

**SYMBOLISM OF SELECTED VISUAL ART FORMS IN
THE BOLE TRADITIONAL AREA**

**THESIS PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE
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OF THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN ART EDUCATION**

BY

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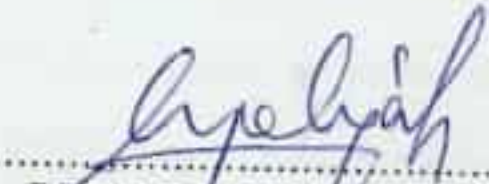
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FEBRUARY, 2004

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the candidate's own account of his research.



.....
DR. ALHAJI Y.S. PELIGAH,
SUPERVISOR

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And to God be the glory.

M. K. YAKUBU

ABSTRACT

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Title: Symbolism of Selected Visual Art Forms in the Bole Traditional Area

Many symbolic visual art forms exist in the Bole Traditional Area, but these have not been documented nor their symbolism explained. This study focuses on selected visual art forms in the Bole Traditional Area and categorises the symbolism of the selected art forms and document in detail the various meanings, value and philosophy behind them. The aim is to explain the indigenous wisdom and knowledge the people of Bole repose in these art forms and to suggest ways of using the research findings for art and general educational purposes.

The choice of illustrations and descriptions has been guided by the intension of simplifying and clarifying the significant meaning and value attached to the various symbols.

The descriptive survey method with interviewing and limited questionnaire administration were employed to gather data for the research.. The problem the thesis seeks to solve is that documentation is lacking in the Bole Traditional Area, especially, in the symbolic visual art forms. The main objective of the author is therefore to document the symbolism of some selected visual art forms in the traditional area. The writer therefore seeks to identify and categorise the types of symbols the selected art forms contain and document in details the various meanings of these symbols. He also intends to research into the symbolic values and explain the philosophy, wisdom and knowledge behind the symbolism in the art forms of the traditional area and also suggest ways of using the research findings for art and general educational purposes. The choices of illustrations and descriptions have been guided by the intention of simplicity and clarity.

The descriptive survey method was used for gathering and reporting the data.

The situation can be attributed to low education of the area and an apparent bias documenting symbolic art forms in Ghana. The lack of documentation was also found

The situation can be attributed to low education of the area and an apparent bias documenting symbolic art forms in Ghana. The lack of documentation was also found to affect the teaching of visual arts in the area negatively. The symbols found in the study were mostly locally produced and are based on the vegetation of the place, although a few were imported ones

The traditional priests, heads, chiefs and elderly people were found to be the best interpreters of the meanings and symbolism of the art forms, most of who were illiterates. The symbolic visual art forms were either symbols themselves or they represented animals, birds or human images.

Not all the symbolic visual art forms could be explained satisfactorily. Reasons have been given for this phenomenon.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This thesis does not intend to present a very detailed account or a complete list of symbolic visual arts of the Bole Traditional Area and their meanings. The plan of the thesis involves some explanation of the symbolism of selected visual art forms in the Bole Traditional Area.

The Bole Traditional Area is within the Northern Region of Ghana. It is located in the extreme Western end of the Region. According to a Statistical Service the Bole Traditional Area is bordered to the north by Wa District of the Upper West Region, to the West by the Republic of La Cote d' Ivoire, to the east by the West Gonja District and the South by the Wenchi and Kintampo Districts in the Brong Ahafo Region.

The southernmost village of the area is Bamboi which shares a boundary with Brong Ahafo. The District extends northward to Nyoli No.1 which shares a boundary with the Upper West Region. Its westernmost boundary is the international border with La Cote d' Ivoire and the Black Volta River. From there the district stretches eastward to Gurpe, within the Mole National Park in the Damongo District.

1.2 The Geography of the Study Area

According to the Ghana map (figure 1), the Bole traditional area lies between longitude $2^{\circ} 50' W$ and $2^{\circ} 10' W$ longitudes and between latitudes $8^{\circ} 10' N$ and $9^{\circ} 50' N$. The area covers approximately $7,200 \text{ Km}^2$ also the Statistical Service at Tamale puts it as 9200 Km^2 in area.

1.2.1 Population

The 1996 population census estimated the population of the area as 151,590 with an average of 8 persons per square kilometer. According to the Statistical Service report the population distribution is not uniform but has 60% of the people living in the northern part of the area. The population is estimated to have been growing at an annual average rate of 4.5 %.

The Bole traditional area has two urban centres in the district, Bole and Sawla and over 314 settlements. The traditional area consists of two administrative districts of Ghana with Bole and Sawla as the capitals.



Figure 1: Administrative Map of Ghana Showing the Northern Region

Key

Thick dotted line  shows position of Bole Traditional Area on Ghana Map.

1.2.2 Soils

The district is within the Guinea Savanna zone of the Northern Region of Ghana. The soils in this zone are said to be among the best soils in the Northern Savanna zone and are therefore extensively farmed. Boateng (1970) recounts that; the former Gonja Development Company's farm at Damongo is situated on these soils.

According to the Statistical Service, the soils in the district are fair. Soil types are savannah ochrosols, which develop under rainfall between 82.2 mm and 103.2 mm. These are predominantly medium sandy loams in the upland and valley respectively. There are also patches of gravel to stony land. Along the riverbanks can be found alluvial sand very good for rice cultivation. The soils are important agriculturally and are suited to a variety of cereals and other cash crops... The major economic activity is agriculture, which is about 75% of the population. There is no pressure on land. In some areas, considerable bush fallow and shifting cultivation is still practiced.

1.2.3 Major Occupations

Subsistence farming is the major occupation in the Bole traditional area. Crops produced in this area are legumes, yams, cassava and cereals. Groundnuts and shea butter are produced as cash crops and also for domestic consumption and for other uses. The production of cashew nuts has also began.

Animal reared in this area include cattle, sheep, and goats which are left to roam because there are just a few of them. There are however, some people who own large numbers of cattle that are herded by hired Fulani men. Fowls and guinea fowls are also reared in the area.

Cotton, clay, wood, calabash and leather provide raw materials for the production of indigenous arts. Like other Ghanaian or African societies, non-formal and informal, education with specializations in the production of specific art forms among particular clans has thrived up to date. For example only certain clans can engage in blacksmithing whilst cloth weaving is also limited to another indigenous clan. Prior to colonization every household had at least, one craftsman. The people therefore depended on themselves for artifacts such as pots, leather products woven cloth, hoes and hunting equipment. Societies or ethnic groups who lived in this area before the arrival of the Europeans in the 1450's were basically the Gonjas, Vaglas, Safalbas, Nchorbas and the Mos. The Lobis were the latest settlers in the area. The people of the area have of late depended so much on modern facilities even to the extent of losing interest in producing their own artifacts, such that traces of their indigenous arts seem to have totally disappeared. Although a few of the indigenous people still produce some arts, the people now mostly depend on the Lobi settlers for art products like pots and hoe sticks for domestic use and farming respectively.

1.2.4 Cultural Practices, Beliefs and Taboos

Before the introduction of the Islamic religion and later, the Christian religion to the Bole area, the people practised the African Traditional Religion. They produced visual art forms to support their religious practices and beliefs. They believed in life after death and the existence of their ancestors who still control their daily lives and link them to the spiritual world. That is, they express their anxieties and desires through these ancestors to the gods and other familiar spirits. They also believed in the existence of the creator God known in the various dialects as *Ebore* and *Korawizi* or *Namwini* and other lesser gods as well as individual personal gods. 'Ebore' in the Gonja dialect comes from the statement: *E-be wur bore* which means, 'The one who

creates the rain'. Another likely meaning of *Ebore* is *Ewur bore* meaning Chief of rain for '*Ewura*' means chief and *bore* means "rain" in Gonja. *Korawizi* in the Vagla dialect comes from the statement *Kora Wiizi* which means the "maker god". *Kora* means "the art of making or creating", while *wiizi* means "a god". In another sense, the statement means "the sun that makes or creates". *Namwini* in the Safalba, Batige and Wali dialects originated from the statement *Nu Mwini* which means "chief god".

The people of the area also believe in the existence of witchcraft. They therefore use sooth-saying and other magical means of finding out suspected witches. For instance, they either sooth-say, consult the ancestors by means of sacrificing some fowls or hunt for a witch when they suspect the involvement of witchcraft in someone's death. They do this through the following ritual: A cloth that the deceased had used when he or she was alive is either put inside a ritual pot or tied to a log. When put inside a pot one person carries it but two men are made to carry the cloth when tied to a log. If the ritual pot is being used, some incantations are chanted over it to arouse the spirit of the dead person to pin-point the supposed witch. When the spirit response he is said to possess the man carrying the pot as he firmly clasps the pot on his head and either runs with it to hit the suspected witch. If the person died a natural death the man only sways to symbolise this.

Where a log is used, the two young men carrying the log called *pigii* in the Vagla dialect and *kadii* in Gonja run very fast with the log to the place where they can find the supposed witch in response to the incantations as shown in Figure 2. When found, the supposed witch is hit with one end of the log (usually the front end) or they men remain rooted to a particular spot while swaying to symbolise that the death is either

natural or due to other reasons. When this happens the log is put away and a sooth-sayer is consulted.

There used to be lots of taboos among the people of Bole traditional area. However, most of these taboos are forgotten due to the acceptance of Islam and Christianity by majority of the people. Some of the taboos were:

1. One must not whistle while in a room.
2. One must not sing while having a bath.
3. It is a taboo for a woman to cook for her husband or any other man when she is in her menstrual period.

However, not all the taboos have been abandoned. For instance, the third taboo listed above is still in practice.

Some beliefs and practices of the area involve the use of art forms. For example, the people of Jentilpe, Jang and Dabori of the Vagla ethnic group are well noted for the use of masquerades during funeral ceremonies. These masqueraders known as *sigma* (singular) and *sigmazi* (plural), come out into the open funeral ground to dance when an elderly person of the village dies and the funeral is being performed. The people of the area also believe that the *sigma* kills witches but protects those who believe in it, and in most cases it is believed that all members of the village are protected by the *sigma*. The sooth-sayers or diviners of Mankuma also have their special attire which they wear during sooth-saying. In addition to the garment they wear, they carry a leather bag, which must not be touched by any ordinary man, and in defiance, the one might die. A child born through consultation with the Mankuma sooth-sayers is usually named *Gholo*.

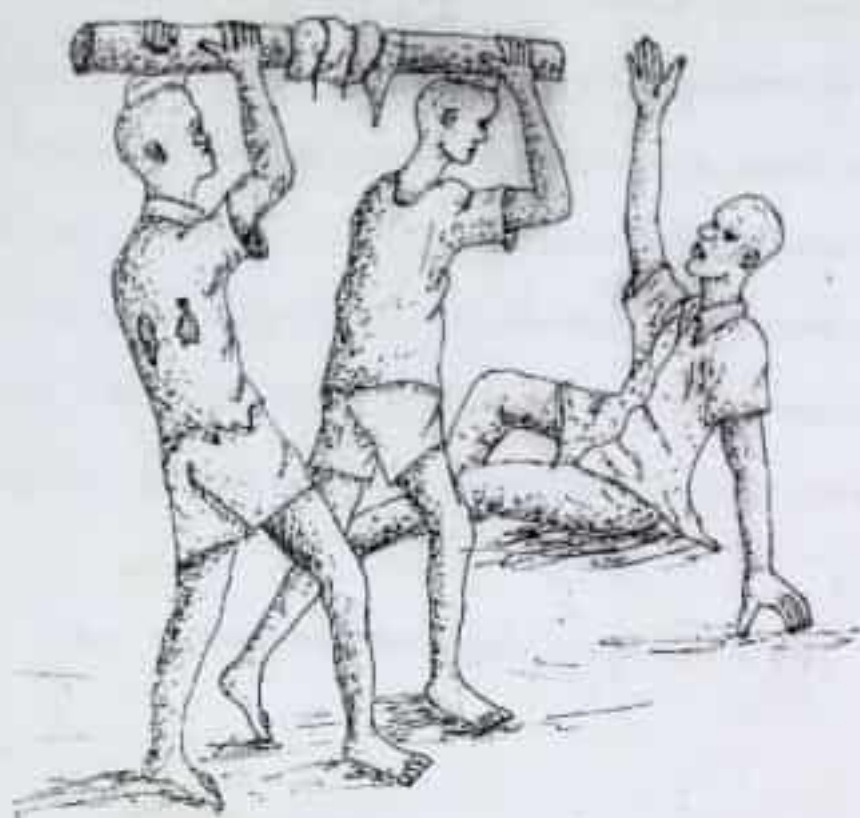


Figure 2: A witch hunt with *Piigi (kadit)*

In spite of the traces of visual art products of symbolic value in this background account, there is no documentary evidence that people of Bole traditional area have ever produced any artefacts of their own. This lack of documentary material on the symbolism of art forms in the traditional area makes it impossible for references to be made on their culture. For instance, when the researcher was looking for related literature on the topic he could not even lay hands on any material concerning the arts of the Bole traditional area. This makes the culture less exposed to the outside world and does not promote much tourism in the area as well as the culture not being documented. As the researcher interviewed people, it was realised that some of the people had forgotten important aspects of their culture. These would not have been forgotten if they had been documented. It was evident that many of the adults who had knowledge of the traditions, methods of production of the art forms and their

sources of raw materials have died and such knowledge is lost forever. For example, a well-endowed traditional craftsman called Yakubu Boadu (also popularly known as Yakubu N'zage by his contemporaries) was a very skilful craftsman in wood carving, modelling, basketry, leatherwork, gunpowder manufacturing, needle work and other art forms. He was also known as a manufacturer of traditional flutes and knew how to beat most of the traditional drums very well. However, this all round craftsman died on 3rd January 1983 when his son (this researcher) was not matured enough to document his well endowed skills, thus losing this knowledge and everything he knew.

(a) **BOLE DISTRICT (The Traditional Area).**



(b) The 20 major localities of the Bole District which also make up the traditional area under study:

1. Bole	8 Jindabuo	15 Bumbala Yuoro
2. Sawla	9 Gbenfu	16 Sakpa
3. Tuna	10 Maluwe	17 Jama
4. Bamboi	11 Poru	18 Kiapo
5. Kalba	12 Soma	19 Teselima
6. Mandari	13 Nyoli No.1	20 Sumpuoyiri/Berinya
7 Banda-Nkwanta	14 Tinga	

1.3 THE PROBLEM

The daily life of the Ghanaian is steeped in much symbolism. Examples of such symbols are the Adinkra and stool symbols of the Akans. Such symbolism of life is also apparent in the Bole Traditional Area of Northern Ghana. It is however unfortunate that the symbolism of the visual art forms in the Bole Traditional Area of the Northern Region have not been documented. One of the reasons for this lack of documentation is due to the over reliance on the oral tradition of passing down knowledge. Lots of art forms and symbols, which used to be found in the traditional architecture in particular is now totally lost from their buildings.

The forms and symbols that were used during funerals and traditional festivals are also gradually disappearing. This is also due to the influence of foreign cultures. Furthermore, since the older generations who are custodians and main practitioners of these art forms are dying off without passing on their knowledge, there is a danger of these traditions being lost to posterity. The absence of documented material on the symbolism of the art forms of the area has resulted in the lack of knowledge and

teaching of it by art and other teachers in schools. In view of all the above shortcomings there is the need to research into and document the art forms and symbolism of some selected visual arts of the Bole Traditional Area and to preserve them for posterity.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

- i. To identify and categorise the types of symbols of selected art forms in the Bole Traditional Area contain and document in detail the various meanings of these symbols.
- ii. To research into the symbolic values and elucidate the philosophy, wisdom and knowledge behind the symbolism in the art forms of the Bole Traditional Area.
- iii. To suggest ways of using the research findings for Art and general educational purposes.

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

The people of the Bole Traditional Area have indigenous art forms that have symbolic meanings and values. These art forms can be assessed and their symbolisms documented and explained for the better understanding and enrichment of the artistic heritage of the people of Bole Traditional Area in particular and Ghana in general.

1.6 ASSUMPTION

It is assumed that the selected visual art forms that may be found in the Bole Traditional Area will have symbolic meanings.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS

The study is limited to visual art forms used for religious ceremonies, funeral rites, prestige purposes and those restricted to the use of chiefs, traditional priests, clan heads or chiefs' palaces and shrines only. The targeted groups are the traditional artists, the chiefs and elderly people of the area who are able to interpret the symbolisms of the art forms. Although elements of some neighbouring cultures may feature in the report, the study is strictly limited to the Bole Traditional Area.

1.8 LIMITATIONS

The researcher experienced a number of obstacles and setbacks during the research; and they were as follows:

- i. The researcher had an accident and sustained some serious injuries on his way to Kong (Kom) to administer some interviews.
- ii. The researcher had to spend heavily to motivate respondents in his interviews or as sign of gratitude.
- iii. Some respondents who compelled the researcher to give them drinks before they could be interviewed ended responding poorly to the questions.
- iv. Some respondents refused to give detail information on certain issues because they were either scared or warned against giving further details.
- v. Some potential respondents insisted on keeping their traditions secret and therefore refused to be interviewed or accept copies of the questionnaires.
- vi. Other respondents collected the questionnaires but returned them unanswered after keeping them for two weeks; with the same reason of keeping their tradition un-exposed to strangers.
- vii. The low level of education in the area resulted in the inability of the researcher to use most of the copies of his questionnaire already printed.

- viii. Some respondents thought the research was one of the usual exercises of the government involving payments of money and they therefore demanded to be paid heavily. The researcher's attempts to explain to their understanding fell on deaf ears.
- ix. Heavy research expenses also led to some set-backs due to bankruptcy.
- x. The researcher had to reschedule several of his interviews because he either missed the respondents or the respondents themselves requested for re-schedule.
- xi. Some people refused to be interviewed due to suspicion and fear.
- xii. Others had no confidence in themselves and therefore avoided being given the questionnaires through excuses.
- xiii. Other respondents misplaced the first copies of the questionnaires issued to them and had to be given copies again and time to answer.
- xiv. Due to intermittent malaria attacks and fatigue, the researcher had to reduce the number of villages in which he intended to conduct his research from twenty (20) to fourteen (14) since time was lost in the course of treating the malaria.
- xv. The researcher also faced lots of financial constraints during the research, which also contributed to the loss of time.
- xvi. The researcher went through the odious task of riding a bicycle for distances of about 36 miles in a day through bush paths.
- xvii. When the researcher presented some of his chapters for typing, his work had to wait for several days till his turn was up before he could have it typed. He was compelled to change to a different typist in order to speed up the typing. Towards the end, the researcher faced some accommodation problems and was compelled to travel to and fro from the Northern Region to the University as he made efforts to finish the report on schedule.

1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Although the researcher looked for definitions of the terms in various books and dictionaries the definitions adopted here have been found to be most appropriate and suitable for the purpose of the thesis. In other words they are operational definitions.

Term	Definition
Symbolism	Representation of ideas by the use of symbols or system of symbols used to represent a particular group of ideas.
Symbol	A sign, mark, object or person looked upon as representing something. For example, white is a symbol of purity. The cross is the symbol of Christianity. A well-arranged set of polished pots in a woman's room is a symbol of the ideal woman.
Document	Something written or printed, to be used as a record or as evidence.
Posterity:	Person's descendants (his children or their children) of Bole Traditional Area. Future generations of this area.
Value:	Quality of being useful or desirable. Worth of something when compared with something else. The worth of the symbolic forms.
Philosophy	System of thinking among the traditional people of Bole Traditional area. Reasons for certain attitudes rules and behaviour in the traditional area.
Indigenous:	The native people of Bole Traditional Area
Wisdom:	The enlightenment, reason or insight of the people of the traditional area for certain traditional establishments.

Terms used in the traditional languages

- Sigmazi* (singular): a masquerade in the Bole traditional area
- Sigmazi* (plural): masqueraders in the Vagla dialect
- Ebore*: The creator God; comes from the statement-*Ewur bore* or *E-be wur bore* literally meaning "The one who creates rain"; to refer to the greatness of God and differentiate him from the smaller gods.
- Korawiizi*: Comes from the statement: *Kora Wiizi* in the Vagla dialect. Literally, it means the maker God.
- Namwini*: The word is from the statement *Na mwini* which means "Chief God" in the Wali and Safalba dialects.

1.10 Abbreviations

- KNUST: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- U.C.E.W.: University College of Education of Winneba.

1.11 Importance of the Study

- i. The study will add documentary knowledge on art symbolism to the already existing records in the country.
- ii. The direct beneficiaries will be the people of the Bole Traditional Area.
- iii. The research report will serve as material for teaching visual art symbols of the area under study.
- iv. It will also serve as a basis for further research to researchers who further intend to research into it.

1.12 ORGANIZATION OF THE REST OF THE TEXT

Chapter two deals with the literature review. The chapter has been arranged in chronological order of the authors beginning with the oldest publication to the most current. Chapter three handles the general procedures or methodology. How the population sampling has been done is explained in this chapter. The administration of questionnaire has also been explained here. The chapter also deals with the libraries visited to collect information and the research methods used. The chapter further describes in a chronological order, how the whole research was done. Chapter four deals with the results of the study. The findings have been presented through description and supported with charts and tables. The analyses are also illustrated with sketches, charts and photographs. The facts assembled have been analyzed and interpreted. Chapter five, the final chapter summarizes all findings in the study. Conclusions and recommendations have also been made from the summary.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter summarises and discusses literature on symbolic Art forms of Europe, Africa and Ghana in particular. It focuses on visual art forms found in the Bole traditional area of Northern Ghana.

2.1 Documentation of Visual Arts

The absence of documentation as well as ignorance about the art forms of Africa for several centuries by European Art historians coupled with slow pace of research as well as false statements on African arts has resulted in great loss of much of African philosophy, knowledge, wisdom and values which were buried with their arts. African culture is mostly expressed in their arts and if these artifacts get buried and cannot be found or explained when found, then the culture of the people, in other words, their wisdom, philosophy and values are lost forever. An example of such an unfortunate situation is expressed by Pelrine (1988) who says:

Buried terra cotta figures from a now-vanished tradition were first reported from Mali's inland Niger Delta in the 1940s and continue to be found there today ... Unfortunately the first controlled excavation in which a figure was discovered was not conducted until 1977; and such systematic investigation has remained quite limited, therefore, nearly all of the statuary in museums and private collections is without specific excavation data and contextual information. As a result, comparatively little can be stated with certainty about individual figures.

Pelrine also quotes Roy (1985:18) to explain that some of the indigenous art forms still being used by the people cannot be interpreted by most of the users. In suggesting a solution to this problem, he said,

... lacking more substantial evidence of the people who made these objects, we can interpret many of their cultural patterns by comparing their artifacts with the material cultures of living peoples.

Owusu – Ansah (1994) states:

The interest in our traditional symbols has gained such a momentum that the author is inwardly troubled by the realisation that no time should be spared, particularly with the passage of three decades and a-half after our freedom from colonial rule, to bring into light our traditional symbols which form part of our cultural thoughts into action.

Owusu Ansah's suggestion of bringing into light our traditional symbols can largely be achieved through documentation. Furthermore, the documentation of the Akan adinkra symbols by Owusu Ansah, (1994) serves as a good source of reference for documented art forms and symbolism of the Akan arts, for, 500 new versions of the traditional motives and their meanings have been compiled. That also serves as an example for people of other traditional areas to emulate.

Anaba (1995) feels disappointed that the use of visual symbols as an integral part of environmental art in the Upper-East Region is steadily declining. The situation in the Bole traditional area is no better. One might be right to claim that it is even worse in

the Bole traditional area than other places in the northern regions. That is because, whereas some documented material was found on the Dagbani, Nanumba and Mampruli cultures of the eastern section of the northern region, nothing of the sort was found in the Bole traditional area. The need to document the available art forms and symbolism of the people of the three regions is so urgent that it cannot be overlooked. Several research activities of this kind are required immediately. Lots of Ghanaian traditional arts in the north in particular have not yet been documented. That has led to the loss of invaluable knowledge in all aspects of cultural activities and the retardation of development. Knowledge that would have been used to promote development is forgotten when the elderly people who are knowledgeable in the art forms die without passing it on to the younger generation. As the knowledge is forgotten due to lack of documented materials, useful knowledge that could have promoted development is not made known.

Adu-Agyem (1998) found that some Ghanaian carved objects were unique and useful in the teaching and learning of art in Ghana. The disappointing fact, however, is that such vital and rich ideas were not recorded let alone documented anywhere. They were only stored or located in the minds or thoughts of some of the master carvers who often died with the knowledge. Other serious problems mentioned include the adulteration or exaggeration of some of the facts learnt by word of mouth due to poor retentive memory or lack of authentic documentary sources of reference. The researcher is therefore determined to curb a similar situation occurring in the research area whereby the knowledge and ideas of the art forms and symbolisms of the people of Bole traditional area will be completely forgotten.

Documentation is much better in the southern sector of Ghana than it is in the North. Much of the Akan culture, for example, their art forms and symbolisms have been documented. Some examples are the adinkra and stool symbols documented by Glover, the New Versions of the traditional motives documented by Owusu-Antah, the Akan of Ghana by Warren (1986) which deals with the Akan culture in general, and many others. And yet, other recent documentations on Ghanaian traditional visual arts have been carried out by some past students of the Art Education Department of the college of Art and some lecturers of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. Again, most of these researchers concern themselves with the southern cultures. The implication is that whilst much of the art forms and their symbols have been documented for the southern sector very little documentation has been done for those of the Northern sector in general and particularly the Bole Traditional Area.

2.1.1 Definition of Documentation

Harnod (1977) defines documentation as "the science of collecting, storing and organising recorded informational materials or documents for optimum access." Harnod further defines documentation as the act of collecting, classifying and making readily accessible, the records of all kinds of intellectual activities. Harnod in another way defines documentation as ...the science of ordered presentation of records of knowledge serving to render their contents available for rapid reference and correlation.

This definition falls in line with the first objective of the topic; for, part of this objective aims at detail documentation of the various meanings of the symbols. The information collected will be organized, recorded and stored for optimum access as

stated in the definition. Documentation is also the act of collecting, classifying and making readily accessible, the records of all kinds of intellectual activities.

The emphasis here is 'the science of ordered presentation' and 'preservation of records of knowledge.' The research has therefore been conducted and presented in an orderly manner in accordance with the definition.

Observations made and information gathered from respondents were compared and conclusions were arrived at. Definition four is stated as: "The procedure by which the accumulated store of learning is made available for the further advancement of knowledge".

Over the years, the people of Bole Traditional Area have used art forms in their cultural practices to accumulated knowledge that has been kept secret from within few individuals who are the custodians of the culture. One of the objectives of the thesis is to make them available for the further advancement of knowledge. It is therefore in accordance with the above definition of documentation. The last definition of Harnod dwells on collection and conservation, classification and selection, dissemination and utilization of all information. The objectives of the research are directed along the same lines. In the research process the researcher categorizes some selected art forms and sorts for the necessary information for utilization and dissemination.

In this report documentation is defined as network of services involving the science of collecting, organising, recording and storing new information materials and an ordered presentation of the records of knowledge and the materials, thus making it readily accessible to enquirers.

2.2 Meaning of Symbol and Symbolism in Visual Arts

Hagger (1992) defines symbolism as :

a recognisable equivalent or type of some person, object, or abstract idea by means of features associated in the popular mind with, that person, object, or abstract idea; the expression of abstract ideas in terms of pattern, colour, line; the conveyance of abstract or spiritual objects.

Taking the female akuaba doll of the Akans for example, is a recognizable equivalent for the Akan concept of femininity, beauty and fertility. The 'roundness' of the head is an Akan attribute of femininity and the rings around the neck of the doll stand for beauty. Warren (1986) states it as follows: "If a woman desires a female child, she gets a doll with an oval or egg-shaped head; ... A religious or wise child is represented with a circular head". The akans in this case have features associated in their popular mind accordingly expressed in the Akuaba doll.

Beauty is an abstract idea and the lines expressing femininity is a quality of the female reflected in some specific features associated in the popular minds of the Akans. Hagger further explains that symbols may be of many kinds; and he listed some of them as hieroglyphics, initials, emblems, allegories, fables and enigmas. He also explains that some symbols closely approximate to an idea or person and are easily recognized and that others can be understood by following some out-of-the way association of ideas. No matter what form a symbol may take as listed by Hagger above, the fact still remains that symbols are abstracted versions of ideas. They are signs of forms representing ideas or objects. They are indirect means of

communication. They may bear proverbial or literal meanings in the African context. For example, figure 3 is the symbol signifying 'Two heads are better than one'; literally meaning that the ideas of two people or more put together produce better results. Its proverbial meaning is that, one must learn to consult others for better ideas. Its modern version from Owusu-Ansah (1994) is shown in figure 3a.

The usual (original) symbol is usually presented as two heads attached together and each facing the opposite direction (with their occiputs joined).

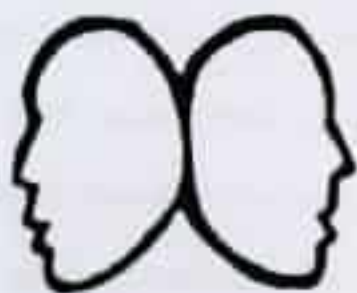


Fig. 3.a

Fig. 3.b

Two heads are better than one.

Two heads are better than one (the usual symbol).

(Tikoro nko agyina). Akan

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (1987) defines 'symbol' as: "... a communication element intended to simply represent or stand for a complex of person, object, group or idea."

The Encyclopaedia cites examples of symbols that may be presented graphically to include: the cross for Christianity, the Red Cross or Crescent for the life preserving agencies of Christian and Islamic countries. Human figures may be used as symbols to represent countries. Such examples are 'Marianne', "John Bull", and "Uncle Sam" standing for France, England and the United States of America respectively. "...

symbols may also be assigned arbitrarily as in the mathematical symbol " ∞ " for infinity or the symbol "\$" for dollar."

As the Encyclopaedia rightly states, symbols are communication elements intended to simply represent or stand for either a complex of person, object, group or idea. Complex because they may not be simple or direct; but they are not easy for the ordinary person to interpret. From the researcher's observation, Symbols are most often interpreted by the most experienced ones or the older generations, in Africa. This sometimes happens probably because they are assigned arbitrarily and they do not directly relate or resemble the objects or ideas they intend to represent. Other possible reasons for the elders to interpret symbols might be that, due to their long experiences in life the elderly are also expected to have accumulated enough knowledge to be able to interpret symbols, which often appear strange to the younger generation. Also, among some African societies such as the Tampluma clan of Jentilpe in the Bole traditional area, certain symbols are secret and are only exposed to the elderly ones. They are therefore the only ones given the prerogative to interpret those secret symbols. The elders are also most often relied upon as the ones able to apply life situations in solving problems-they must therefore be able to answer questions pertaining to those 'strange' symbols.

Cambridge *et al* (1996) defines symbol as: "a sign, shape or object, which is used to represent something else." The authors explain that a symbol can be used to represent a quality or idea. For example, the wheel in the Indian flag is a symbol of peace; the heart shape is a symbol of love. Water a symbol of life. An object can be described as a symbol of something else if it seems to represent it because it is connected with it in a lot of people's minds. For example, among the Gonja, Vagla, Safalba, Nchorba

and Batige ethnic groups of the Bole Traditional Area, a white cloth traditionally woven by the people themselves is usually used for burying their dead; which symbolises purity-an idea as well as a quality cherished by the people. This is also common to almost all the tribes of northern Ghana. A person buried naked or with ordinary clothing is considered wicked and impure. Therefore, people suspected of witchcraft or evil deeds or those who have died out of abnormal circumstances and their impurity confirmed by the gods or ancestors through divination are usually buried without the white cloth. The white cloth is therefore a symbolic object for death and purity in the Bole Traditional Area in particular and among some of the tribes in the Northern Region.

It is also common knowledge among the people that when grass is cut and shaped into a round pad and then put on any object in the bush it is a sign that one must not carry that object away apart from the owner. If one did, the one would die. Meanwhile, it is common to see farmers and hunters most often using this type of pad to carry their loads during the rainy season when grass is in abundance. When somebody therefore leaves a luggage or an object near a road or a path with the grass pad on top, it is a sign language signifying that the object belongs to somebody and must not be carried away.

Its symbolic meaning has, however, extended to a spiritual dimension. It now symbolises 'a spiritual trap' set on the object. It suggests that the one who steals the article that has this pad placed on it will fall seriously ill and eventually die.

Urdang (1997) defines symbol as: "... representation, figure, metaphor, allegory, insignia image, logo type mark, trade mark, colophon, brand, code, abbreviation, phonogram,..... armorial bearing, ... hanner, flag." A symbol is said to be a

representation because it may be in the form of an object, a sign, drawing or mark standing for the original object or idea. For instance, the people of Gonja traditional area present 'a man on horseback holding a spear in his hand' to stand for their great leader Ndewura Jakpa, Smaila, who established the Gonja kingdom through conquest. They may even accord to an object bearing the symbol the same honour due to Ndewura Jakpa himself.

'Figure' is a drawing, painting, or an image of the body of a bird, an animal or a human being. In this sense, it is not the actual person but a mark or drawing giving an idea of the person's appearance.

Metaphor is defined by Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1996) as: "an expression which describes a person or object in a literary way by referring to something that is considered to possess similar characteristics to the person or object you are trying to describe."

A symbol therefore tends to be slightly different from a metaphor in the sense that, whereas a symbol represents, the metaphor is a description or comparison of the state in which a thing is to another. Representation is the art of giving form to stand for a thing or making a mark or sign to look like. It is the production of a picture to stand for an object.

Persall and Hands (1998) define symbol as

a thing that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract; a ~~mark~~ or character used as a conventional representation of an object, function, or process, e.g. a

shape or sign used to represent something such as an organisation.

An example to support the above definition is the case where many of the African smaller gods either have carvings, modelled objects or woven material representing the gods. In summary, a symbol may be defined as the representation of a complex of a person, object, group or idea or a recognizable equivalent for a person, object, group or idea.

2.3 Symbolism

'Symbolism' is derived from the term 'symbol'. Persall and Hands (1998) see symbolism as, "the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities." It therefore means that when people express their ideas or qualities in symbolic forms like flags, linguist staffs, objects of worship, the red tall hat of the high ranking chiefs of the north, then symbolism is being expressed. This message may contain some societal value and knowledge pertaining only to that society. For example, the Akuaba doll, the golden stool and the kente symbols are symbolic elements that are usually associated with the Akan Society. In another definition, symbolism is said to be an artistic and poetic movement or style using symbolic images and indirect suggestion to express mystical ideas, emotions, and states of mind. For example, symbolism in the nineteenth century France and Belgium. Since most Europeans have taken to either scientific concepts or Christian beliefs, symbolic experiences in their lives are mostly associated with aesthetic functions. In the case of Africans, however, symbolism is deeper, and more involving. It has value and it is functional.

The Encyclopaedia of World Art defines symbolism as the practice of signifying a thing by means of something else that stands for it - in other words, its symbol, 'a

sign'. Explaining further the *Encyclopaedia* states that symbolism always involves the substitution of signs and thus has its roots in visual experience, the dimension of imagination and of artistic expression; objectively the symbol does not arise from aesthetic experience but forms part of the cultural patrimony from which it is selected for purposes of artistic expression. In other words, the symbol is arrived at out of the cultural experience of the artist and not aesthetically motivated. The objective for that matter is to communicate with the society from a cultural perspective. The following observation by Fosu (1994) is an example of some Ghanaian symbolism developed out of cultural experiences. He writes about the ceremonial pots that are decorated in geometric abstract and figurative relief motifs. And that these decorations or motifs are often symbolic and admirably incised, serrated, etched or moulded. The motives are said to range from simple carvelines to intricate combinations of linear motif patterns, others painted in flat earth colours or burnished with herbal dyes and so on. Fosu mentions the "Abusuakuruwa, the family pot series as excellent examples of the many ceremonial pots that were popular from about 14th to the 19th centuries used for storing pieces of hair and finger-clippings of the deceased person and closed relatives of the living, and that they are symbol of family unity.

The *Encyclopaedia of World Art* again explains that in symbolic representation there is an immediate and direct relation between the chosen symbol or sign and the thing signified, implying a spontaneous, reciprocal correspondence – indeed, almost an identification – between them; the thing signified is conceived as being implicit in the symbol, which thus has a well nigh magical and uniquely summary quality. This explains among other things, the deep connection between symbolism and the religious imagination. This may be likened to the symbolic representation for the Asante kingdom and their golden stool. The stool symbolises the Asante Kingdom.

Its golden nature signifies the wealth of the kingdom. The rituals through which Okomfo Anokye presented the stool are religious and symbolically valued by the people. This value and belief make the people believe in the spiritual powers of the stool, which serves as a binding force for their unity. The stool, therefore, symbolises unity for the Asantes because the chiefs under the kingdom were made to undertake the oath of unity (in the form of a pledge of obedience to the golden stool). And since Akan chiefs sit on stools to arbitrate disputes, there is also a direct symbolic link between the stool and the judicial authority of an Akan chief. The rest of the ethnic groups throughout the country also possess similar symbols of significance pertaining to their kingdoms and kingship. For instance, some ethnic groups in the north, especially, the Dagombas and Gonjas enskin their chiefs. Their ranks and authorities are therefore symbolised with the skins of various animals. These signify their levels of importance and power. Among the Gonjas of the Bole Traditional Area for example, only a chief is allowed to sit on the skin of a gold skin animal of the deer family, a hunter beast or the skin of the lion. The use of the leopard skin is also limited to the 'Kupo' the chief priest of the traditional god (Sornyor Kipo), based at a village called Sornyor. The major symbol of the Gonjas is a hand holding a spear, and that symbolises their founder of the Gonja kingdom (Ndewura Jakpa the spear holder). It is therefore a symbol of power to the Gonjas.

Symbols are at times representations of the totems of some ethnic groups. A research by Conservation International - Ghana (2002) gives a number of animals and birds as totems for the people of the Gonja Traditional area. The leopard is said to be the totem of Tulwe traditional area and the paramount chief sits on its skin. This signifies the power the chief wields, as the people were very great warriors in the olden days. The lion and antelope are for the Kpembe traditional area with the lion being the main

totem. The paramount chief of this area sits on the skin of a lion whenever he sits in state. In the Bole Traditional Area, however, the report says, Aardvark is the main totem of this traditional area though there are eleven others. These are vultures, cattle-egret, red dove, lion, elephant, leopard, hippopotamus, wart-hog, side-stripped jackal and bushbuck.

The north Mo which is partially part of the Bole Traditional Area, according to the report, has the vulture and crocodile as their totems, but the most important one is the crocodile. One can therefore say that although these totems are not drawn or graphically presented in visual art form, they can be considered as living symbolisms of the people.

In summary a symbol may be defined as a representational form of an object or idea that may have a literally or symbolic meaning or both. Symbolism on the other hand may be defined as the practice, organisation or way of symbolic representation among ethnic groups.

2.3.1 Historical Overview of Symbolism

The history of symbolism may be traced as far back to the time of cave art produced by Pre-historic man. It was the time when ancient man used art in promoting aspects of his living. Hunting was very risky and the cave man had to depend on his rock and cave art to save himself from the state of helplessness in order to achieve his religious and spiritual needs by means of magic through certain rituals. Thus, the development of 'sympathetic magic'. With sympathetic magic, the people painted, carved or modelled images of animals and then 'hurt' these images with weapons, believing that the wounding would result in their power to kill the live animals. The painting or art form so produced represented the animal they had in mind. The weapons drawn on

the picture symbolised the idea of the combat or struggle they are going to have with the animal they intended to conquer. African symbolic expression bears a close resemblance to the sympathetic magic of the prehistoric man of ancient times, since both involve symbolic representation.

Symbolism in Europe is different from that of Africa due to the different purposes they had for producing the arts. Whereas the Africans produced their arts for functional reasons, the European arts were mostly for aesthetic purposes. It cannot be totally ruled out that the western cultures sometimes produced functional arts that were symbolic, deducing from Segy (1975) who says that "The cult of the dead and ancestor worship passage graves found in France, England, and Scandinavia, indicate communal burial sites which were used over long periods." It is an indication that certain aspects of African symbolism existed in parts of Europe in the past.

Symbolic art production in Europe was insignificant until in the 1880s and 1890s when there was an intellectual growth in European art which led to the development of European interest in African symbolic expressions in Art. Some of these intellectuals, according to Gwinn *et al* (1987) include three principal figures: Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, and Pierre Puves de Chavannes.

Deducing from the above information from Gwinn (1987), it will be observed that the concept of symbolism existed in Europe in the past.

According to Chilvers *et al* (1988), "the aim of symbolism was to solve the conflict between the material and the spiritual world".

And from the account of Smith (1995) it is realized that symbolic expressions in Europe was due to the intellectual growth in European art. From his account we

realise that symbolic movements were formed during the period of artistic revolution in Europe. That was a period when realistic art was being criticized or even being replaced with new artistic concepts like impressionism, surrealism and cubism. These evolutionary changes eventually led to artistic abstraction. Movements were therefore being organized every now and then in support of the new ideologies that were coming up in the various European countries to defend the various group ideologies in artistic concepts. A movement known as symbolism was also organised aimed at distinguishing true impressionism in which the artist tried to fuse together what he saw in nature, from the analytic Moreau approach to appearances favoured by Neo-impressionists such as Seurat and Signac.

Whilst Europeans had their conflicts over symbolic and realistic presentation of arts, symbolic arts were generally features of African arts.

There were no disputes about how to present the arts or their symbolism. Symbolism was generally acceptable in African functional arts.

2.3.2 Function of African Symbolism

Leiris and Delange (1968) make us understand that African symbolic arts are generally functional as they explain that the arts of Africa in general are devoted to purposes, which strictly speaking are not aesthetic. Leiris and Delange (1968) therefore remark: "The dancing masks, usually termed 'fetishes', are utilitarian objects in that they fulfil a ritual function closely associated with every day life."

These rituals are effective ways of convincing the individuals or the general public as well as the performer about the spiritual potency of the mask and its ability to solve the every day life problems. It is the belief of the people, according to the type of mask they possess, that it is capable of hunting down witches or detecting witchcraft.

Masks from other ethnic groups have diverse abilities. The Chiwara of the Bamana people of Mali for instance helps them in the cultivation of grains.

Africans venerate their ancestors to the extent of burying their dead with items they believe would be required in the ancestral world. Nunoo (1970) gives us an account on the Akans of Southern Ghana. He observed that for centuries the people have attached so much importance to their dead chiefs that they are buried with great honour. As a result the idea to bury their dead chiefs or queen mothers with terra cotta heads eventually developed. Nunoo (1970) also asserts that it has long been the custom for the Akans to make for the funeral of an important person, terra cotta heads pots with lids surmounted by figures or free standing terra cotta figures. He explains that these figures are always made by old women who are past the age of child bearing. He asserts that some of the figures represent members of the royal family and their attendants Ohene, the chief; Ohemaa, the queen. The obvious conclusion is, therefore that the arts produced for the burial of their kings or queens are functional and symbolic. They are believed to represent the servants of the dead chief or queen mother at times.

Laude (1973) gives a historical account on the use of funeral masks on royal tombs and of pendant masks. Laude asserts that it was very likely that during the reign of Apokou Ouere (Opoku Ware) that the use of funeral masks on royal tombs and of pendant masks representing kings taken captive or killed in war became general. The Agni are mentioned to be the best known for their delicate terra cotta figurines molded in clay by the women and destined for the royal tombs. From this information it can be deduced that there was much symbolic importance attached to terra cotta masks among the Akans of Ghana. Their true symbolic meanings are probably more

religious rather than social. However, the most essential point is that the symbolic figures were produced for functional reasons rather than aesthetic. These symbolic meanings are best known to the people themselves. Laude (1973) opines that for the Asante, it seems, art is essentially regal, destined for the king and his family, embodying the values related to royalty or to celestial after life of kings who watch over the destiny of their people from the great beyond ...

Traditional Ghanaians or traditional Africans have depended so much on their arts of symbolism and function that they did not produce art for art's sake, unlike the Europeans.

Segy (1975) asserts that African sculpture is used for magico-religious purposes. He also stated how Africans consider them as objects of use necessary to the successful performance of rituals. He further described the process of divination through the use of bones numbering about ninety, each having its own meaning. The researcher therefore believes that the deep belief in abstracts or spirituality by the African promotes the intensive use of symbols to represent the unseen world. For instance deities and ancestors have symbolic representations. According to Segy animals that may be represented in sculpture for divination include crocodiles, pigs and dogs, some with human and others with animal heads. Explaining further, Segy says how the symbols help make the African art forms alive and communicative to the people. In the opinion of the researcher, the symbolic interpretation and the extent of belief attached to the artefact determine the value and function of it. The magical aspects also get established as more people have their problems solved by passing through similar processes using the artefact. Segy opines that these experiences also lead to some high degree of expressiveness of art work. He writes, "The high degree of

expressiveness of art work from Africa is based upon the intense emotionalism connected with their deeply experienced religio - magico - social ceremonies, all based upon a rich tradition which survived in unquestioned, basically unaltered form from generation to generation".

Secrecy is often associated with the religio-magico - social ceremonies probably to instil fear and respect for the art forms and persons associated with the art forms thus keeping some vital information perpetually secret since it is sometimes even a taboo to talk about the art form or person associated with it. This practice of keeping knowledge and ideas secret does not therefore allow questions from curious minds, thus, the rich tradition which survived in unquestioned, basically unaltered form from generation to generation. In further attempt to conceal knowledge and ideas from the common man in order to keep the activities of the societies secret, symbolic forms that can only be interpreted by special people or members of the association are also developed to represent such vital information. However, such attitudes do not promote documentation.

Another important aspect of the African symbolic arts is that the artist may produce the work to a finish but it is without value until the proper words are said over it. To buttress this point the researcher quotes Dendel (1975) as follows, "... Camera Laye, the author of *Dark Child*, describes how his father, a goldsmith, went about making an ornament. The father had skill of hand, but for all his skill the ornament was without value until the proper words had been said over it".

African symbolism sometimes represents natural phenomenon according to the imaginations or philosophical interpretations of the people. Take the story of 'the coiled snake,' for instance; which supports the world, should the world-snake become

uneasy his nervous undulations cause earthquakes. This symbolism according to Dendel (1975) comes from the Fon people of Dahomey. The function and value of a symbolic art form very much depends on the philosophical interpretation or meaning attached to the work. Tordy in Segy (1975) informs us how one Bakuba King died in 1884 and two thousand people including his wives and personal servants were killed. Segy explains further how similar practice of killing people to accompany the dead were carried out in the Benin Kingdom where heads were severed and raised on poles around the body of the king. Segy also said that the Bakuba cups carved in the form of human heads also appears to be survival of a custom of drying human head and using it as a drinking cup. An ancestor figure was later developed where by the dead man was rather carved so that his sculptured body was provided to enable him rejoin the living instead of slaughtering his former companions to keep him in company. Segy further observed that masks were considered the abodes of various spirits; often the *nyama* of a dead person was attributed to a mask or an ancestor statue. It is therefore not an over statement for one to say that symbolic presentations of ancestor figures and certain masks originated from the unfortunate situation of Africans honouring their dead kings by killing innocent people.

The researcher believes that Africans also produced art works for magico-religious purposes. To Africans they are objects of use necessary to the successful performance of rituals. In divination a carving of a crouching dog represents the soul of the dead, a human figure represents a child, and a long sliver of bone represents a traveller. From their position in basket, the diviner interprets a person's fate. Other animals that may be represented in sculpture for divination include crocodiles, pigs and dogs, some with human and others with animal heads. Each has its symbolic meaning. The symbols thus help make the African art forms alive and communicative to the people.

The symbolic interpretation and the extent of belief attached to the artifact determine the value and function of it. The magical aspects also get established as more people have their problems solved by passing through similar processes through the use of the art forms. Dendel (1975) writes about the functions of some symbolic designs associated with textiles and garments. He said that although the Adinkra cloth had been associated with mourning for many years it is now worn at any time and not restricted to periods of grief. It is however, interestingly used to show an attitude or a mood. He also mentioned that a warrior's shirt made of hand-loomed cotton fabric was found in a gallery in Ghana. And that garment possessed magical symbols that were in words and ink. They were said to be verses from the Koran, which had power enough to turn aside arrows and blunt bullets aimed at the wearer. A similar garment which combines leather amulets and written script was also collected in 1889 from Senegal. Dendel (1975) asserted that ink has long been a venerated substance in Africa because it is used in Koranic schools to write sacred verses on wooden slates and the ink then washed and used for medicine. The various designs carry meanings in African cultures from which they are borrowed. Symbolism in Africa is therefore not limited to sculpture alone but it is also used in textiles and garments. Symbolism in garments most often serve as protective objects to the individual who is using it.

A symbolic art form commonly produced among many Africans especially in the West African sub-region is the equestrian rider. Cole (1984) treats this topic in some details. The main points are however, discussed here. The figure mostly prevails among the sculpture producing people of Africa. The theme of riding a quadruped, whether leopard or lion, elephant, buffalo, or horse has a broader distribution because of the importance of elevation and domination as principles characterizing African leaders. The identity of the rider depicted is varied. In many cases, he is considered a

spirit, a deity, or a legendary ancestor. Some are actual ancestors, while others are feared and respected alien leaders from the 'North' where horse originally came from. Rider sculptures may commemorate elite hunters, warriors, and/or chiefs. Only a small number can be documented as historical personages. Equestrians appear on the doors of kings and chiefs of the Senuso and Yoruba ethnic groups. They symbolise their prestige, wealth and patronage. Riders adorned rulers' staffs and scepters too. The majority of rider sculptures were housed in shrines, where they reflected the powers and leadership traits attributed to spirits and deities. Sculptures represented deities. They also often depicted worshipers and members of the community gathered to pay respect to the gods through worship and sacrifice. The forms and materials vary considerably and the most common sculptural medium is wood, then bronzes, followed by wrought iron, terra cotta and unfired clay. Cole (1984) further observed that:

Equestrian figures are favoured subjects in the large cumbersome Epa - Elefon mask danced in the Ekiti region where the rider is often identified as the culture hero and warrior jagunjugun. He is a chief equipped for battle, sometimes with retainers ideologically called (that is depicted far smaller), at his side.

Cole (1984) also considers equestrian gold weights of the Akan and Senuso rider as both being symbolic statements. The variations in the equestrian rider among the ethnic groups of Africa also reflect the philosophy and degree of wisdom in African traditions which, of course, cannot be separated from their symbolic art forms. He further stated that horses were well known among the Yoruba from 18th and 19th centuries before most surviving Yoruba sculptures were made. According to Cole

equestrian images appear in many contexts. These include shrine statuary mask structures, house posts and doors of palaces and shrines and divination objects, among others. Their meanings also vary although the power of leaders is always implicit, whether divine or temporal. The art is true representation of African philosophy because the equestrian stresses wisdom, wealth, military power, general superiority or any other activities of interest to the African. That of the Akan, he said, is however different and rather less cosmic order than the Senufor rider. Cole further explains that the proverbs associated with Akan equestrians stress wisdom, wealth, military power, and general superiority of leaders. That is an example of a symbol that is presented in different contexts among different ethnic groups but with the theme being the same. It is of a wider distribution in Africa. It is the symbolic art form which appears to be capable of representing every aspect of human activities; for instance, rider sculptures may commemorate elite hunters, warriors, and or chiefs. The people of the Gonja Traditional Area popularly known as 'Yagbon', present the equestrian rider as a chief on a horseback holding a spear in hand. This symbolises the founder of the Gonja Kingdom-Yagbonwura Nde-Wura Jakpa Sumaila. Equestrian rider is also one of the traditional art forms that have experienced changes through the influence of the Western cultures. It appears to be the most popular theme among the traditional African symbolic forms.

The African symbolic art forms make her culturally distinct from other cultures, especially the features of African sculptures which have intrigued scholars. First, that the head is commonly represented as disproportionately large. For a long time it was thought to be child characteristic. Research however, proved that the proportions are deliberately established at the outset and certainly not due to lack of skills. Willet (1989) explains this further as follows "...the large torso, the big head, and the flexed

disproportionately small legs are definitely infantile in character. Now ... the statue presents both an infantile and ancestral aspects. While the fact argues that the statues represent age, the ancestors, and their august powers in their descendants' affairs, they also recognise the infantile qualities of the figures themselves". He explains that these contradictory qualities imply cosmological and theological explanations.

African symbolic art forms should, therefore, no more be thought of as child art or primitive and un-developed. Another feature of African symbolism is that some religious art forms are symbolic representations that are mostly abstracted with the characteristics of strange creatures such as monsters, animals; making them fearful and strange in order to lure believers into having more reverence for the artefacts and strengthening their religious beliefs.

By means of restrictions, taboos and banishments placed on certain persons from seeing some art forms, a degree of importance is created for the art forms or persons using them. Willet (1989) confirms the above custom as follows:

Some shrine figures are not seen by devotees, only by the priests of the cult. In contrast chief Obaloran, who is in charge of the Orisha lko cult in Ife, is not permitted to see the terra cotta sculpture which is used in the festival, though other worshippers may ...Horton reports the case of the shrine of the head of the village heroes of Soku, where even the priest does not see the cult object, which is hidden behind a screen of skulls of sacrificed animals. Very commonly only membership of masked societies is restricted to one sex. Around the plateau of northern Nigeria there are several small

groups of people whose womenfolk are forbidden to see the mask used by the men.

Among the Vagla and Tampulinsi ethnic settlers in Bole Traditional Area in the northern region of Ghana, similar masks can be found with similar taboos. Before the mask appears, whether during the day or at night, women and children are locked up in rooms for long hours to prevent them from seeing the masquerades. Willet (1989) opines that it is important not to deceive ourselves into believing that we can understand the intention of an African sculptor simply by looking at his work. He emphasises on studies based on direct observation in the field. Willet states how studies in the field have frequently disproved generalisations formulated by scholars in their museums and studies, and in doing so have sometimes produced new concepts.

A common feature of symbolism in African arts is the mask. Masks play very vital roles among the various ethnic groups. Their functions are varied but their common functions include funeral performance, initiation ceremonies, those for religious purposes, entertainments and agriculture. The Dogon, a farming community in north-east Mali for instance, are perhaps better known for their stylized and abstract figures and masks. Rita and Grunwald (1990) describe how the Dogon masks are used by the men's association of the Awa society. The uses include rituals for the passage of the dead into the supernatural realm, the masks are also brought out at funerals and the commemorative ceremonies of two or three years after death, at the rites of renewal which also take place every sixty years.

Adjei (1992) opines that the main purpose of artwork in the traditional society is religious and that, the majority of them are instrumental and in the performance of

ritual ceremonies. Masks play a vital role in making rituals more efficacious. They are used in sacrifices, libation and for spiritual contact; they act as a medium between the priests, chief, society and the spiritual world. Adjei further observed that such works of art are based on the general understanding of tradition and customs of a particular society and that they illustrate the life of the society in the form of symbolic designs, which are a combination of images and ideas. These are either abstraction or representational. Adjei (1992) quotes Robins and Nooter as saying:

Any object of African art, regardless of its degree of authenticity or aesthetic excellence is a carrier of significant cultural meaning. In the absence of written historical records, a collection of African art, like a library, constitutes a principal source of cultural information conveyed through symbols.

Apart from the useful function of documentation, African symbolic arts serve as means of summarizing information as well as forms of communication. The researcher's emphasis here is the ritual importance of the masks as symbolic art forms.

The African culture is built on the philosophy of her people. This philosophy is largely made up of the Oral traditions. The literature also contains a list of proverbs that are thought of in concrete forms. Symbolic art forms are therefore created from many of these proverbs which are forms of social commentaries. These proverbs that are translated into symbolic art forms are seen mostly in sculptural and textile products. The commonest are the stool and the adinkra symbols as well as the very impressive linguist stick symbols of the Akans in Ghana. Some of these have been documented by renowned Ghanaian artists like Ablade Glover of the College of Art in

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Five hundred new versions of the traditional adinkra motives have been documented by Owusu-Ansah (1994). A large number of these symbols have proverbial background. Some of which are as follows:

- i. If you know how to pull, pull out your own grey hair. (wo nim tua, tu wo' dwene) When it boils over and over again, it becomes cool again. (ehuru, hur a, ebedwo) When the crested porcupine is going to porcupine country, he does not carry with him what he will eat. (Kɔ́tɔ́kɔ́ rekɔ́ kɔ́tɔ́kɔ́ a, ɔ́mpe adidide)

The ability to translate the rich proverbs into symbolic and concrete art forms also makes the symbolism of African art forms unique due to their functional qualities.

2.4 Functions of Ghanaian Symbolic Arts

The functions of Ghanaian symbolic arts are not different from those of Africa in general. The only differences that at times exist are due to the little variations in culture among the various ethnic groups as a result of environmental differences. The themes remain the same with slight philosophical differences. It is the similarities that are worth mentioning here. Styles, purposes and methods of production may also be different. The use of material may as well vary from place to place.

According to Nunoo (1970), the Nankanse, Kassena and Builsa of the Upper East who use the flute as a means of signaling. Similar flutes are said to exist among the Dagombas of northern region called *wibe*. The East Dagomba call it *yibe*. In the 1960s the Vagla ethnic group of Sawla in the Bole Traditional Area also used a flute called '*limbiri*' to stop "fighting" between two clans of the village. Nunoo asserts that

whistles are believed to bear religious importance among the Nankanse. The flute for the Vagla ethnic group of the Bole Traditional area also has the same religious importance and the people pay reverence to the *lumbiri* (the symbolic flute's) sound whenever they hear it.

Another symbolic form of importance mentioned by Nunoo is the personal shrines known as *yini*. It can either be a tree, a stone, a pot, a wooden whistle or anything erected. This is known as *Witzi* (personal god) among the Vaglas, and *Akilbi* (personal god) among the Gonjas of the Bole Traditional area. The idea of personal shrine is as a result of the belief in each person choosing his or her own fate before birth in the presence of God, as Nunoo explains.

Rita and Grunwald (1990) mention three ethnic groups living in the Cercle de Bondougou, an administrative unit of Cote d'Ivoire, and in neighbouring West Central Ghana. They are the Nafana, Kulango and Degha (sometimes called Mo). The Degha (Mo) are from Northern Ghana. According to Rita Grunwald, the Nafana are said to be the likely originators of the Bedu mask although it has been quickly and completely adopted by the Kulango and Degha. The authors mention Bravmann (1974, 83) as having listed both Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana as possible sources for one Bedu mask. They also mention Williams (1968, 19) for saying that the masquerade once existed in Ghana but it is no longer found. The mask is said to emerge at ceremonies associated with death of an elder, and that their primary appearances are nightly as part of a four-week-long festival that occurs during part of November and December. The masquerade is said to visit the sick before it goes to a central clearing to perform. Its language is ~~restricted~~ to the Bedu appearances. It can therefore be guessed that one of the purposes of the Bedu mask is for healing the sick. That was a

functional art form which previously existed among the Degha (Mo) of Ghana. Mention is also made of the Islamic mask called 'Do' which is owned by members of the Ulama and the Ligbi of Ghana, originated from the Dyula of Cote d' Ivoire and are made to perform during certain religious occasions, such as Ramadan; at marriage ceremonies; at the funeral rites of members and other Muslims if requested by their families and at political gatherings. According to the authors, the appearance of masquerades is determined by the needs of the Muslim community. Due to the strong connection, the non-Muslims see no benefit they could derive by adopting the masks for their own use. This therefore suggests that indigenous Africans, and more so, indigenous Ghanaians do not go in for art forms, which will not function for them.

Symbolism in Ghanaian arts is not limited to only sculpture or the terra cotta art forms mentioned above. It involves other areas of visual arts like textiles and painting/drawing (picture making). The adinkra cloth symbols are examples of Akan symbols. The cloth is a mourning cloth very rich in symbols; and especially, proverbial symbols. New versions of these symbols have been developed over the years and documented by Owusu-Ansah (1994). This serves as evidence of documentation in the southern sector of the country. His historical account of the symbols also tells us that the symbols have theological and philosophical basis. He asserted that it is in consonance with the ways in which ideas about many art forms have been expressed by Ghanaians among whom this art is now predominant. Owusu-Ansah (1994) further observes that the adinkra symbols for instance, manifest a number of the proverbs and the verbal arts of Ghanaians, which are also, epitomes of specific values or sanctions.

It can then be said that the multiple roles played by the Adinkra symbols make the visual art forms unique in African symbolism; and the cultural values carried by the proverbs which have been converted into symbols have no cultural equivalence in the Western cultures.

Anaba (1995) is concerned about the decline in the use of visual symbols in the Upper East Region of the Northern Sector of Ghana. In the view of Anaba, visual symbols are an integral part of environmental art in the Upper east region and yet their use is steadily declining. As such, Anaba documented a few of these visual art symbols such as their wall symbols. It is also important to note that the symbolisms are of socio-cultural importance in the lives of the people. They are a means of cultural integration and realization of oneness as a nation.

To sum up the historical overview of symbolism of art forms in Europe, Africa and Ghana, all indications show that symbolism appeared in different forms in Europe and Africa. Whereas people organized symbolic movements in Europe, symbolism was a sort of practice in Africa. It was a way of life. Symbolic art is even still functional in present day Africa. It is a reflection of African traditional values, wisdom and philosophy.

2.5 Oral Traditions in Ghana

At Bonwire (6th January, 2003), the symbolic names and meaning were provided for Kente and Adinkra cloths:

Symbolic name	Meaning/Description	Function
Oyokoman	The Oyoko kingdom	Restricted to the use of the Asantehene only
Fatia fata Nkrumah	Fatia fits Nkrumah	In honour of the late President of the first republic of Ghana - the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah
Obregu yeya	It is painful to toil in vain. It also has a story related to the original designer's painful experience. (The motif is made up of stool symbol with five strips of lines above and below the stool symbol. Originally designed by a man called Osei Kweku)	Used for prestigious purpose, festivals and other occasions
Kente Ayie ntoma	Kente cloth meant for funerals. Made up of black and white strip.	Used for funeral

The functions of the following cloths were not stated:

1. Adwen asa (ideas are finished). All the various kente designs are combined in designing the cloth.
2. Zhene aforo suhyrn (the chief has boarded a ship).
3. Edwini si edwini (Designs are developed from designs). Symbolically means, we get knowledge out of experience.

Major (ret) Tweneboah-Kodua, the curator of the Ghana Arm Forces Museum in Kumasi was interviewed on 15th November 2002. According to him, the British were the original creators of the symbols for Ghana Arm Forces. He mentioned the new symbolic ranks created for the identification of positions or levels in the arm forces. They include sergeant-major, command sergeant-major and Forces sergeant-major. These are under the ranks in the colonial era. The Forces sergeant-major is the most senior and is of most importance in the Arm Forces.

Forces Ranks in Ascending Order:

1. Private
2. Lance-corporal
3. Corporal
4. Sergeant
5. Staff Sergeant
6. Warrant Officer class two (W.O.2)
7. Warrant Officer class one (W.O.1)

The link between the forces ranks and the thesis topic is that symbolic badges have been attached to the ranks and their symbolism appear to have been originated from Africa.

I. Some Important Military Symbols

1. Coconut tree with red and black background:

Formation sign of Headquarters of the West Africa command. Its literal meaning is that the coconut does not die easily and it symbolically means that the West African command does not give up easily (in other words, they do not surrender easily).

2. Badge with the crown and the cross:
A symbol for the Royal Service. This symbolically means they are at the service of the British authority and God.
3. (a) A spider: This symbol stands for first Brigade, Southern Command. It also symbolizes how skilful and wise the West African Command is at fighting.
(b) A spear through a pad: stands for second Brigade, Northern Command – symbolically means that the members carried loads while fighting whenever the Ghana army was fighting for Britain.
4. Badges- arm flag (crossed Worsted) symbolizes the flag bearers.
5. Badges Arm in Wreath Worsted; an oval encloses a Wreath and the letters MG – the symbol of group operating the machine gun.
6. Badges arm worsted wheels: wheel encircled - the symbol for those in charge of transport.
7. Badges Proficiency E. Worsted: A black 'E', printed and enclosed with broad black circle and an outer narrow red area of empty background of a red piece of fabric used for the badge – the symbol for the communication group.
8. Badges Arm Drum Worsted: a drawing of a drum and its sticks – symbolizes handsmen.
9. Badges Arm Hatchets crossed: crossed hatchets drawn on a red background. – symbolizes group that fought with hatchets.
10. Badges Arm Worsted: two swords crossed. Symbol crocheted with white and red threads onto a brown piece of fabric. Red thread used for their handles and white for the sword blades) – symbolizes the group who fought with swords.

11. Badges Arm Hammers and Pincers worsted: Hammer and Pincers are drawn crossing each other – symbolizes the fitters who service the ammunitions used by the army.
12. 1 Infantry Battalion: A silhouette of a soldier standing on a dragon and seizing it by the head and tail. With the inscription, **READY AND WILLING SURE TO DELIVER** surrounding the picture within a square piece of fabric – signifying their preparedness to face direct danger.
13. 5 infantry Battalion: The head of a lion on a rectangular fabric. With the inscription, **Mighty five we are Dependable**-It symbolizes that their strength can be likened to that of a lion in the jungle.
14. 6 Infantry Battalion: Symbol of bow and arrow in a six-sided geometric figure (sexagon) enclosed by a 'U'-shaped crest. '6' is inscribed above the bow and arrow with a black background and the inscription: **DISCIPLINE, WE CAN, SUCCESS.**
Probably, this group also fought with bows and arrows.
15. Airborne Force (ABF): The wing of an eagle – Symbolically meaning: 'Who dares wins'.
16. 64 Infantry Regiment: The symbol is made up of an eagle landing or taking off, two crossed raffles, five intersecting circles in a crest of 'U' shaped with "64" printed above the eagle. The symbolic meaning is, 'Honour in sacrifice'.
17. The military Academy and training schools (MATS): A 'U' shaped crest made up of black and white squares and a knife in the center – symbolizes that the trainees are going to be companions to the knife. It also symbolizes that people of both the black and white races are trained by the academy.

18. The Jungle Warfare School (JWS): The head of a roaring tiger is their symbol – symbolising that they are as effective in the jungle as the tiger.

The above primary source information about the symbolism of the Ghana Arm Forces proves that African symbolism was successfully adapted by our colonial masters in motivating or inspiring our fore-fathers to fight for them. This was probably because our colonial masters found the effective role symbolism played in the life of the African, and especially the Ghanaian.

The researcher contacted the Centre for National Culture in Tamale for data in order to find out the Cultural links that exist between the people of the Bolc traditional area and the three other ruling tribes of Northern Ghana (Dagombas, Nanumbas and Mamprusis) with regard to symbolic art presentation; since these four cultures appear similar in the region.

II. The Dagomba and Gonja Ethnic groups in the Northern Region.

Mr. Anaba Anyelom, the Deputy Director for the Centre for National Culture in Tamale, Northern Region gave the following information on some symbolic art forms at the Centre and certain symbolisms which prevail among the Dagombas, the close neighbours of the Gonjas in the north.

According Anaba, the lion is the symbol of the Dagomba kingdom. The arm holding a spear in the hand is the symbol for the Gonjas, the elephant is for the Mamprusi and the leopard for the Nanum kingdom. In plate 1, a man on horseback holding leaves symbolizes peace among the various ethnic groups in the region. Anaba also said that the Dagombas are of the view that the lion is the king of the forest.



Plate 1. The symbol of peace: *A man on horseback with green leaf in his hand*

It therefore implies that the paramount chief is the king of the kingdom since it is the paramount chief that uses it on his car and in his palace.

According to Anyelom, the symbols are found on the umbrella tops of the kings and the use of the symbols is restricted to only the kings. These symbols are used during durbars, festivals and sometimes, they are found on the kings' cars as flags. The above symbols can be found in mosaic on a short wall near the Centre for National Culture building designed by Dr. Alhaji Yakubu S. Peligah.

The symbols can also be found at the premises of the Northern Regional House of Chiefs. Plates 2(a - d) show the various symbols of the four kingdoms of the Northern Region of Ghana.



Plate 2a. The lion symbol of the Dagomba kingdom.



Plate 2b. The arm and spear symbol of the Gonja kingdom.



Plate 2c. The Elephant Symbol of the Mamprusi Kingdom.

A mosaic executed on a short wall at the Centre for National Culture in Tamale by Alhaji S. Y. Peligah.



Plate 2d The Leopard Symbol of the Nanum Kingdom.

A mosaic executed on a short wall at the Centre for National Culture in Tamale by Alhaji S. Y. Peligah.

Plate 19 shows a prominent chief in the Bole traditional area wearing a tall red hat, a symbol of highest authority among all the four main ethnic groups in the Northern Region of Ghana. The hat also symbolises prestige among the ethnic groups. The special tall hat is called *mulfe* in Dagbani and *mulfa* in the Gonja dialect. It is therefore restricted to the use of very important chiefs in the kingdoms.

The skin: Among the Dagombas, any ordinary chief sits on the cow skin; the lion's skin is however, restricted to the use of the Yaa-naa only (the paramount chief of the Dagombas at Yendi); in other words, the Dagomba king. Anyelom explained that some of the symbols of authority are totems.

III Oral Traditions from the Bole Traditional Area

Donkulmu Kotobiri, a traditional cloth weaver was interviewed at Mankuma, the burial place for all paramount Chiefs of the Gonja Traditional Area (Yagbon). Kotobiri said the images of animals and insects are used for the Gonja traditional wall designs. These images include snakes, crocodiles, tortoise, spider and scorpion. The patterns of the python (a snake) are sometimes designed on the wall. This symbolically means that nothing of the house will fade, that is, it will never lose stability no matter the numerous problems it might face. In literal terms, the snake never loses its design no matter how often it is beaten by rain. Another tradition of symbolic significance is the use of a white traditionally woven cloth and a traditionally woven grey mat for burial and birth rituals. The two art forms symbolize purity of the dead person or baby for whom the art form is being used. They are used as symbol of good wishes to the person. They are some expression of purity of the dead person to the ancestors ~~of~~ wishes of a life of purity and welcome to the newly born baby to the world.

Functions of Some Traditionally Woven Cloth of the Gonja Traditional Area

Plates 3a -3c are some of the traditional cloths of the Gonjas discussed by Donkulmu Kotobiri at Mankoma. Plates 3a and 3b are the indigenous traditional cloths, while those at plate 3c are the modern ones. The modern ones are Buipe be nkilia, Kichantie, Angelina, Borewonche and Mankpalawoso. They are all used for prestige purposes. Kotobiri explained the functions of the traditional clothes as follows:

Kutugfaa, Kelenkelen, Kitimitikoya and Ahiafo are all cloths acquired for prestige purposes. Kutugfaa is particularly owned by important personalities. Kelenkelen, plate 3b, is at times woven under request by the husband of a newly married couple or by an individual to pacify his/her personal god. That is because the weaving of it involves thin strips of line pattern which require some high degree of patience. It is as well very expensive. Kitimitikoya is owned by neat wealthy women who are capable of keeping the cloth neat. Ahiafo is a cloth for the poor. The name 'ahiafo' is an adopted name from the Akan language. This again reflects the influence of the Asante culture through trade and peaceful co-existence between people of the south and the north.



Plate 3a Kutugfaa



Plate 3b Kelenkelen

The above names are associated with the social classes of the people who use the cloths and also, the nature and appearances of the cloths but they have no symbolic meanings as such. For instance, the name 'Ahiafo' indicates that the cloth is commonly used by people of the poor class.

2.6 SUMMARY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SYMBOLISM TO AFRICAN WISDOM AND PHILOSOPHY, WITH REFERENCE TO FUNCTIONS AND VALUES.

African symbolic arts fulfil a ritual function. Africans have attached so much importance to their dead chiefs such that they bury them with terra cotta heads and other art forms – these arts are functional and symbolic. Traditional Africans did not produce art for art's sake. African sculpture is used for magico-religious purposes and the symbols make African art forms alive and communicative. Their symbolism sometimes represents natural phenomenon according to the imaginations or philosophical interpretations or meaning attached to the work.

The symbolic interpretation and the extent of belief attached to the artefact determine the value and function of it.

The various designs carry meanings in African cultures from which they are borrowed. Equestrian (riders) sculptures may commemorate elite hunters, warriors and or chiefs. The variation in the equestrian rider among the ethnic groups of Africa also reflects the philosophy and degree of Wisdom in African traditions.

The equestrian stresses wisdom, wealth, military power, general superiority of leaders or any other activities of interest to the African. Restrictions are placed on certain African symbolic art forms. The intention of an African sculptor cannot be understood simply by looking at his work: studies must be done based on direct observation in the field. Art works in the traditional society illustrate the life of the society in the form of symbolic designs, which are a combination of images and ideas; they are either abstract or representational.

The functions for Ghanaian symbolic Arts are not different from those of Africa in general. The themes remain the same with philosophical differences. Symbols also serve as means of cultural integration and realization of the oneness as a nation. Ghanaians think and create their symbols in terms of both direct representational forms and abstract forms to embrace all aspect of human endeavour.

In conclusion, the literature review has proved that although much has been documented on African art and symbolism almost nothing has been done about it in the Bole Traditional Area- the area of study.

The purpose of the literature review on Ghana and Africa in general is to enable the researcher compare any similarities or differences that may exist in the research data of the area of study and the rest of Africa in general.

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CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Methodology

The descriptive and survey methods were chosen for this thesis by the researcher after seriously considering the nature of the research. Descriptive research involves the collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions, prevailing practices, beliefs, attitudes, on-going processes. The central purpose of descriptive research is discovery of meaning. The researcher therefore used this method to discover meanings to the traditional symbols. There are three main methods of presenting descriptive researches, and they are as follows:

1. General description
2. Analysis
3. Classification

The three methods have therefore been used in the researcher's presentation. The presentation is therefore in the form of a verbal description, characterised by the use of non-quantitative data. Statements are made based on facts that can be confirmed by competent authorities or observers as facts. Verbal facts are used because the researcher is interested mainly in indicating the general nature of situations. Expressing complex conditions in quantitative form is inconvenient and unnecessary here. Although a few figures have been quoted in certain cases, the bulk of the description is verbal. The bulk of the research and most of the basic data is therefore verbal. The descriptive survey method was also adopted because it gives room for analysis, synthesising as well as allow simple description and explanation of the data. Analysis, in research is the process by which we try to uncover what is beneath the surface of a particular state of affairs. It is through analysis that we can find answers to research questions like:

- 1 What relationships between the various variables are responsible for creating the state of affairs, as we perceive them?
- 2 What are the relevant and significant aspects that will help to solve the research problem on hand?
- 3 \What are the components of the state of affairs that we perceive?
- 4 What is the form, the integrated structure and the quantitative characterization of those components?

Simply put, analysis helps the researcher to determine what is essential or dominant in any complex mixture of factors. The real objective of analysis is an explanation of the system as a whole. The researcher similarly aims at explaining the symbolism of the art forms as a whole. The following five types of analysis were therefore made:

- (i) General aspects
- (ii) Components
- (iii) Structure
- (iv) Relationships and
- (v) Trends

The classification aspect of descriptive research has been catered for in the thesis as the symbols and art forms have been categorized into visual art forms used for religious ceremonies, those used for chiefs/traditional heads and priests/their palaces and shrines respectively and visual arts for prestige purposes. These were further categorized into subject areas like Sculpture, Basketry products, Paintings/Drawings and Leather products, Textiles products and Pottery products.

3.1 SURVEY

Survey involves the following research instruments used. These were mail (postal) questionnaire and personal interviews conducted. Although there are three types of survey research methods the mail questionnaire and the personal interviews were found more convenient and within the means of the researcher. The researcher therefore used those two means to collect his data by asking people who have experienced and practiced the culture enough to be able to supply authentic information on the art forms and their symbolisms.

3.1.1 Use of Mail Questionnaire

The mail questionnaire was used to support the interviews because it reduces biasing errors that might result from the personal characteristics of interviewers and variability in their skills. The assurance of anonymity with mail questionnaires is especially helpful when the survey deals with sensitive issues. Mail questions demand a considered (rather than an immediate) answer. Some of the answers required consulting personal documents or other people. It was therefore adopted to elicit higher response rate; for, ample time was allowed to give room for consultation. The researcher went from house to house and presented them personally to the respondents.

3.1.2 Use of Interview

The interview was also used after considering the high rate of illiteracy in the population. There are more illiterates in the sample population than the number of literates. Apart from the above reasons the researcher also felt that the interview would also serve as a cross check of the authenticity of the responses that may be made by the literate population through the questionnaires.

3.2 The Population

Population in research refers to all elements in a well-defined collection or set of values. In other words, all the individual members that makes up a specially identified group that is bound together for a common purpose make up a population. Invariably, a targeted group or specially identified people that could be used in the process of collecting data for the purpose of research may also be termed as a population. All the ethnic groups of the Bole Traditional Area, for instance, put together make up the population of the area. The estimated population of the area from the 2000 population census is 110,250. In a research of this kind, however, it was more convenient to work with the sample population since time was limited. The sample population was therefore selected by the researcher and used in the research.

The sample population, which was a representation of the people of the Bole traditional area made of elderly of 50 years and above, clan heads, traditional priests, chiefs, traditional artists or ordinary adult citizens representing indigenous ethnic groups of the area were selected by the researcher to answer the questionnaire and for interviewing.

3.2.1 The Population Sample

Mkpa (1997) defines sample as any subject of values from a population. Amenuke (1997) also defines sampling as, "...a method used in selecting a small part of a whole population for research in such a way that the characteristics of each unit in the sample approximate the broad characteristic inherent in the total population"

In effect, sample is a fraction or part of the population (the set of values) selected by the researcher to effectively represent the whole population or set of values. In the case of the population of the Bole Traditional Area, one clan from each of the ethnic

groups in the traditional area constitute a sample of clans in the Bole Traditional Area, in this research, however, the sample population is 25% of each of the estimated populations of the craftsmen and senior citizens of the five ethnic groups of the traditional area. This gives a total of 35 people. About 70% of this population are however illiterates. Seventy per cent (70%) of the findings were therefore in the form of interviews and the remaining 30% were obtained through the use of questionnaires. Much of the research therefore depended more on the personal interviews than the questionnaires. More interviews were therefore conducted than the number of questionnaires distributed. Out of 23 copies of the questionnaires distributed 21 copies were retrieved and 18 out of the 21 retrieved were answered by the respondents. The rest were not answered. Twenty-seven interviews were also conducted involving 36 respondents.

3.2.2 Stratified Sampling

Sampling methods are many and varied and a sampling method may be chosen depending on the nature of the population and the type of research being undertaken. After serious consideration the researcher chose the stratified sampling method to suit his population. This type of sampling technique has been used because the population of Bole Traditional Area is made up of five main ethnic groups with common traditions. These are made up of definite strata but each stratum is different and the units in each stratum are homogenous. This type of population requires simple stratified sampling. The identified groups in the traditional area are the Gonjas, Vaglas, Nsafalba, Nchorba and the Batige/Walas. The population is made up of the definite ethnic group but each ethnic group is different and the members (units in each group- stratum) are homogeneous. According to Nkpa (1997) stratified sampling aims at ensuring proportionate representation of these sub-groups in the sample. He further

said that the stratified sampling procedure divides the population into homogeneous sub-groups containing members who share common characteristics. The simple stratified sampling had been adopted by the researcher with the aim of making his population more represented because each stratified group is adequately represented, thus, making the sample more valid.

3.2.3 Justification of Sample

The target population was the traditional craftsmen and senior citizens of the traditional area. Table 1 illustrates how the sampling was done to facilitate selection.

Table 1. A Strata of Five Ethnic Groups in the Bole Traditional Area

Ethnic Group	Stratum	Estimated population of craftsmen and senior citizens	Sample	Sampling Technique
Gonjas	1	48	12	25% each randomly selected.
Vaglas	2	30	8	
Nsafalba	3	25	6	
Batige/Wala	4	20	5	
Nchorba	5	15	4	
	Total	140	35	

Note: 'Senior citizen' is limited here to chiefs, priests and elders of about 50 years and above.

The above table indicates that the area of research (Bole Traditional Area) which consists of five strata (sets of identified groups of people) is made up of five identified ethnic groups. These are Gonjas-stratum 1, Vaglas-stratum2, Nsafalba-stratum 3, Batige/Wala-stratum 4 and Nchorba-stratum5.

The estimated population of craftsmen and senior citizens for the various ethnic groups or strata beginning from 1 to 5 are 48, 30, 25, 20 and 15 respectively. The sampling technique used is 25% each randomly selected. Considering the relative size of each ethnic group, the following sampling figures were arrived at for each ethnic group: 12 sample for Gonjas, 8 for Vaglas, 6 for Nsafalba, 5 for Batige/Wala and 4 for Nchorba. The total estimated population is 140 craftsmen and citizens whilst the sample population is 35. By this method, each ethnic group was proportionally and fairly represented.

3.3 Conducting Research in Chronological Order

This section of the report gives a clear outline of how the research was conducted in chronological order. This involves the time schedules of all the activities or processes the researcher undertook in the course of the research from the beginning to the end. In other words, it is a summary of the entire research activities, systematically arranged. For the sake of clarification and convenience the researcher presents this section in detail description.

3.4 Data Collection

As soon as the researcher defended his synopsis in July 2002, he immediately started gathering data on related literature to the topic. While in this data gathering process he also conducted random preliminary interviews whenever he went to the area of study. That was also to assess the feasibility of the research. He also made more personal observations during those periods. The various university campuses and their libraries were visited in search of related literature.

3.4.1 Library Research Conducted

From July 2002 onwards, frequent visits were made to the KNUST library and lots of books were read from the undergraduates' section, the Ghana Collection Section, the reference section and the ground floor. The researcher also had a few browses on related literature from the library's Internet café. The libraries of the College of Art and that of the Post Graduate library of the Art Education department were also intensively used. Lots of useful textbooks, periodicals, magazines, newspapers as well as theses of the past students were read and some useful materials on the research were extracted from them. The library of the University College of Education of Winneba, Kumasi Campus was also visited on 30th October, 2002 and a few textbooks that had related literature were read and material extracted. By December 2002 the researcher was able to submit part of his chapter two for vetting.

Chapter one was also submitted for proof-reading in January 2003. On 27th January, 2003 libraries in Tamale were also visited. At the Tamale Regional library very few textbooks on art could be found. However, some material was got from the library. On 29th January 2003, the researcher visited a unique and expensive library at the Tamale Institute of Cross-cultural Studies. Useful material was extracted from a few textbooks in the library. At Tamale Teacher Training College on the same day, the researcher browsed through a few papers and some periodicals but had no related literature from that library. At the Senior House Master's personal library, however, some useful material was got from his computer, with the reference as: Microsoft Encarta Encyclopaedia 1999. At various points in time, the personal libraries of some individual friends were visited, but much could not be got from them. The researcher also got some materials from his personal library. In spite of the substantial literature stored by the researcher, he continued his visits to the KNUST

library from time to time browsing through newspapers, magazines and other periodicals in anticipation of the latest relevant literature as he proceeded with the review.

3.4.2 Museum, Archival and Gallery Research

The researcher visited the Ghana Arm Forces Museum and Archives of Kumasi on November 8, 2002 and had an interview with the curator, Major (rtd) Tweneboah-Kodua. There were lots of things of symbolic value in the archives which included captured guns and caps from the enemies of the British during the Wars of the colonial days. The researcher asked many questions on the symbolic badges that were exhibited in glass cages. On his second visit on November 15, 2002, he took snapshots of the badges in the glass cages and also had a browse through one of their textbooks, which dealt with the various ranks of the Ghana Arm Forces. However, the pictures taken failed to be registered at the development stage.

On 29th November, 2002 the researcher visited the archives of the Northern Regional House of Chiefs and took pictures of the paramountcy symbols. He also had the opportunity of collecting a copy of some photocopied pages of an unpublished research paper on the symbolism of certain totems among the northern kingdoms. The title of this paper is, 'Conservation International - Ghana. He also had short interview with Mr. J. S. Babina, the Registrar for the Northern Regional House of Chiefs; and some primary data was gathered from him. Discussions Centred on the symbolic importance of the various symbols found in the hall (meeting room) of the House of chiefs. Others contacted included Alhaji Naa Abubakar Von Salifu, Director of the Centre for National Culture, Tamale and Mr. Anaba Anyelom (Deputy Director of the Centre for National Culture, Tamale. Other places visited in Tamale for data

were the Regional archives and the Statistical Services. Data on population was also collected from the Population Department which shared the same premises with the Statistical Services.

3.4.3 Pre-testing of Questionnaire and Interview Questions

From late March to early April, the interview questions and research questionnaire were pre-tested and restructured. Pre-testing was done in Tamale and Bole. The researcher chose these centres because the two urban centres were the places where the targeted literate population could be found and more adequately presented. In February 2003, three copies of the questionnaire for pre-testing were also distributed in Bole on 3rd march, 2003. In all, ten copies were distributed. Two of them were retrieved in Bole and one in Tamale, after three weeks had elapsed. The reasons for the poor response were that, the questions were too many and the respondents were officers who either went on treks after collecting the questionnaires or were so occupied that they never had time to attempt answering the questionnaires. From the retrieved questionnaires the researcher deduced that the structure for the questionnaire was also a little confusing to the respondents. The questionnaire was therefore re-structured.

3.4.4 Conducting of Interviews and Administration of Questionnaires

The conducting of actual interviews and the administration of questionnaires were in two phases. The first phase was two weeks in May 2003, that is, from 14th May to 30th May. The second was from 15th to 24th June 2003. Twelve towns and villages were visited covering the length and breadth of the traditional area in cognisance of the five dialects of the traditional set-up. Appendix F shows the researcher's route during his research in the traditional area.

The places were:

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Sawla | 7. Tuna |
| 2. Bole | 8. Kong (Kom) |
| 3. Jentilpe | 9. Soma |
| 4. Mankuma | 10. Sanyeri |
| 5. 'Gilankon | 11. Seripe |
| 6. Nakwabe | 12. Mandari |

In each of the villages, from one to about three of the five dialects featured and persons interviewed were selected based on the dominant dialects in that village. Due to the low literacy rate in the traditional area the researcher embarked upon more interviews than the administration of the questionnaires. Twenty- nine interviews were conducted. Twenty- six of them were successfully taped and due to gadget failure three were not recorded on tape but were however, written down in hand. Eighteen questionnaires were successfully administered out of twenty-three distributed. Two of the distributed questionnaires could not be retrieved. Five of the retrieved questionnaires were returned unanswered. A total of sixty-one questionnaires were printed.

3.4.5 Analysing Data Collected

To facilitate the analyses of the data, the tapes used in recording the interviews were numbered and named for easy identification. These were played back, translated and transcribed into English from the various dialects. The essential points of each interview were then extracted, and re-arranged in accordance with the research objectives and their order of arrangement in the synopsis. Charts were therefore

developed from the above arrangements of the interviews and questionnaires. The charts were then analysed and interpreted basing on the results of the charts.

3.4.6 Synthesising of Results

The results were therefore presented through the descriptive report method. The results have been categorised or classified and described and backed with explanations, illustrations and pictures when found necessary. Conclusions were arrived at from the analysis and relevant suggestions made accordingly.

3.4.7 Final Typing and Finishing Processes

In order to ensure good and fast work, a computer expert was engaged to type the thesis paper and all other typing materials were supplied in advance to ensure speedy and un-hindered work.

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CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESULTS

This chapter deals with the results of the research questionnaires that were administered and the interviews conducted. The data covers four major cultural activities in the traditional area. These are the symbolic visual art forms involving religious activities or ceremonies, funeral rites, those restricted to the use of chiefs, traditional priests, clan heads, chiefs' palaces and those for the traditional shrines. The fourth cultural aspect included is the art forms of the traditional area that are acquired for the purpose of prestige. The details of each cultural activity will be spelt out to include the types of art products the symbolic visual arts were made of. In other words, the specific types of crafts under which the art forms were produced. These types are pottery, sculpture, basketry, textiles, drawing and painting products. The rest are leather and any other products that were not listed in the questionnaire and of which the respondent had to specify. A summary of the report on each cultural area is given. The philosophical implications and educational role the symbolic visual arts must play in the traditional area is also given at the end of the data.

The section concentrates on symbolic art forms used for the various cultural activities. The data from the responses deal systematically with the types of crafts and how they are used in the ceremonies, the images made in the art forms and what they stand for, their literal or direct meanings, their titles, their symbolic or metaphorical meanings and which parts of the art forms bear the symbolic meanings. As much as possible, the art forms have been described and illustrated with pictures or sketches. The following data is therefore from the respondents. The responses to the questionnaires and interviews have been summarized in the form of tables and labeled 1a, 1b, 2a, and

2b below. Each table is followed with detailed interpretation of the figures and some analysis and conclusions on the responses.

Table 1a. TABLE OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	NUMBER OF VISUAL ARTS LISTED	NUMBER OF GOOD RESPONSES	NUMBER OF FAIR RESPONSES	NUMBER OF POOR RESPONSES	TOTAL RESPONSES	% OF GOOD RESPONSES	% OF FAIR RESPONSES	% OF POOR RESPONSES	% TOTAL
A. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES/CEREMONIES									
18	21	8	3	7	18	44.4	16.7	38.9	100
B. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR FUNERAL RITES									
18	4	8	3	7	18	44.4	16.7	38.9	100
C. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR CHIEFS/TRADITIONAL HEADS & PRIESTS/THEIR PALACES AND SHRINES RESPECTIVELY									
18	7	8	3	7	18	44.4	16.7	38.9	100
D. VISUAL ARTS FOR PRESTIGE PURPOSE ONLY									
18	6	8	3	7	18	44.4	16.7	38.9	100
18	38	32	12	28	72	177.6	66.8	155.6	400

4.1 Analysis and Interpretation of the Significance of the Data Presented in the Tables

4.1.1 Tables 1a and 1b

Data presented in tables 1a and 1b for responses to the questionnaires is positive. The responses have shown a very narrow margin between the number of good responses and bad responses to the questionnaires. That is an indication that the number of literates in the area who have good knowledge of symbolic visual art is about the same number of those who know very little about these symbolic visual arts. It thus implies that many of the youth in the area who are educated cannot interpret the symbolic visual art forms of the area. Since the questionnaires were administered to the targeted literate group in the area who, however, failed to respond to the questionnaires as expected, it suggests that this group of people do not know much about the symbolic meanings of their traditional art forms which have symbolic meanings. Reasons for this lack of knowledge may include their lack of interest in the symbolic visual arts, failure of the youth to learn about these symbolic art forms from the elders who are the custodians of the art forms; and the general low level of education in the area. Another reason may be due to deliberate refusal to compromise and give true answers to the questionnaires in an attempt to keep certain information concerning the culture secret.

The responses to the questionnaires presented in the tables also indicate that 21 symbolic visual arts were mentioned by the respondents under the religious activities/ceremonies. That was quite significant. It implies that the people of the area have some appreciative number of symbolic visual art forms for their religious activities.

Only four symbolic visual arts were, however, mentioned for the funeral rites – an indication that they have very few symbolic visual arts used for their funeral rites. The implication may be that the people do not place much importance on symbolic visual arts for their funerals as they do with rituals that do not require the use of visual art forms. Another probable reason is that most of the funeral rituals do not require the use of visual art forms. They use verbal arts like libation accompanied with sacrifices of animals.

Seven symbolic visual arts are listed under chiefs/Traditional heads and Priests/their palaces and shrines, while 6 visual arts are listed for the prestigious art forms. That is an indication that the people attach almost equal importance to the symbolic visual art forms for chiefs/traditional heads and priests/their palaces and shrines as they do to those for prestigious purposes. The implication being that these aspects of their cultural activities are inter-related and they are equally valued.

4.1.2 Tables 2a and 2b

Tables 2a and 2b indicate that 27 interviews were conducted involving 36 respondents. It is also indicated that 21 symbolic visual arts were mentioned by respondents under the religious activities/ceremonies, 4 for funeral rites, 18 for chiefs/traditional heads and priests/their places and shrines; and 14 are for prestigious art forms. It implies that some of the interviews were responded to by two or more persons simultaneously in an interview. That form of interview will yield both negative and positive effects. The data provided positive effects in tables 1a and 1b and tables 2a and 2b indicate that both sides, that is, the questionnaire and the interview respondents listed ~~21~~ symbolic visual art forms for the religious activities/ceremonies and 4 visual arts for the funeral rites. Where as 7 visual arts

have been listed for the respondents of the questionnaires for chiefs/traditional heads and priests/their palaces and shrines; 18 are however given for the respondent of the interviews. There is some contrasting difference in the data here. Similarly, there is another contrasting difference in the data of the two different sets of tables regarding the data provided for the prestigious visual arts, that is, 6 and 14 of the questionnaire respondents and the interview respondent respectively.

The possible effect of two or more people being interviewed simultaneously as indicated in the data is that data that might be forgotten during the moment of an interview may be remembered by the supporting partner or team.

The possible negative effect however, is that each person in the group may be afraid to reveal vital information in the presence of others. The outcome of such interviews was that as much as some vital information was withheld by some of the respondents for fear of others, more information was also provided through the team work.

The uniformity in the data provided by the questionnaire respondents and the interview respondents for the religious activities/ceremonies and for funeral rites confirms that those visual art forms mentioned do exist in the area.

It can be observed that whereas the questionnaire respondents gave fewer numbers for the visual arts used by chiefs/traditional heads and priests/their palaces and shrines as well as for those used for prestige purposes, the respondents of the interviews listed more visual arts for them. It implies that the respondents to the interviews who are illiterates and more elderly know more about the symbolic visual art forms than the questionnaire respondents who are literates but younger and know less about the culture.

4.1.3 Summary and Conclusions on Data of Tables

Summary

Although responses to the questionnaires were positive, a large number of the literate population in the area do not know the symbolic meanings of their traditional art forms because they are young. The fact that an appreciable number of symbolic visual art forms were listed in both the questionnaire and interview responses is an indication that the area has symbolic visual art forms. More prominence is given to the religious activities and prestigious symbolic visual arts in the traditional area because they are more represented in visual art forms.

There are both disadvantages and advantages for the way the interviews were conducted, however, the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. Uniformity in some of the data provided by both questionnaire respondents and interview respondents also helped to confirm the presence of symbolic visual arts in the area. There were however differences in some other data which also confirms that the illiterate elderly had more knowledge about the symbolic visual arts than the young literates.

Conclusions

1. Deducing from the unimpressive responses of the questionnaires by the young literate population of the area, the researcher therefore concludes that if nothing is done to document the symbolism of the visual art in the area, the rich knowledge will be lost to posterity. Achieving proper documentation of the symbolism of the area will also depend on how early feature researches are conducted.

2. The research data has proved that there are symbolic visual art forms in the traditional area which can be researched into and documented for future references and educational purposes. These art forms can be developed and adapted for educational development and cultural enrichment. If properly documented, it is likely to promote art Education in the area.
3. The research data also indicates that although there are visual art forms in all the four cultural areas the people attach more importance to the religious and prestigious ones. The prestigious art forms are the arts likely to promote art education; economic and social life of the people.
4. Interviewing has proved more effective in the research conducted. This is due to the low level of education in the area which does not allow effective use of questionnaires.

Table 1.b. TABLE OF RESPONSES TO LITERAL AND SYMBOLIC MEANINGS TO QUESTIONNAIRE

VISUAL ARTS LISTED	SYMBOLIC MEANINGS KNOWN		SYMBOLIC MEANINGS UNKNOWN		LITERAL MEANINGS KNOWN		LITERAL MEANINGS UNKNOWN		% OF SYMBOLIC MEANINGS KNOWN		% OF LITERAL MEANINGS KNOWN		% OF LITERAL MEANINGS UNKNOWN		% TOTAL
A. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES/CEREMONIES															
21	16	5	16	5	76.2	23.8	76.2	23.8	76.2	23.8	200				
B. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR FUNERAL RITES															
4	4	0	4	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	200				
C. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR CHIEFS/TRADITIONAL HEADS & PRIESTS/THEIR PALACES AND SHRINES RESPECTIVELY															
7	5	2	5	2	71.4	28.6	71.4	28.6	71.4	28.6	200				
D. VISUAL ARTS FOR PRESTIGE PURPOSE ONLY															
6	0	6	0	6	0	100	0	100	0	100	200				
38	25	13	25	13	247.6	152.4	247.6	152.4	247.6	152.4	800				

Table 2a TABLE OF RESPONSES TO THE INTERVIEWS

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS	NUMBER OF VISUAL ARTS MENTIONED	NUMBER OF GOOD RESPONSES	NUMBER OF FAIR RESPONSES	NUMBER OF POOR RESPONSES	% OF GOOD RESPONSES	% OF FAIR RESPONSES	% OF POOR RESPONSES	% OF TOTAL RESPONSES
A. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES/CEREMONIES									
36	27	21	18	6	3	66.7	22.2	11.1	100
B. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR FUNERAL RITES									
36	27	4	18	6	3	66.7	22.2	11.1	100
C. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR CHIEFS/TRADITIONAL HEADS & PRIESTS/THEIR PALACES AND SHRINES RESPECTIVELY									
36	27	18	18	6	3	66.7	22.2	11.1	100
D. VISUAL ARTS FOR PRESTIGE PURPOSE ONLY									
36	27	14	18	6	3	66.7	22.2	11.1	100
36	27	57	72	24	12	266.8	88.8	44.4	400

Table 2b. TABLE OF RESPONSES TO LITERAL AND SYMBOLIC MEANINGS TO THE INTERVIEWS

VISUAL ARTS MENTIONED	SYMBOLIC MEANINGS KNOWN		SYMBOLIC MEANINGS UNKNOWN		LITERAL MEANINGS KNOWN		LITERAL MEANINGS UNKNOWN		% OF SYMBOLIC MEANINGS UNKNOWN		% OF LITERAL MEANINGS UNKNOWN		% TOTAL
A. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES/CEREMONIES													
21	18	3	17	4	85.7	14.3	81	19					200
B. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR FUNERAL RITES													
4	4	0	4	0	100	0	100	0					200
C. SYMBOLIC VISUAL ARTS FOR CHIEFS/TRADITIONAL HEADS & PRIESTS/THEIR PALACES AND SHRINES RESPECTIVELY													
18	17	1	6	12	94.4	5.6	33.3	66.7					200
D. VISUAL ARTS FOR PRESTIGE PURPOSE ONLY													
14	0	14	10	4	0	100	71.4	28.6					200
57	39	18	37	20	280.1	119.9	285.7	114.3					800

4.2 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF MAIN FINDINGS

4.2.1 Symbolic Visual Art Forms Used During Religious Activities or Religious Ceremonies.

4.2.1.1 *Jebuni*

Description of the art form

Plate 4 shows the *Jebuni* god surrounded with other gods. *Jebuni* is a pottery and horn product. Its pot is with a lid surrounded with the bones of sacrifices, especially, the skulls of dogs and other animals chained together with a rope. Blackened by bloodstains through years of sacrifices, vulture feathers are also tied together and placed on top of the pot. Fowl feathers are as well stuck on it during sacrifices. It is sometimes placed on a built up platform or a three-branched stick of an ebony tree. A thread with about three beads and copper specially designed sometimes hanged on top of it. People sometimes wear these beads for self-protection.

Functions

Jebuni is used for spiritual protection and curing of the sick. For instance, herbs are kept inside the pot and soaked with water. The water is later used to revive a person who has fallen unconscious. The god is also used to scare off bad spirits or ghost that haunts a person. It protects the owner from sickness and solves other personal problems. Men who therefore marry widows use *Jebuni* to ensure that their late rivals' ghosts do not haunt them and the women. Hunters use it to protect themselves against the spirits of dangerous wild animals which they anticipate would haunt them spiritually, especially when the hunter kills such an animal or comes across a dead body. The one who possesses "*Jebuni*" is also protected from the attack of an enemy who uses a spiritual arrow known as "*kikipirandi*".

The *Jebuni* art form does not represent any image neither has it any other title. The name originated from the Gonja expression '*Ju ebuni*', literally meaning, 'Drive away a ghost'. The Vagla interpretation of the word is different. The literal expression in the Vagla dialect is *Jaa yaa bini*, meaning, 'Be among us'. It implies that the god is being invited to always be among them wherever they are and protect them. *Jebuni* symbolically means 'bravery and life protector'.

The feathers of a vulture are placed on the pot to symbolise the god's ability to resist all evil things, because the vulture eats all carcasses from all dead animals including dead human beings without experiencing any problem. It is the water inside the pot that bears the symbolic meaning, for, it is believed that whenever the water is used in washing one's face it washes off all evil.



Plate 4. The *Jebuni* and other gods.

4.2.1.2 *Laye*

Description

Laye is a god in the form of a pot with a pair of drumsticks hanging on top of it. It is usually in an ebony tree branch with three projections and fixed to the ground. Other ethnic groups use the branch of a different tree for the same purpose but there are restrictions to the type of tree branch that may be used. A platted rope of jute fibre with three cowries attached to it is also hanged on the branch.

The platted rope with cowries is meant for wearing round the waist. Fowl feathers are attached to the pot during sacrifices. The pot contains some herbs and water. The surface of the pot is plain apart from the sticks and the platted rope hanged on it. There are, however, different forms of the god.

Functions

Laye, like *Jebuni* is a god for fortification against bullets (gun shot). The herbs and water inside the pot are used for curing poisoning. This type of poisoning is usually spiritual and known in the Vagla and Gonja dialects as *kortor*. Farmers mostly own the god.

Laye has no image representation. It has no additional title except its appellation *Alaye mu so, Jentire kage*. That is in Gonja, meaning *May every evil return to the person who wishes it, pepper reply*. 'Pepper reply' in other words means *harsh reply*. The appellation is therefore a curse on enemies. *Laye* symbolises protection against enemies. Figure 4 illustrates the *Laye* god.

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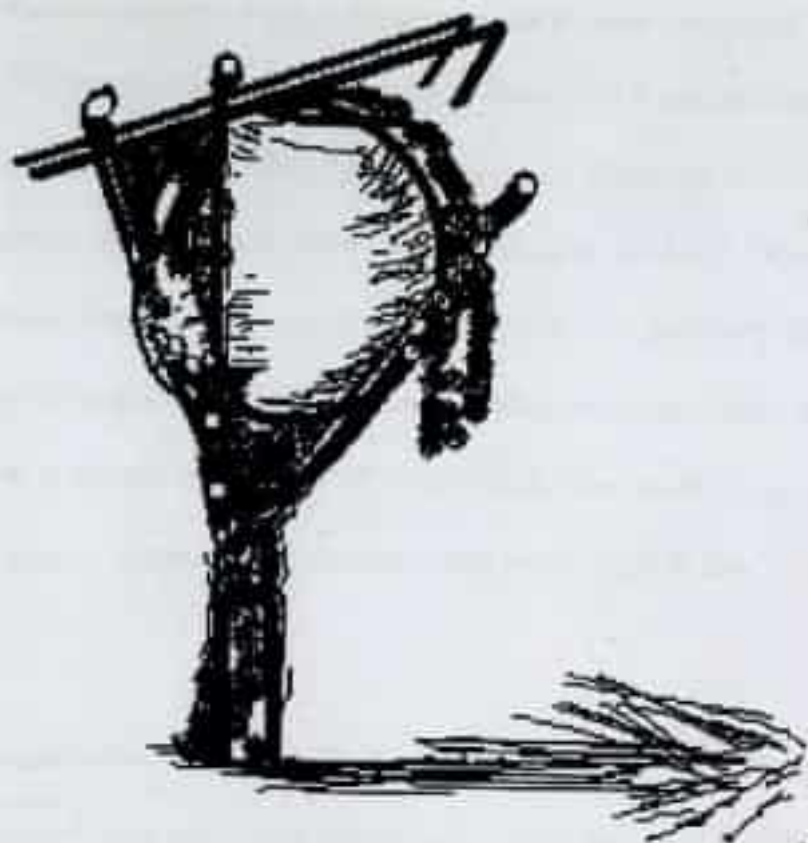


Figure 4. The *Lany* god

4.2.1.3 *Korli*

Description

Korli is a pot god with a lid. There is a specially woven pad for carrying it during its out-door performances like witch-hunting and tree killing. It has a small white hat accompanying it. The hat is a cotton product and it resembles the one usually worn by Muslims. *Korli* is said to have a female counterpart. The pot usually contains some herbs and water. It is carried on the head when performing outside its shrine.

Functions

'*Korli*' is used for the treatment of sickness or diseases of various kinds and for self-protection. It is also used for scaring away dwarfs and evil spirits on farms and other human environments. It kills witches and it is also used in witch-hunt. It points out trees with bad spirits (that is, it expels bad spirits from the trees and the trees are

destroyed). Farmers request from it the good yield of their crops and "it grants them". An initiate or any person who owns a *korli* also owns a special *korli* hat which he wears very often, especially when he is going to the bush, the farm or travelling. He sometimes drinks water from it when on the farm or in the bush. Drinking water from it, it is believed, would let the owner gain its potency. It "protects" the owners of the hat from snakebite and other evil. His farm is also protected. Other ordinary persons may also ask it for the protection of their farms. The water in its pot is sprinkled around the farm for protection of the crops and good yield. It also "cures" madness in people.

Korli does not represent any image and it has no any other title. The name is claimed to have originated from the Vagla expression: '*Korli yaa wia*' which literally means, "solve our problems". *Korli* symbolises "the powerful enemy of witches and a spiritual armoury". It is the whole pot together with the special white hat that bears this symbolic meaning.

To perform out-door, it is carried on the head by a young and energetic man. Incantations are recited and it is asked to point out dangerous people, especially witches and places of bad spirits. Figure 5 shows *Korli* performing outside the shrine.



Figure 5. *Korli* performing out-doors.

4.2.1.4. *Heu*

Description

The *heu* is either made up of a pile of rocks or a stone kept in a pot. It is a taboo for the stone in the pot to be laid on the ground.

Functions

It is the god of the land or the settlement. It is therefore under the care of the *Tindana*. *Tindana* means, "land owner" in the Wali dialect. The *heu* (god) helps the people in farming. The people are also protected against all evil by the god. When the people are about to sacrifice to the god, fowls that are on free range in the village are caught

without permission and are later sacrificed to the god. Animals may as well be sacrificed to it. The sacrifice, which is usually done once every year, is for the welfare of every member of the village and for the prosperity of everyone. It is also for the good health of the children. A request is also made for the increase in the number of births for the year.

The *heu* guides the individual against witches. *Pito* is used for libation. The last large pot of the *pito* is used for some special rituals on the 7th day of the celebration. Only the most elderly men are allowed to go to the shrine for the last day rituals. The pot and stones that symbolise the *heu* do not have any images of representation although some of the villages have other titles or appellations for theirs. *Heu* literally means "a settlement" in the Vagla dialect. The god is therefore called *heu* because it is the god of the settlement (that is, the village). The *heu* symbolises the "foundation and survival of the village".

4.2.1.5 *Sigmaa*

Description

The *sigmaa* gourd is conical in shape. It is broad at the base and tipped at the top. A narrow hole is created towards the tipped end through which the seeds of the gourd were removed. Through this same hole some substance is kept inside it. A thread is attached to this end for hanging. The blood of sacrificed animals is poured on the gourd and some fowl feathers are pasted on the gourd towards the tipped end. It is hanged at the forked end of a wooden pillar in the shrine as in plate 5.

The *sigmaa* attire is made up of the fibre dress and the mask. For the dress, jute fibre and fibre prepared from the bark of a baobab tree are dyed dark. The dyes are prepared from the seeds of a special tree called *bagni* in the Vagla dialect. The seeds

are pounded into powder and boiled into the dye. It is then sprinkled on the prepared jute and baobab fibres. The ends of the fibres are woven together whilst the rest of the fibres are allowed to hang down loosely. Some of the fibres are woven into a belt to hold a skirt for the waist. The same fibre is used for the skirt. The main garment hangs down from the shoulders over the skirt. According to some description from a respondent, the whole sigma masquerade looks like a bird when dressed up. The headdress (mask) is carved to have horns of an antelope (those of a ruine-duiker or a hunter beast). The head masks vary from locality to locality. It may be abstracted to look like a dwarf or a fairy. Part of the dyed fibre is attached to the headdress. The mask is painted or designed with patterns out of red earth colour, kaolin (white clay) or the faeces of a Python mixed with burnt sheanuts to make the colours oil base.

When dancing the masquerader holds a slightly forked stick with a jingle hanging at the forked end which produces a rhythmic noise as he dances to drum beats accompanied with the sound of a flute. The masqueraders usually dance in pairs, 'male' and 'female' masqueraders. The headdress of the male appears broader than that of the female. There are night *sigmaa* (masqueraders) and day ones. Their performances and attitudes differ. Those of the night are more hostile and volatile. They carry whips along and may attack any person who comes their way. They also make frightening noises.

It is important to mention here that most of the respondents were scared when more questions were being asked about the *sigmaa*. According to them, it is a very serious taboo and an offence to the god to reveal secrets about it.



Plate 5. The *Sigmaa* (gourd) god

Functions

Sigmaa consists of a gourd, jute fibre attire and carved wooden headdress. It is used for curing diseases and for protecting the villagers against evil. It is believed that it kills witches. Its herbs and water are kept in a large dish for all believers to drink for protection against epidemic diseases and other evil happenings. The water of the herbs is said to be quite bitter. It protects believers by killing those who are witches or who have evil intentions. The people also use it to mourn funerals of elderly persons of the village. It is believed to be able to provide rain. It is said to make barren women have children who then named *Mwenju*, *Suglo* or *Yaaba*. *Mwenju* is for both male and female children. *Mwenju* marks the first child got after the request from the *Sigmaa* for

a child. The second child that follows is named *Suglo* in the case of male and *Yaaba* when it is a female child. The third child is *Nandan*. The fourth child has no bearing with *Sigmaa* and can be given any name.

The *Sigmaa* headdress is carved to appear like an abstracted animal head. The horns appear to represent those of an antelope. No interpretation could be given on the headdress because all the respondents feared talking further about it. Another title for the *Sigmaa* is *Zapɛgu*.

Those initiated into the *Sigmaa* have a strange dialect understood by only the members. *Sigmaa* in that dialect means *Take good care of me or Help me!*. *Zapɛgu* literally means *kills instantly*. *Sigmaa* symbolically means *a god of cure* who administers instant justice to any offender or evil person. The headdress, which is abstracted, appears to symbolize complex wisdom. It is the *Sigmaa* attire that bears its symbolic meaning.

4.2.1.6 *Kaale*

Description

Kaale is a war garment. It is a smock dyed dark brown with some talismans attached to it. It has a cap accompanying it. The cap too has talismans attached to it. A large *kaale* is called *batakari* in Akan. *Kaale* sometimes looks wretched due to overuse but it remains potent. The Gonja traditionally woven cloth is the only acceptable material suitable for the *kaale* smock. Some *kaale* have their talismans hidden inside them.

Functions

Kaale (also called *Kaali*) consists of two parts. The smock and the talismans attached to it. It is these talismans that make it potent. *Kaale* is used for self-fortification

against bullets, knife, arrow, spear or any sharp metal. It is only worn in time of war or danger and means. *The one who wears it is protected in the name of God*, according to a Muslim respondent. A pot of some special herbs is used to fortify the garment. It is also possible for the one wearing this garment to take hold of the hand of one of a chain of persons, especially the family members and lead them out of a dangerous ground unhurt.

No image is represented on it. Its appellation is, *ju-enyin*. *Ju-enyin* in Gonja literally means, *chase away a warrior*. The name is said to have originated from the Vagla word *Kuali* which means *greater*. In Vagla, *M kaali bu* means, *I am greater than you*. *Kaale* therefore equally means *greater than*. The implication is that the one wearing the garment is supposed to be greater than the one who has not got it. The talismans attached to the *kaale* are called *sébé*. This literally means *To write* in the Gonja dialect. The *sébé* is therefore some incantations written on a piece of paper in Arabic and enclosed in leather. The incantation written in the talisman of the *kaale* usually asks for God's protection. The *kaale* is a symbol of *bravery and manliness*. Plate 6 illustrates a man in war dress wearing the *kaale* and its hat,



Plate 6: *Kaale (Kaali). A fortified war garment.*

A man in the Kaale garment and the hat

4.2.1.7 The Leopard Skin (of Sonyor Kazaywura).

Description

The skin as in plate 7, is broad with beautiful black and white spots on the fur.

Functions

The *Kazaywura* wears a leopard skin when a sacrifice is about to be made to the Sonyor Kipo god at Sonyor in the Bole Traditional Area. The skin is normally worn with the beautiful spotted black and white fur showing. *Kazaywura* literally means

The knife (sword) bearer. Knife or sword bearing symbolises a person in-charge of sacrifices. It was explained that the leopard skin worn by the *Kasagewura* also symbolises the conquest of the wild animals before settlement on the land was made possible. It therefore symbolises the struggle of the people before the acquisition of the land. The leopard skin, however, in most symbolic interpretations usually stands for a *high ranking position*. It therefore signifies that the *Kasagewura* is in a very responsible position.



Plate 7. The symbolic leopard skin, lion figure, leather pillow and golden colour antelope's skin of Gonja chiefs.

4.2.1.8 *Kupor bé kikipabi (Kupor's staff)*

The Sonyor Kupor is a spiritual leader responsible for all decisions concerning the most popular god of the Bole traditional area (known as Sonyor Kipo). He bears a symbolic staff, which is specially carved. An angel-like figure is carved on top of the stick. That symbolises that the Kupor is the over-all leader and has supernatural powers. The Sonyor Kipo is the chief god of all the gods in the traditional area. It has two other titles. These are *Kosiako* and *Birbirko*. Both titles literally mean *the great one*.

4.2.1.9 *Gurkus*

Description

The *Gurkus* pot is surrounded with skulls of animals from sacrifices.

Functions

It is a pot made god used for self-defence in time of war. It is believed to protect one against knife, arrow, spear and bullets from a gunshot. It does not have any image representation and it has not any other title. Its literal meaning is not known. It symbolises spiritual defense against physical and spiritual attacks. The entire pot together with its contents bears the symbolic meaning. Plate 8 shows the Kurkus shrine and the priest.



Plate 8. *Gurkus; The Gurkus god in its shrine*

The traditional priests squats very close to it

4.2.1.10 *Gbanjaukeu*

Description

Gbanjaukeu is either hang on a wall or on a pillar in the shrine. It is a gourd surrounded with the jawbones of lions joined together by a network of rope made from jute fibre. Its surface appears rough and thick because it is smeared with some soot mixed with shea butter.

Functions

It is a gourd god of brave hunters used for hunting. The god's special herbs are burnt and kept inside a horn with some shea butter added to it. The hunter usually licks this black substance from the horn; in order to protect himself from being haunted by the spirits of dangerous animals and human beings that may be killed by the hunter himself or found dead. It originated from Mandari and can now be found in Soma. *Gbanjau* refers to the most important property of an individual. *Keu* means a gourd so

Gbanjaukeu literally means *the gourd of most important property*. It symbolises *bravery and life protection*. Plate 9 shows *Gbanjaukeu*.



Plate 9. Gbanjaukeu: *The hunters' god*.

4.2.1.11 *Buoi*

Description and function

Buoi is made of a gourd. The *Buoi* gourd is similar to the *sigmaa* gourd and it is stained with the blood of sacrifices. It is usually consulted for childbirth. According to a respondent, the god *Buoi* is open hearted and it opens the womb of a barren woman and she is able to have children. The people also rely on *Buoi* to cure spiritual poisoning. *Buoi* has no image representation and it has no other title. *Buoi* is an expression of openness in all the five dialects in the Bole traditional area. The god

named after that expression is a god of the Batige ethnic group at Sanyeri, a village in the traditional area. *Buoi* is a symbol of fertility.

4.2.1.12 *Wurkibe*

Description

Wurkibe is a collection of stones and five little pots in a hilly environment. The pots are left standing in the open to trap rainwater in them. *Wurkibe* is created in a secret forest where a group of rocks have been gathered either naturally or by design. Respondents could not explain how the stones were gathered.

Functions

Wurkibe is made of rocks and five little pots which are left in the open to trap rainwater in them that symbolises wetness or moisture in the soil and the fertility of the land provided by the god. The water in the five little pots bears the symbolic meaning.

It protects the people, cures them of sickness, and provides them food through favourable harvests. It also prevents epidemic diseases, war and protects their women from snakebites during shea-nut picking. It helps them to love one another, provides rain and fertility to the land. It has no image representation or title. The literal meaning of *Wurkibe* in the Nchorba dialect is *Ewur be kibe* meaning *Chief's hill/mountain*. Figure 6 shows the *Wurkibe* shrine.

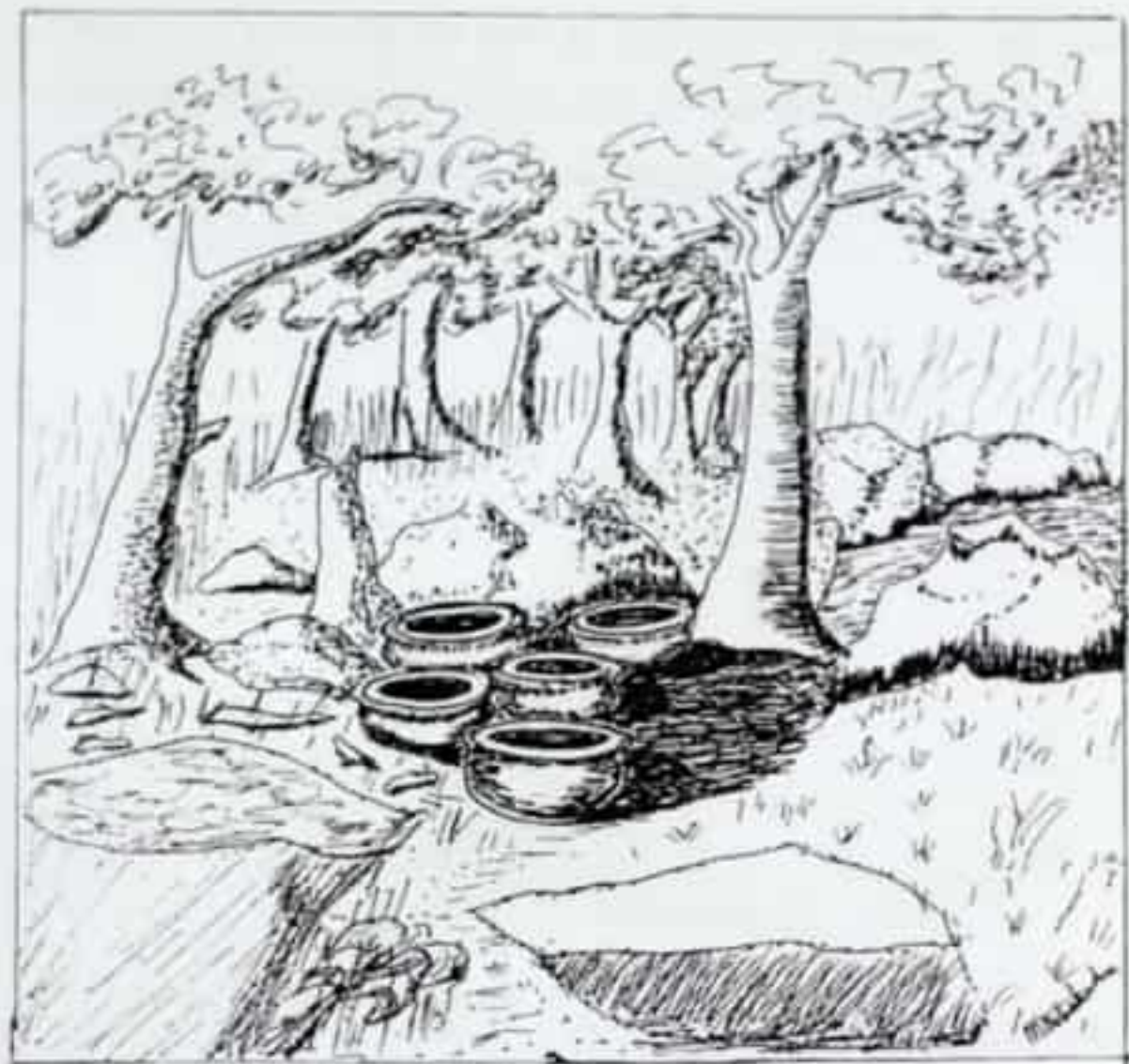


Figure 6. *Wurkibe* god and its environs.

4.2.1.13 *Borz*

Description

That is a molded mound and a stone. *Borz* is a built-up mound with a little white stone at its apex. The function of the white stone is to let the blood from the sacrifice show when poured over it.

Functions

Borz serves as a god. Rain is created through *borz* by means of certain rituals performed by *Borz* priest when there is a long drought during the rainy season. *Borz* can be used to kill thieves or other criminals who fail to admit committing the

offences. The people may also swear by it to settle their disputes. It has no image representation or any additional title. *Borc* literally means *rain* in the Gonja and Nchorba dialects. It symbolises the source of fertility of the land.

It is the mound and stone that bear the symbolic meaning.



Figure 7. *Borc* (The rain god).

4.2.1.14 *Muari*

Description *Muari* is an open little pot with a strip of white cloth tied around it. Some unextracted shea butter (that is, the butter together with the residue) is kept inside the pot.

Functions

Muari is a pot god used to settle quarrels in a village called Mandari. It also takes general care of the people. There is no image representation or any special title for it.

The name literally means, *Reduction of tension* in the Safalba dialect. It is a symbol of *peace*. Figure 8 indicates the *Muari* pot.



Figure 8. *Maari* (The god for settling quarrels).

4.2.1.15 *Lempo*

Description:

It is a pot with the skulls of animals including dogs and wolves attached to it. A horn is also used for keeping some burnt herbs after performing certain rituals of the *Lempo*. The charcoal from the herbs is grounded into powder, mixed with shea butter and kept inside the horn. The hunter carries that horn containing the black substance on him whenever he goes hunting. He licks the content of the horn in case he is getting missing in the bush in order to find his way back home.

Lempo is a pot god and hunters sacrifice to it for self-protection and help. It attracts animals to the hunter, protects him from all dangerous animals and persons. It is also used for curing certain diseases. In case a hunter kills a person by accident he uses it to ensure that the ghost does not haunt him. There are no image representation and special title for the god. The literal meaning of the name in Gonja is, *elengpo* meaning

The powerful one. The symbolic meaning is not known. Figure 9 shows the *Lempo* pot and the skulls.

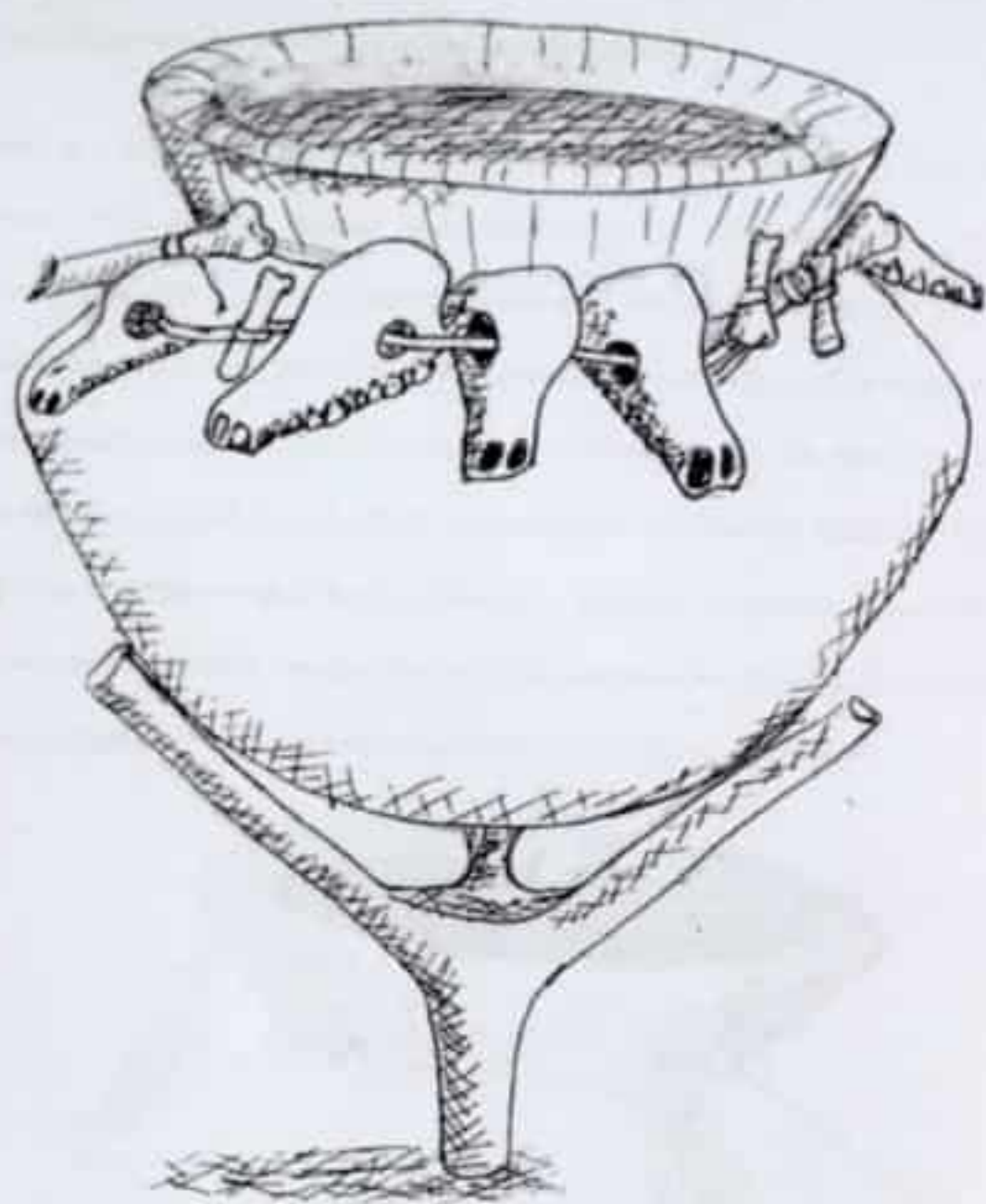


Figure 9. Lempo god

4.2.1.16 *Guma*

Description

Guma is in two parts. These are the pot and the human figure. The *Guma* pot remains in the sacrificial shrine whilst the modelled human figure of the *Guma* is sent to the place the priest intends to protect. The *Guma* pot has two feathers fixed through a

twisted jute fibre tied in the middle of the pot. The feathers are fixed at two opposite sides of the pot. The whole pot is also dotted round with red earth and ashes. The human figure of *Guma* is modelled having a hunch-back.

Guma is a god for protecting property in the home and on the farm from devilish persons who seek to destroy them spiritually. For instance, witches with evil intentions against a home or farm protected with the *Guma* are instantly killed. The image of a hunch-back person is represented by the *Guma* figure. The image signifies that a person caught by the *Guma* develops a hunch-back for the rest of his/her life. The name originated from the Wali expression *Gur ma* meaning Bend me. The name therefore describes what it does to its culprit. Although the human figure symbolises *Punishment by bending* the pot does not bear any symbolic meaning. Figures 10a and 10b illustrate the *Guma* pot and its modelled human figure, respectively.



Figure 10a. *The Guma pot.*



Figure 10b. The modeled human figure of *Guma*

4.2.1.17 *Kabire*

Description:

Kabire is a small tail of either a goat or sheep ritually prepared and used for charms. A strong thread with a cowry attached to its end is joined to the tail and is used for tying around the tail a number of times. It is usually fastened very tight with the aid of the cowry.

Functions

Kabire is used for charming people. The victim is either made confused, seriously ill or even killed. The owner therefore uses it to gain power over his opponent. During

the rituals, the tail is tied firmly with a thread which is attached to it whilst pronouncing the opponent's name over it. The literal meaning of *Kabire* is not known. It is a symbol of *Triumph over an opponent or a rival*. The tied section bears the symbolic meaning. Figure 11 shows the *Kabire* tail.

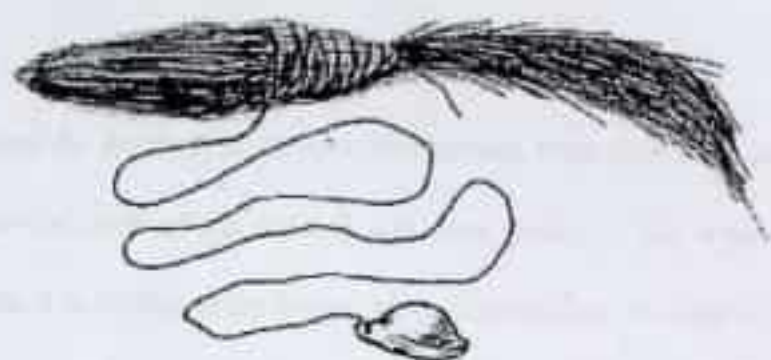


Figure 11 *Kabire*

4.2.1.18 *Boli*

Description

Boli is another god made of a pot and tail. The main god is the pot but its power is transferred onto a cow tail for one to carry about. The tail is usually black. It appears to be the tail of a bullock.

Functions

Boli is used for personal protection against bullets from gun-shot and other dangers. It is believed repel the bullets when the gun is shot. It is also said to make a knife blunt when used on one who has undergone the rituals of the god. The literal meaning for *Boli* could not be given. It is a symbol of *personal security*. The symbolic meaning is borne by both the pot and the tail.

Description:

A little tail from either a cow or a goat is usually used for the *Bonkurma* rituals. It is then attached to the back of the hunting attire of the hunter.

Functions

Bonkurma is used by hunters to protect themselves from attacking animals. It hides the hunter from the view of the animal and even makes it fall whenever the hunter shouts at it when it is within close range. He is then able to re-load or cork his gun to shoot at the animal. *Bonkurma* has no any other title or representative symbol. Although the respondents could not tell its literal meaning, it probably means *save me* since it saves the hunter from destruction. It symbolises hunting security for the hunter. The part bearing the symbolic meaning is the tail attached to the back of the hunter's attire. Figure 12 illustrates the hunter in his *Bonkurma* attire.

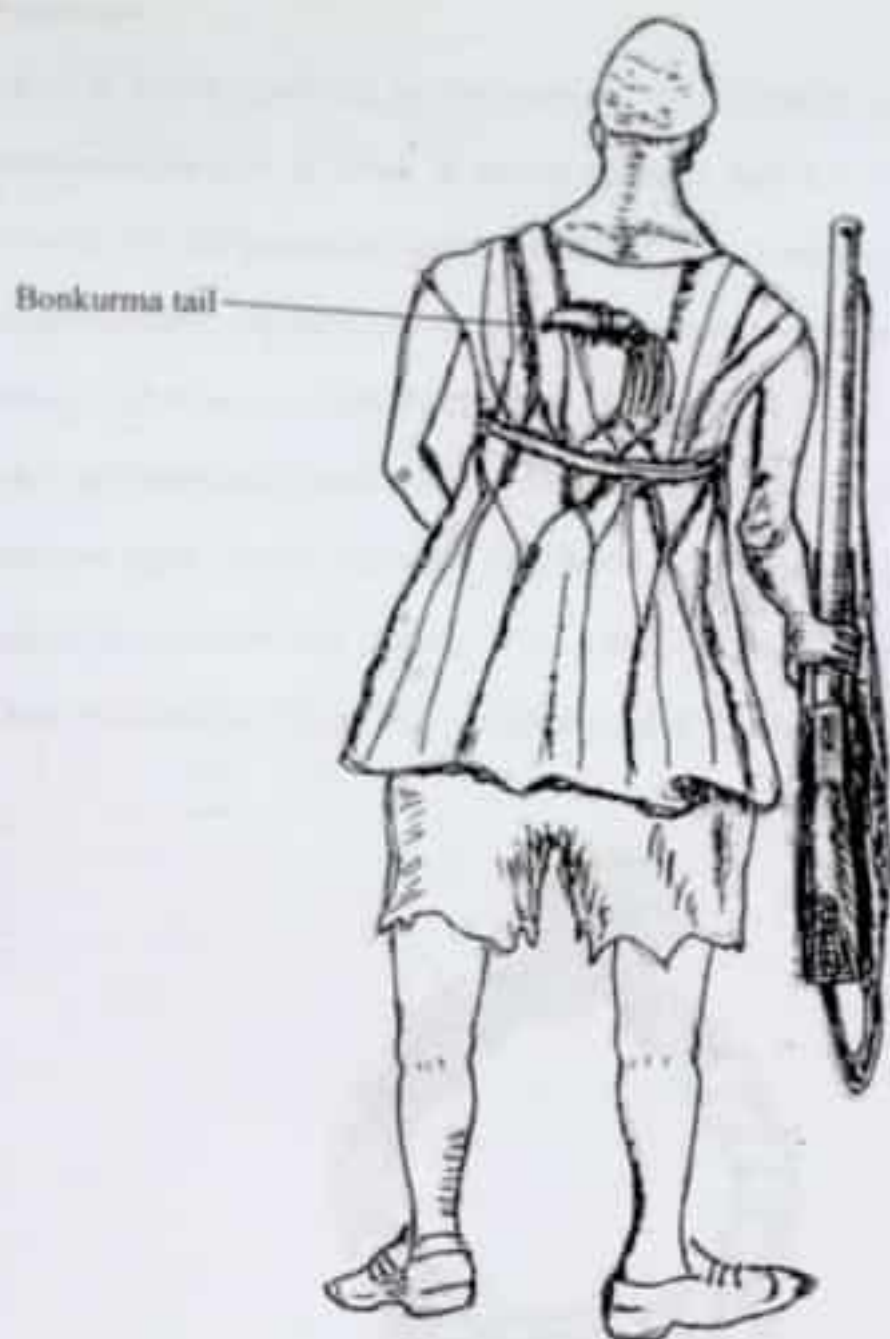


Figure 12. A hunter wearing a smock with the *Bonkurma tail* at the back

4.2.1.20 *Chora*

Description

The *chora* ring is a piece of metal cut from an exploded gun barrel. It is fired and hammered till it is about the thickness of a five-inch nail and long enough to fit the second left finger when twisted and rolled to let the two ends meet.

Functions

Chora is mostly possessed by the youth for the purpose of fighting. The one who possesses it is able to knock down his opponent during a fight. *Chora* therefore provides for self-protection against attacks of both human beings and animals. It performs similar functions like the Bonkurma except that the owner of it only hits his attacker but does not shout. Furthermore, the victim of *chora* might not be able to stand up immediately when knocked down unless the victor asks him to stand up or performs some special rituals for him before he gets up. *Chora* literally means a painful hit in all the five dialects of the traditional area. The symbolic meaning of *Chora* is not known. Figure 13 is an illustration of the *Chora* ring.



Figure 13 The twisted ring of *Chora*

4.2.1.21 *Kafurma*

Description

Kafurma is made with a pot and a tail. The *Kafurma* pot has skulls and feathers from sacrifices made to it attached to it. It also contains some herbs. The water from the herbs is needed to bathe. The pot is kept near a wall in the shrine. The power of *Kafurma* may be transferred into a tail that can be carried about.

Functions

Kafurma is a god for vanishing. Its rituals are performed when new yams are about to be eaten. Before one can be initiated into it the one needs to provide a cock, although people who are not capable of providing cocks can also be initiated. The literal meaning of the name in Gonja is *ka fu ma* that is *My sudden pick*. That describes the function of the god. That is, the person who has *Kafurma* is suddenly picked away by the god from a spot when danger is imminent. *Kafurma* therefore symbolises *self-protection against un-expected dangers*.

4.2.2 Summary and Conclusion of Findings on Religious Visual Art Forms

The symbolic visual art forms of the area used for religious activities involve almost all aspects of the visual arts. Some materials are used directly as symbolic forms in their unprocessed state. They include sculpture products like the *sigmaa* headdress (mask), Pottery products such as *laye* pot, basketry products like the plaited rope of the *laye* god, textiles products like *kaale smock* and leather products such as *mwolputi* or leather pillows of the chiefs. An example is the leopard skin of Sonyor Kipo's *Kasajwura* (the fetish priest of Sonyor Kipo). Some of the symbolic visual arts are representations of gods. For instance, the *guma* pot and its modeled human figure are both representation of the *guma* god. Others like the symbolic staff of Kupor of Sonyor, which is designed to show his status in society, symbolize ranks. The gods are either personal or group gods. Chora for example is a personal god while Sonyor Kipo and *Sigmaa* are gods for the entire society. The gods are either for spiritual protection, healing or for solving social problems. Those among this group of god include the *Kaale* for spiritual protection, *Korli* and *Jehuni* for healing and solving social problems. Some of them like *Korli* and *Sigmaa* have identical functions. There are both lesser and greater gods such as *Gbanjauken* which is only a family god and

Sonyor Kipo which is a god for the whole society. Respondents could not however interpret some of the symbolic visual art forms such as gathered stones of wurkibe.

The symbolic meanings reflect the functions of the art forms. The function of *guma*, for instance, is to bend the back of its victim. Its symbolic meaning is punishment by bending. The themes also centre on social problems of the people, the dependence on the gods for protection and so on. For example, the theme for *Kaale* is *I am greater than you*. Since the people anticipate wars and other social problems that may create the need to fight or defend themselves, the *Kaale* is therefore made to warn their enemies that they are better prepared than they, the enemies.

The theme for *Kafurma* expresses dependence on the god for safety. *Kafurma* means *my sudden pick*, in other words *pick me quickly* in the Gonja dialect. Other themes relate to the ills of society and responsibilities, whilst others reflect the people's philosophy. For instance, the theme for the *lajɛ* god is against the ills of society. Its appellations a *lajɛ mu so, jentire kajɛ* means *may every evil return to the person who wishes it*, pepper reply "Pepper reply" means *harsh reply*. This theme also reflects the philosophy of the people, because the people of the area have the saying that "people who always think evil have evil in return".

The symbolic virtual arts forms are constructed, modeled, carved, painted or assembled. *Gbanjaukeu* for instance is constructed with gourd, bones, jute fibre and soot. The *guma* figure is modeled with clay, the *Sigmaa* headdress with wood and painted whilst *Wurkibe* is an assemblage of rocks and pots in a forest. A visual art symbol may be made up of a single craft (artifact) or a combination of artifacts. One example of a single craft artifact is the modeled human figure of *guma*. The sigma

attire and Kaale are good examples of symbolic visual art forms that are made up of combined artefacts.

It can be concluded that the symbolic visual art forms of the Bole traditional area, which are used for religious purposes, are functional. The peoples strongly believe the god's ability to solve their problems for them. For, most of the symbolic visual arts used for religious purposes are either gods or artefacts meant for performing the rituals of the gods.

4.3 SYMBOLIC VISUAL ART FORMS USED FOR FUNERAL RITES.

The symbolic visual art forms used by the five ethnic groups of the Bole traditional area are basically the same. There are only slight differences in the ways they go about the burial and the performance of the rituals. The literal and symbolic meanings of the art forms used are the same.

4.3.1 *Kasaṅaṅa*:

'*Kasaṅaṅa*' refers to a set of clothing sewn from the traditionally woven white cloth of the people of the traditional area for burial of their dead. These are the most important set of clothing used for dressing the corpse before any additional white cloths could be added. They are usually sewn with needle and thread, and only when the body is lying in state, because it is a taboo to sew them down in advance when the person is not yet dead. A man's *Kasaṅaṅa* is made up of a long garment covering the deceased from head to toes, a pair of shorts and a hat, all made from the same white cloth. A woman is provided with the long cloth (called 'lolo' in Gonja, 'Munganti' in Wali/Batige, 'dang' in Vagla and 'gbinde' in Nchorba) for covering her private part. Before the introduction of the cloth, grass was woven for the same purpose. It is only the elderly women who are provided with the lolo. A skirt called '*mḥari*' or '*bari*' for

short is also provided for a deceased woman. It should however be noted that the *mbari* is provided for only natives of the village and elderly women. Although the various ethnic groups have different names for a white cloth, they all call this particular attire for the dead '*kasajae*'. The *kasajae* together with the white cloth as the clothing of the dead are a symbol of purity. It signifies that the deceased person had lived a good life and that, after a consultation of the gods, ancestors and the spirit of the deceased it was confirmed that the death was a natural one and that the person is also clean in heart. It is therefore believed that the ancestors will receive the person if he/she is buried in the white clothing. The name, '*kasajae*' is said to have originated from the Vagla expression '*Aka u saja*' literally meaning "*It is now time for him/her to depart*".

The deceased is usually bathed before the '*kasajae*' and the white cloths are used in dressing the body. Plate 10 shows the researcher's own late junior brother dressed in *kasajae* and layers of white cloths. Note that the Wali/Batige pronounce it as *kahiga* or *kasiga*.

The differences in the use of among the ethnic groups are the names due to dialectal differences. Whereas the Gonjas, Vaglas, Safalbas and Nchorba call it *Kasajae* the Batige/Wali call it *Katiga* and *kasiga*. The components of *kasajae* are the same among are the ethnic groups except the different names they have for the components in their various dialects. The rituals for using the *Kasajae* are all the same among the clans. The symbolic meaning is also the same among all the five ethnic groups. Plate 10 shows a deceased person of the Bole Traditional area lying in state clothed in the *kasajae* and a number of white clothes.



Plate10: A deceased young man dressed in 'kasayaa' laid on mat.

4.3.2 *Koshimaayannaa*

Koshimaayannaa is a native mat traditionally woven from the raffia plant. It is grey in colour. It is slightly stiff and when rolled like paper it is usually difficult to let it lie flat unless objects are placed at its ends or one lies inside it immediately it is stretched. It is used for sleeping on like any ordinary mat. However, some of the ethnic groups of the Bole traditional area use it also for burial for symbolic reasons. The name originates from the Gonja expression *koshi maay gan ma*. It literally means, *a fowl does not fear me*. It is called so because fowls often defecate on it when it is spread on the floor. The mat is used for burial of the dead among the Gonjas and some of the Fagla clans. This gray mat together with the white cloth symbolises purity. The corpse is laid on the mat after it is bathed and dressed in the *kasayaa*. When it is to be taken away for burial, the mat is folded around it and the *kasayaa*. They are taken together to the grave where some of the top white cloths may be removed. The corpse is then lowered down the grave together with the mat around it, the rest of the cloths and the *kasayaa*. The corpse still dressed in the *kasayaa* and some of the white cloths

are kept in the inner chamber of the grave and made to lie on the mat (*Koshimaayanna*).

Burying with the mat is not a common practice with all the ethnic groups. The ethnic groups of the traditional area that use it for burial of the dead are the Vaglas and the Gonjas. A clan of the Vaglas at Jentilpe also bury with a special mat woven from rid purposely meant for burial of the dead. Yet another clan among the Vaglas bury with the skin. Although, the use of *Koshimaayanna* for burial also symbolises purity like the *Kasagae*, the symbolic meanings of the specially woven rid mat and the skin are not known. They probably symbolize "a comfortable sleep in the grave"

4.3.3 The Bow and Arrow Symbolism

The clan of the Vagla ethnic group at Gilinkon usually "present" a bow and some arrows to the deceased man as a symbol of enabling him to protect himself on his journey to the home of the ancestors. That is usually done immediately after burial through rituals.

It is done by an experienced elderly man, who lays the weapons on his grave and chants words of presentation over the deceased's grave. The presentation of weapons to the deceased is an isolated form of burial rituals limited to only the Vagla people of Gilinkon.

4.3.4 *Kikaryirnde*

Kikaryirnde is a kind of carrying pad specially made from corn sac or a type of grass, and used for carrying a pot or basket in which a funeral cloth is placed in the process of transferring a funeral from one village to another after the deceased has been buried. The *Kikaryirnde* is to stabilize a pot or basket when placed on the floor or

carried on the head. To ensure that the funeral pot does not slip off the head of the woman when a funeral is being transferred, the *Kikaryirnde* is usually placed on the head of the woman before the pot with the cloth is placed on it. The literal meaning of *Kikaryirnde* in Gonja is *kikar yir inde* that is, *the carrying pad meant for sending funerals to towns/ villages*. When the funeral of a deceased person is to be transferred to another place, some soil is collected from the grave of the person buried. The soil is kept in one of the white cloths used in covering the deceased when he/she was lying in state. The parcel is then put in a pot. A woman is made to carry these with the aid of the *Kikaryirnde* to the original home of the deceased. The woman carrying the pot and funeral cloth holds the flange of the pot with the left hand and takes the lead followed by a few other relatives of the deceased. They must be in a file and no one looks back from the queue until the pot is placed down at the destination. Plate 11a shows *Kikaryirnde* (the funeral pad) plate 11b also shows a young girl caring the *Kasayae*

As in the case of *Kasayae* all the five ethnic groups transfer their funerals to other places in the same manner using the *Kikaryirnde*.



Plate 11a. *Kikaryirnde*



Plate 11b. A young girl carrying the *Kasanyae* in a funeral pot. (On *Kikaryirnde*).

4.3.5 Summary on Art Forms for Funeral Rites

The literal and symbolic meanings of the art forms used by the people of the Bole traditional area in funeral rites were found to be the same among the ethnic groups. There are two basic forms of funeral symbolism in the area that relate to the ancestral world. These are in respect to the white burial cloth and mat, and the bow and arrows. The strong belief and meaning attached to this burial symbolism are the basis of people's good moral values and attitude to life. An individual who desires to have a fitting burial and acceptance in the ancestral home therefore lives a virtuous life.

4.4 Symbolic Art Forms Limited to Chiefs, Traditional Priest, Clan Heads, Chiefs' Palaces or Shrines.

The symbolic visual art forms limited to the use of Chiefs, Traditional Priests, Clan heads, and their Palaces may also be referred to as court arts. They include *Lemo*, *Nwulputi*, Skins and Walking sticks.

4.4.1 *Lemo* (Large umbrella)

Lemo is a very large and colourful umbrella sometime with a symbolic figure on top of it. It is usually erected at a conspicuous place on durbar grounds. It alerts people that there is a durbar taking place at that moment. It also symbolizes that *the traditional area and the chiefs have been shaded against all evil or misfortunes during the durbar*. The umbrella was acquired from outside the Gonja kingdom. The literal meaning of the name could not be explained. Figure 14 shows how the *Lemo* is plantet on a durbar ground.

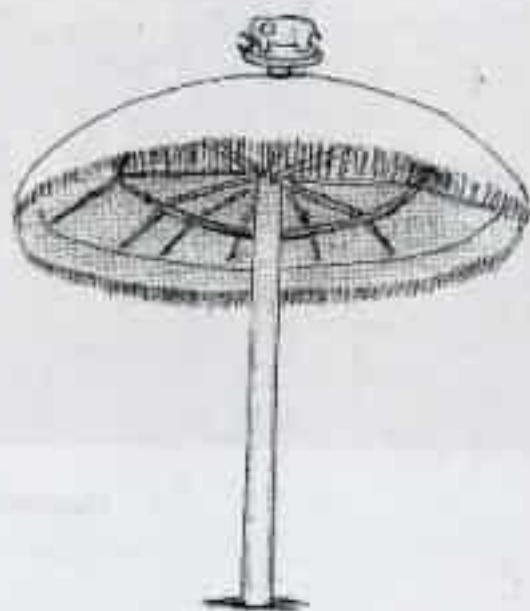


Figure 14. *Lemo*

It must be noted that the elephant symbol on this umbrella does not directly refer to any particular symbol in the traditional area. But indicates that umbrella tops sometimes bear symbols

4.4.2 *Nwolputi*

Nwolputi in Gonja literally means leather pillows. The singular form of the word is *Kawolputi*. The use of the leather pillows used to be restricted to chiefs, but in modern times, any rich person can use them. Because their use was limited to chiefs only, leather pillows symbolised prestigious artifacts for chiefs. If an ordinary person owned leather pillows he was questioned or charged. Plate 12 shows a chief standing by his *Kawolputi* on his chieftaincy skins.



Plate 12. *Kawolputi*

4.4.3 Skin symbolism

Kufulwol refers to a skin of gold coloured kind of antelope. This skin was restricted to the use by chiefs and some important traditional heads and priests. Traditional heads permitted to use this skin apart from Gonja chiefs are the heads of the blacksmiths

who have the title *gbandi* and the *Vagla* chiefs who also have the title *jara*. Young blacksmiths may not own the antelope skins but they are permitted to sit on it when they visit the chief's palace, for, they are considered chiefs or equivalent to chiefs.

Gonja princes are not allowed to sit on the gold skin as long as they anticipate being chiefs in future. A prince who sits on the skin when he is not yet enskinned can no longer be enskinned as a chief. The skin of this special antelope therefore symbolises chieftainship. Plate 13 shows the special antelope skin. The *Vaglikori* (*Vagla* chief) may decide to use either the skin of a hunter beast, an *aurabeast* or a lion. Officially, the lion and leopard skins are restricted to the use of major chiefs like the *Jangwura* (also known as *Chorwura*), *Kongwura*, *Bolewura* and the *Yagbonwura* as far as the traditional area is concerned. Similar traditions exist in other traditional areas of the Gonja kingdom as well as their immediate neighbours the *Dagombas*, *Nanumbas* and the *Manpurisi*.

It must be noted that whilst the other chiefs of the traditional area sit on the skins the *Kasagewura* of *Sonyor* wears his leopard skin. The symbolic meaning of the *Kasagewura's* leopard skin is different. His symbolises 'the struggle before the acquisition of the land'. These skins symbolise the various ranks of the chiefs. That of the elephant being of the highest ranking, followed by the lion and then, the leopard and others. The lower chiefs also use the gold coloured antelopes the antelope, which is also restricted to the use of only chiefs. This is special honour to the chiefs because it is the most beautiful skin among all the skins that are used for sitting on. Since everybody sat on a skin in the olden days it was found inappropriate for common people (the subjects of the chiefs) to also use the beautiful gold skin alongside the chiefs. Among some of the ethnic groups, especially the people of *Kong*, the

enskinment is done directly on the gold antelope skin. After the enskinment rituals, the skin becomes the chief's permanent seat.

The gold coloured skin antelope is called *kuful* in Gonja, *wilu* in Vagla and *mofu* in the Wali/Batige and Safalba dialects. Its skin is therefore called *kufulwol*, *wiluhong* and *molfugbani* as in the respective dialects.

Plate 13 shows *Kufulwol*, the gold coloured antelope skin.



Plate 13. *Kufulwol*

4.4.4 The Linguist Stick or Staff

In the Bole traditional area, there are two types of staffs for the chiefs. The first is the linguist staff of the highest ranking chiefs like the *Yagbonwura*, the *Bolewura*, the *Kongwura* and the *Chorwura* (Jang chief) which are usually borne by their chief linguists; and the personal walking sticks carried about by the individual chiefs themselves. The second linguist staff is usually carried by the chief linguist is a symbol of the authority of the chief. Whenever the chief linguist is delegated to act on behalf of the chief, he bears this stick to indicate that the chief has authorised him to do or say whatever he wants to be done or said to the people. Therefore, the linguist invites an offender to the chief's palace by presenting the stick to the offender. That means, the offender must follow the linguist to the chief's palace to answer the call. The offender is therefore responsible for the transportation cost of the linguist and other charges relating to the offence. This staff is usually covered with some aluminum material or brass. It is usually taller and appears heavier than the personal or any normal walking stick. It has no figure representation. At plate 14, a chief linguist sits in front of the chief and his subjects bearing the linguist staff.



Plate 14. The Linguist Stick

4.4.5 The Chief's Personal Walking Stick (*Kikpabi*)

It is obligatory for every chief of the traditional area to have a personal walking stick. Some of these personal walking sticks may bear symbolic figures depending on the ranks of the chiefs. Those of the common chiefs have no symbolic figures. They may only have beautification designs or special fortification elements personal to individuals, which may also appear like ordinary designs. The chief's walking stick is a symbol of the chief's power and it "protects" him. That is to say, it is fortified to make it potent and capable of helping him resist any unexpected attack from an enemy. The chief is therefore not expected to use his walking stick for hitting or pointing at people except as a last resort.

4.4.6 The Symbolic Sticks

The Vagla chiefs have many different symbols and some of them are as follows:

1. The Cock Symbol

This symbolises time. The cock crows to remind the chief's subjects to pay him the early morning visits as a sign of honour. It is usually during such early visits that new ideas and wisdom are shared. The second meaning of the symbol is that *the cock is a bird of sacrifice which the priest uses to take care of the people*. It thus reminds him that he must always sacrifice on behalf of the people. It as well serves as a means for identifying the *Tindana* or *Heuhin* (the one who sacrifices to the gods of the land).

Plate 15d shows the Cock symbol.



Plate 15. Some types of symbolic stick for the Vagla chiefs

a-b Lion symbols, **c** Human figure **d** The Cock symbol

The Vagla chiefs have many different symbols and some of them are as follows :

2. The Bird Symbols

The perching bird symbolises that the throne (skin) of the *Vaglikori* (the chief) is like a flying bird, which may perch at a given time. His throne is therefore metaphorically referred to as "a perch of the bird". This literally means that chieftaincy comes in turns; and no one can deprive you of it when your turn comes.

3. The Vulture Symbol

The vulture is a symbol of patience and achievement. Its patience is seen as wisdom for, it waits patiently until it gets the flesh of even the most powerful and dangerous animals to eat, when the powerful animal dies. It may either be through an accidental death of the animal or through a hunter. The stick of the Tindana of Mandari has a

snake and a crocodile in a struggle. The vulture is perching on top watching patiently to see the end of the battle. It implies that no matter whichever loses the battle, the vulture will get its share of the meal. And if both should die, they are both consumable to the vulture. It means the vulture never loses. Implicitly, the chief never loses. He must be patient in judging cases or resolving issues. Plate 16 shows the Mandari Tindana Natogma's walking stick bearing the vulture symbol.

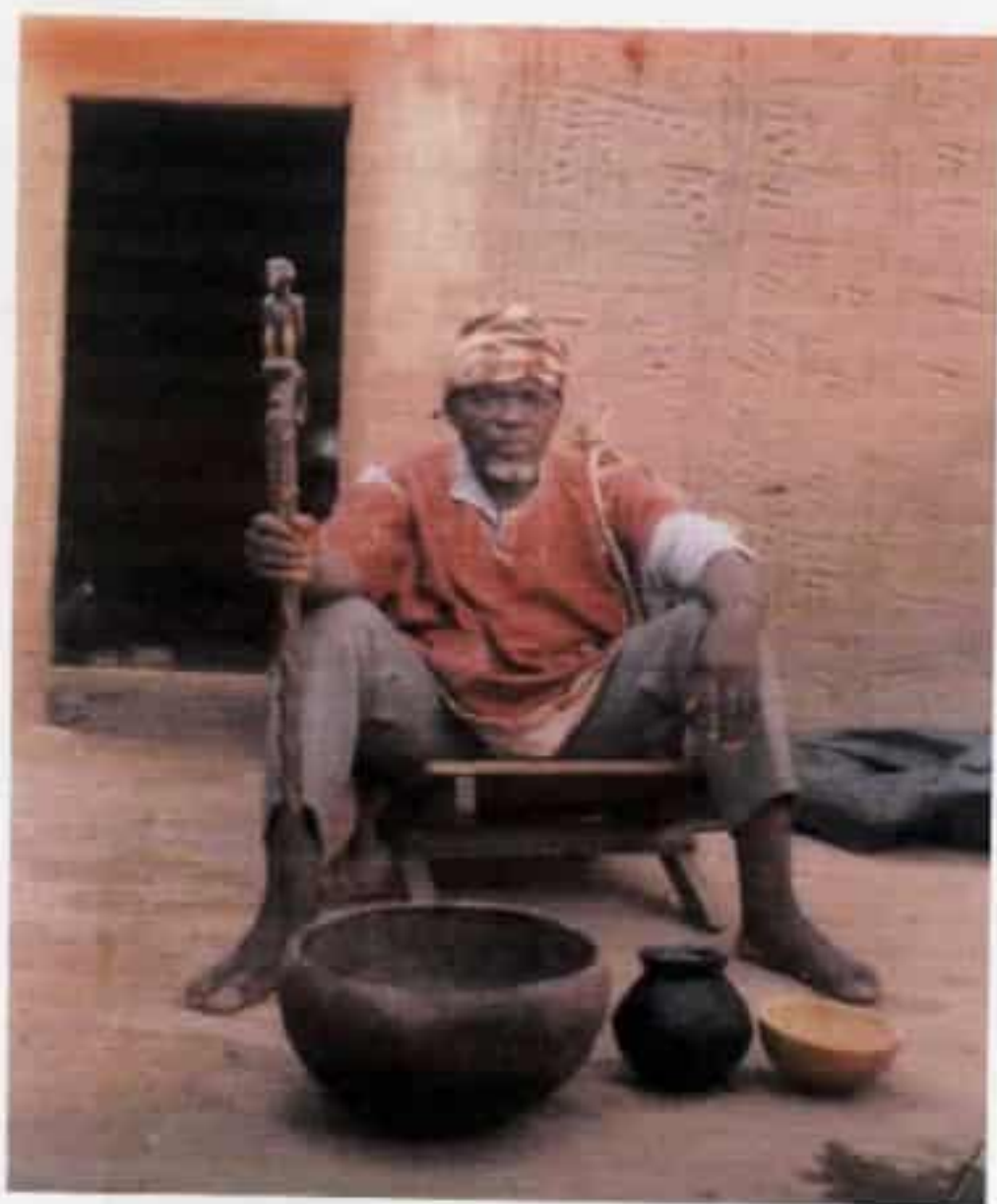


Plate 16. The Vulture Symbol

4. The Animal Symbols

i. The Elephant Symbol

The symbol of the elephant stands for greatness and largeness of the kingdom and its power. The chief's power and greatness of the kingdom is likened to the size and strength of the elephant. The additional designs on the staffs are for decorations and do not possess symbolic meanings.

ii. The Lion Symbol

The lion symbolises a powerful chief. His power is likened to the strength and powerful position of the lion in the jungle. This strength of the lion is therefore used as a simile to liken the chief's power to that of the lion. The Vagla chiefs are therefore addressed with the appellation, *Jara* meaning *The Lion*. Plate 17 shows the lion symbol.



Plate 17. The Lion Symbol

iii. The He-goat Symbol:

The he-goat of the *Tindana's* or *Heuhig's* stick symbolises that he sacrifices to the gods of the land with animals.

iv. The Human/Dwarf Symbols

The *Safalnaa* of Mandari has both the elephant and human symbols. The human symbol of a *Safalnaa* may either be a woman or a man. His woman figure symbolises that he is maternally related. A man's symbol indicates that he is from the paternal lineage.

The dwarf symbolises spirituality. It therefore implies that the traditional priest who bears the symbol is the spiritual head of the village. The traditional priest of the Sonyor Kipo with the title *Kupo* bears a similar symbolic stick with an angel-like human figure. It has wings and appears to be about to fly. That symbolises the god's superior ability to move about freely and fly above the people, and he is, thus, capable of seeing all activities of the people and helping them in their need. Human figures of varied postures can be found among the Vagla chiefs and their traditional priests with various symbolic meanings. Their meanings, however, generally centre on wisdom, knowledge, superiority, rule of law. Plate 18 shows the *Safalnaa* of Mandari holding his staff bearing the human symbol.



Plate 18. The Human/Dwarf Symbols

4.4.7 The Fortified Walking Sticks of the Chiefs

Every chief has or is supposed to have a personal walking stick for self-support and defence in case of an attack of an enemy. Most of these personal walking sticks are therefore fortified with talismans or through certain rituals. It is therefore a taboo for a chief to hit or point at an innocent citizen with his walking stick when he is not being attacked. The walking stick identifies him as a chief as well as serves as a defensive weapon.

4.4.8 Prestigious Visual Arts for Chiefs

The study found out that footrests or leather pillows known as *Nwolputi* and the horsetail are also restricted to the use of the chiefs. That is done to give the chiefs honour and respect. Apart from the scarcity of leather pillows during the early establishment of the Gonja kingdom leather articles were also considered most durable and beautiful. They were equally expensive for the ordinary man. It was only chiefs that were capable of owning them. It therefore became generally accepted that only chiefs should own them. Many rich people in modern times also now own footrests (leather pillows), horse tails and other leather products that were formerly restricted to chiefs' palaces.

i. *Mulfa*

Mulfa is a tall red hat restricted to the use of very high-ranking chiefs like the Chorwura (chief of Jang), Kongwura (Kongnaa), Mandariwura and some of the Vagla chiefs. Plate 19 shows a high-ranking chief wearing a *mulfa*.



Plate 19. *Mulfa* tall red hat.

ii. The Blacksmiths of Gbenfu and Sawla

The blacksmiths are a high-ranking group of craftsmen put on the status of chiefs and also allowed to sit on the special skins of the chiefs. They are highly respected in the traditional area. The heads of the blacksmiths also have the antelope skins and use them in their palaces as chiefs. Apart from the skins they also have some little types of traditional pliers that they wear on important occasions for self-identification. Although the headquarters of the blacksmiths is at Gbenfu, the Sawla group plays a

mandatory role of performing rituals on behalf of the headquarters at Gbenfu; for the reason of proximity to the seat of government in the paramountcy. Figure 15 illustrates the blacksmith wearing his symbolic pliers.



Figure 15. A blacksmith wearing the little pliers

iii. The Stool/Chair of 'Mbonwura' and Queen Mothers

The *mbonwura* of the Gonja traditional area is the head of the Warriors, referred to as *abrafo* by the Akans. Any person born of that lineage is also recognized as a *mbonwura*. They are the defenders of the Gonja kingdom. In other words, they are like the *asafo* companies in the Akan tradition. *mbonwura* literally means 'the Asante chief'. His rights and responsibilities are therefore opposite the rights and responsibilities of the chiefs and princes. The *mbonwura* is not supposed to sit on the skins but rather, he sits on either a stool or chair. The *mbonwura*'s stool or chair may have no symbols carved them depending on his personal interest and philosophy. The *mbonwura* uses the stool or chair because he must always be smart and alert, ready to

defend the kingdom at any moment. The stool or chair is therefore considered most suitable to keep him active and alert as compared with the skins. The queen mother equally serves the interest of the chiefs and the rest of the people. She must therefore be ready to move at any moment to perform her duties as a wife. The stool and chair are therefore more suitable for her than the skins. Just as the *mbomwuras* do, the queens have their stool and chair symbols of their personal interests and philosophies. The symbols found on their stools and chairs directly related to those of the akan stool and chair symbols. Their symbolic meanings are not different from those of the akans. One such example is the Gye Nyame symbol.

The Vagla chiefs also use stools and chairs in their palaces and especially during durbars. This is because they are enstooled as well as enskinned. That is, a Vagla chief is usually enstooled at an enstoolment base and passed onto the skins in the courtroom. Plate 20 illustrates the enstoolment base of a Vagla chief at Tuna. According to a respondent, the stool symbols could not be explained because they have been bought from Asante. Plate 21 shows a chair bearing the Gye Nyame symbol bought from Asante.



Plate 20. Enstoolment base of Vagla chief



Plate 21. Chair bearing the Gye Nyame Symbol

4.4.9 Summary and Conclusion of Findings on Palace Arts

The court arts of the Bole traditional area consist of textiles, leather, and sculpture productions. These are used for prestige and identification of ranks. Some of the sculpture products are similar to those of the Akans, example the stool and the linguist staff symbols. Human figures, animals and birds are represented in their symbolic visual arts. The themes are philosophical and cover every aspect of human endeavour. Some of the themes reflect the chieftaincy hierarchies in administration.

The people's traditional administration is therefore very rich in symbolic representation. Their philosophy is also full of wisdom and knowledge. There is also a well-organized administrative system, which is built on their symbolic visual arts.

4.5 Symbolic Visual Art Forms for Prestige Purposes Only

Societies and clans throughout the world have certain standards and values for classifying their individuals. These standards of measurements and values are based on achievements, success and possessions. Any individual who achieves these desires of his society as regards success and possessions is either respected or he/she feels respected by his/her society or clan. This respect is referred to as prestige. Prestige is defined by (Hornby, 1967) as "respect that results from the good reputation of a person, nation....." Almost every individual desires prestige for him/herself. There are therefore, certain art forms societies and clans regard as objects of prestige and every individual strives to have them. Objects of such status existed and some still exist in the Bole traditional area. They either possess or do not possess symbolic meanings.

The art forms for prestige purposes in the traditional area are limited to the areas of Textiles, Basketry, Sculpture, Architecture, Pottery and a few other areas. The following data is therefore the response to the interviews and questionnaires administered under prestigious art forms.

4.5.1 Prestigious Art Forms in Textiles

1. *Bachaga* or *Banaga*

Bachaga or *Banaga* in plate 22 shows men's smock with sleeves worn by all persons regardless of their ranks in society. It is most commonly used by the Youth.

2. *Dansiki* or *Tago*

Dansiki or *Tago* in plate 23 is men's smock without sleeves usually worn by the youth.

3. *Kutumbi*

Kutumbi in plate 24 is a very wide and heavy traditional garment usually worn by chiefs and high-ranking persons in society. *Kjargjo* is another type used by only chiefs. Any elderly man who is who is able to own *kutumbi* also uses it.

4. *Piji Chie*

Piji Chie in plate 25 literally means *Female garment*. It is a white smock usually worn by people newly enskinned or about to be enskinned.

5. Men's Cover Cloth

This is usually a very wide and long traditionally woven cloth, most sewn from a prestigious cloth called *kitimitokoya*.

6. *Kurlanni*

Kurlanni in figure 16 literally means *supporter of the testicles* in the Batige/Wali and Safalba dialects. This is a very large and loose pair of native trousers used by men for prestige puposes.



Figure 16. *Kurlanni*



Plate 22. *Bachaga*



Plate 23. *Dansiki*



Plate 24. *Kutumbl*



Plate 25. *Piñi chie*

7. *Sarada*

The name expresses the long nature of the garment in the Batige/Wali dialects. Men use it for prestige purposes.

8. *Chechere*

Chechere expresses the appearance of a cloth of mixed colours such as black and white, red and so on in the Batige/Wali dialect. A woman with this kind of cloth is highly respected.

9. *Butugu Wiaja*

The name literally means a cloth from Butugu in Côte d'Ivoire. A very beautiful native cloth woven from yarns of many different colours. It was mostly imported from La Côte d'Ivoire. The cloth was later imitated by local weavers. That is a prestigious cloth highly regarded by women. Women who owned this cloth are very much respected by both men and women.

10. *Kutugfoa*

A traditional cloth of narrow white strips and broad black strips used by women and chiefs for prestige purpose. It is said to be so expensive that the poor need to wait till maize is harvested before they can buy it. Thus, the origin of its name which literally means *is maize matured?* Plate 3a show the cloth known as *Kutugfoa*

11. *Kelenkelen*

Kelenkelen in plate 3b shows a native cloth of black and white narrow strips which functions as a cloth of prestige for women. It is worn, especially, during festive occasions for its beautiful appearance.

12. *Kukogonishi/kuo siwti*

Kukogonishi/kuo siwti literally means the *eye of a rein duiker* in Gonja and Vagla dialects respectively. It is another prestigious cloth for women.

13. *Kitimitokoya*

This name literally means *own me and buy soap*. It implies that any woman who owns it must be capable of keeping it neat. It is a highly prestigious cloth for women.

14. *Kichantie*

Kichantie in plate 26 is a cloth with thin black and white zigzag designs that make it appear, as a whole, like the black and white designs of guinea fowl feathers. The name therefore literally means *guinea fowl's wings* in the Gonja dialect. Women wear it for prestige.

The above named cloths are the most prestigious cloths of the traditional area, although there are many other cloths as well as those of modern designs and names that are also admired by women. The modern clothes include *Buipe be nklii*, *Kichantie*, *Angelina*, *Borewonche* and *Munkpalawoso*. These can be found in plate 26.



Bupe de rikia



Kichantfo



Angelina



Barawonche



Markparawoso

Plate 26. Some modern traditional cloths of the Gonja traditional area commonly used for prestige.

4.5.2 Prestigious Visual Art Forms in Sculpture/Architecture

A man who had a mud built bed in his resting room was respected.

1. A beautifully designed walking stick is fashionable and prestigious for men.
2. A beautiful traditionally woven hat is worn to accompany this walking stick.
3. It is prestigious for one to have finger-printed-designed walls

4.5.3 Prestigious Visual Art Forms in Basketry

1. *Tere*

Tere is a traditionally woven small round basket with an indented lid. Palm branches are usually split into narrow wefts and warps, which are used for the weaving. It is used for keeping treated cotton wool being spun into yarns. Any elderly woman who possesses a *tere* is highly respected. Plate 27 shows a *Kaburi* placed on top of a *tere*.

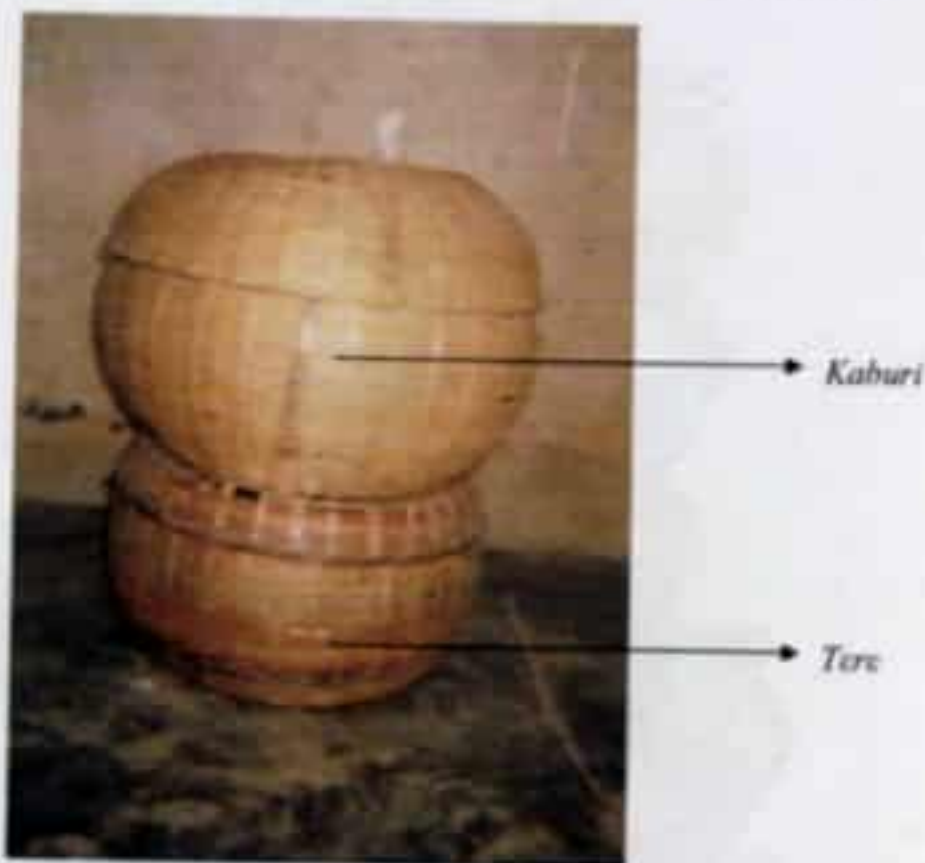


Plate 27. *Tere* and *Kaburi*

2. *Kaburi*

Kaburi is a large basket woven with palm branches. It also has a lid like the *tere*. Its lid is, however, pyramidal in shape. It is plastered with cow dung to seal up all holes in it. *Kaburi* serves as container for keeping clothes, especially important cloths like the white cloth and the prestigious cloths of women.

4.5.4 Prestigious Visual Art Forms in Pottery.

A set of 15 well-polished pots nicely arranged at the back of a woman's living room are objects appreciated by women. Women who possess such orderly arranged and well cared for pots are highly regarded by both men and women. The pots are for beautification of the room and display of artistic skills; and they also symbolize the ideal woman. Figure 17 illustrates the pots of the ideal woman.



Figure 17. A set of polished pots of the ideal woman

4.5.5 Other Prestigious Visual Art Forms for Women

Men and women alike appreciate a woman who has her waist packed with imported beads. Women therefore regard beads as objects of prestige. Bangles and rings of various sizes for the legs and arms are also very much appreciated. For instance, *nampasi* for the ankles are worn in pairs by matured adolescent girls who are due for marriage. That symbolises both wealth and maturity for marriage. Beads very much loved are *karifiri* and rings for the arms are called *ghitisi* in Batige/Wali, Safalba and Vagla dialects.

4.5.5.1 Neatness of the Environment

Women were responsible for plastering and designing the walls as well as keeping the floor and the whole home environment neat. Women who perform these duties well are regarded as ideal women. A woman who has her walls decorated with china plates, tin plates or broken pieces of pot in the form of mosaic designs and a floor well plastered and smeared with cow dung to produce a nice scent and a green colour is highly respected. The walls are as well painted with ashes mixed with cowdung or white substance produced from treated corn. Others use earth colours. Women also wash their calabashes white. And together with other kitchen utensils thoroughly washed are displayed in the kitchen or the bedroom for prestige reasons. The displayed pots may only be used during certain emergencies when she can no more rely solely on the utensils in use. The reward of neatness much appreciated by the women is rather on prestigious reasons and not for the sake of hygiene.

4.5.6 Summary and Conclusion of Findings on Prestigious Visual Arts.

Most of the prestigious art forms in the Bole traditional area for both men and women are in the form of textiles, although there are a few symbolic art forms from leather.

The art forms isolated for women are mostly baskets and pots, whilst men's prestigious arts are generally sculpture. The architectural visual arts are used for determining the ideal women.

Textiles therefore, play a unique role in the people's culture. Women who want to be recognized as ideal women keep their homes very neat and beautifully designed with finger print symbols on their walls. They as well adopt good hygienic practices by keeping the home environment clean. There is also some degree of sex and class segregation in the use of the visual arts.

It is therefore not surprising that the artifacts of the traditional area are mostly in textiles, basketry, pottery and sculpture. One must not also hesitate to say that it is rather unfortunate to observe that the beautiful symbolic finger printed walls of the past and the beautifully and neatly organised homes of the traditional area have also become scenes of the past in bigger villages and towns in the area. This may be because the women have become more and more preoccupied by commercial activities and have no time to decorate their walls. Masons are now engaged to plaster their walls plain.

4.6 PRODUCERS OF THE ART FORMS

Art production is a necessity of man for survival. Since art production played such a vital role next to agriculture towards the survival of early man, every human society that ever existed on earth produced art in one way or the other for certain reasons at certain times. Some people produce art for the purpose of aesthetics (beauty), others produce it for pleasure or emotional expression and others produce it for functional reasons such as healing. Others yet produce arts as objects of utility in their day to day activities. The producers of the arts in Bole traditional area produce their arts for some

of the above reasons. The symbolic art forms are, for instance, produced for functional purposes (that is, they must have spiritual powers) whilst others like their textiles articles are mostly for prestigious and daily domestic utility. These and many other reasons compel people all over the world to produce art. Influenced by the people's philosophy, their environment and available materials as well as their values, the arts were produced through two sources or categories of artists. That is, they were either ordered or produced by the people themselves. In other words, the producers were either outside the traditional area or from among the people. The responses on the producers have therefore been put in these two categories as follows: Arts produced within the traditional area or by the people; and art brought from elsewhere.

4.6.1 Arts Produced Within the Traditional Area

The people of the traditional area produce most of their art forms themselves. The producers learn the skills on their own according to their area of interest by trial-and-error. They practise during infancy by learning to carve when they are on their farms. By the time they become adults they have become perfect in their production skills. Some of the crafts that can not be practised on the farms are learnt through apprenticeship. They attach themselves to master craftsmen to learn the skills. The people themselves produce all the cloths and garments of the traditional area as well as the domestic utilities like baskets, pots, and calabashes. The blacksmiths are well noted for their all-round-craftsmanships, who are able to produce tools, carvings and other art forms that are even out of their area of specialization. The cloth weavers also play their parts. Women engage themselves in pottery and spinning of the yarns, which are supplied to the traditional weavers of the area. Majority of the middle aged men know how to weave the baskets of various designs. The elderly and experienced women also guide the married women to design the mosaic and finger printed walls as

well as plaster the floors of the rooms. The men know where to get the cloth dyes from the bushes. The cotton is cultivated by the men and picked by the women when their white fluffy pulps burst out of their sacs. There are no strict specializations in the arts but artists are available in all areas of the arts they produce for their traditional activities except the special ones they import from neighbouring countries like Cote d'Ivoire or Burkina Faso.

4.6.2 Arts Brought from Elsewhere

The following arts were said to have been brought from other places outside the traditional area:

The 'sigma' is said to be a god brought from Burkina Faso to the traditional area. The original garments of the god were therefore from the country of origin. These garments, however, are now imitated by the people themselves when they wear out. It is however believed that whoever orders for the production of a new set of the sigma attire dies. An elderly person who is prepared to sacrifice his life therefore does such orders. The '*butugwiata*' is also a prestigious cloth that used to be imported from a village called *Butugu* in the La Côte d'Ivoire. According to respondents, our colonial masters, the British, brought the large umbrellas used for durbars. Stools are also brought from Ashanti as well as Brong Ahafo Region which shares borders with the traditional area.

4.6.3 Summary and Conclusion of Findings on the Producers of the Art Forms

The visual arts are either produced by the people themselves or ordered. Their artists are either self-trained or produced through apprenticeship. There are arts for the different sexes. Any one can produce the arts if he/she wishes. There are however notable craftsmen in the area. Art therefore plays a vital role in the area. The people

are independent and produce their own crafts. Their craftsmen are given administrative role because they want to accord them the necessary respect. This indicates that as much as the people are independent they also share or import ideas from other cultures.

4.7 PHILOSOPHICAL AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The respondents expressed the following opinions on the philosophical implication of the use of the visual art forms in the rituals and how the symbolic art forms could be used in the education of the learners. Opinions were also expressed on the educational role the outcome of the research should play.

4.7.1 Philosophical Implications

1. The symbolic visual art forms are used in the rituals to make physical representation of the gods and spirits possible.
2. The people make the symbolic art forms and use them in the rituals because they want to concretise their beliefs.
3. The symbolic art forms are made for the spirits of the gods to dwell in them to give them the functioning ability. And as the people believe that the spirits and the gods are residing in them, they talk to them directly.
4. The symbolic art forms sometimes serve as containers for the herbs that provide the power of the gods and spirits.
5. The symbolic visual art forms are made and used during the rituals because the existence of the gods and spirits can best be expressed to others with the art forms that can rather be seen than the spirits.
6. The symbolic visual arts are used to express the values of the gods and spirits.

7. Physical contacts with the gods are made possible through the use of the visual arts, because the visual arts are regarded as the bodies of the deities.
8. The symbolic presentation serves as a way of respect for the gods.
9. The use of the visual art forms for the rituals is a psychological way of making people believe in the existence of the gods; this tradition helps to strengthen the faith people have in the traditional priests.
10. The symbolic forms are created to differentiate the gods from each other. They are therefore made for the purpose of identification.

4.7.2 How the Symbolic Visual Arts can be Used in the Education of students

1. The students need to observe the uses of these art forms by the adults and imitate the adults in order to learn from these art forms.
2. The researchers and the teachers should work hand-in-hand to teach the students about the symbolism of the art forms.
3. The symbolism of our art forms must first be properly documented before they can play any meaningful educational role.
4. Teachers must organise field trips for the students, aimed at giving students chance of asking questions about the symbolic visual art forms of the traditional area.
5. Teachers must use traditional people as resource persons to teach the symbolism of the art forms.
6. Teachers themselves must learn about the symbolism of these visual art forms to be able to teach their students.
7. Parents should teach their children about the symbolism of the visual art forms.

8. Parents should be prepared to provide the teachers with the necessary assistance and information about the symbolic visual art forms to enable them teach the children.
9. Teachers and students must learn more about these traditional symbols from the traditionalists. Whenever possible, teachers should use the symbolic visual arts directly as teaching-learning aids.

It will however be naïve to expect a total positive response to this issue. Other respondents were therefore pessimistic that very little of the traditional art forms could be used in modern education due to the increasing vices like theft and general confusion in the system. The symbolism cannot also be learnt by modern children because one is either a Christian or a Muslim. They are therefore not prepared to learn from the traditional people who know the symbolic meanings of the traditional arts. According to the respondents, the art forms involving the traditions will surely be forgotten because modern children also prefer modern traditions. They do not respect the taboos attached to some of these symbolic visual arts.

4.7.3 The Educational Role to be Played by the Outcome of the Research

1. Future researches of this kind on the traditional area will be made possible built on the outcome of the research in order to facilitate wider coverage of the topic.
2. Future scholars will learn about the symbolism of the visual arts of the area from the research report.
3. The research will serve as guide to any educationist who wants to prepare a teacher's manual for teaching the symbolism of the traditional area.
4. The documented data of the research will serve as authentic material for teaching.
5. The data will be documented and made available for easier and quicker access.

4.7.4 Summary/Conclusion of Findings on Philosophical Implication of the Use of the Visual Arts for Rituals; and the Educational Usefulness of the Research

The philosophical and educational implication of the uses of the visual arts for rituals are that the visual art forms are used for physical representation of abstract ideas, to make some psychological impact on participants and the strengthening of their faith as well as serve as receptacles for herbs. Educationally it will lead to further research and wider coverage, future scholars will learn about the symbolism, it will serve as a guide on symbolism and an authentic teaching-learning material. There is, however, the pessimism that modern children will not be prepared to learn about the visual arts symbolism. Conclusively, the positive responses from the respondents reflect that the research is considered to be educationally useful. Others found the situation hopeless because they are aware that the freedom of worship being enjoyed by the youth in modern times no longer allows the adults to have control over their children's interest. They cannot therefore persuade the learners to learn about the symbolism of the visual art forms. The complexity of it all is that most of the modern religions are not able to differentiate between symbolic visual art forms as objects of wisdom and knowledge and those for traditional worship. The fear, therefore, is that the modern religions will reject right away the idea of introducing a study of visual art symbolism of the traditional people in schools.

4.7.5 The Hypothesis Test

The two major towns of the area (Bole and Sawla) and some two villages in the area (Mankuma and Jentilpe, which were noted for their traditions) were selected for the test.

In each of the selected towns and villages the knowledgeable elders, craftsmen, traditional priests and some chiefs were interviewed. Responses were positive and in some cases sample pictures were taken. Respondents gave references and even mentioned specific names of persons and places where symbolic visual art forms could be found, and the people who could explain them. The respondents explained those readily available.

4.7.5.1 Test Findings

An average of four persons was interviewed in each of the selected towns and villages. The first village visited was Mankuma, a very notable traditional village in the area. It is situated between the two major towns of the area, Bole and Sawla. It is 16.4 km north of Bole and about 12.4 km south of Sawla. It is a major divination centre for the area as well as the burial place for the paramount chiefs of the Gonja Traditional Area. Lots of symbolic visual art forms are therefore found in this village. The head of the diviners called '*Kadewura*' is of symbolic importance to the village and the whole traditional area of the Gonjas known as '*Yagbon*'. Although the village has a chief who resides in Bole, the *Kadewura* is the symbolic head of the village. '*Kadewura*' literally means "Head of the settlement". Most of the valuable symbolic art forms are with the *Kadewura* and his group of soothsayers (diviners) known as the '*nlosor*'. '*Nlosor*' is the plural form for *lorsor* (divider). They are the best interpreters of these visual art symbols, especially those used for their divinations. These symbolic art forms include secret leather bags, hats, calabashes and garments. Some of these are considered very secret and sacred. They are therefore kept away from the general public and nothing may be mentioned of them to outsiders. The *Kadewura* bears a symbolic staff, which has the crescent of the moon. The same symbol and stars could

be found drawn on a wall in his courtyard. Their symbolic meanings were allegorically explained. In the *Kadawura*'s explanation, the moon symbolizes himself and the stars stand for the people of the traditional area. "As the moon provides light to the stars, he also informs the people about their lives and their fortunes are told them through divination".

Donkulmu Kotobiri, also a *lorisor*' and a cloth weaver explained some symbolism of the traditional cloths and their finger print designs on their walls. According to him the main purpose of the finger print wall designs is to prevent the plastered wall from being eroded off. He added that some of the designs, however, are representations of spiders and their webs, crocodile and types of snakes like the carpet viper called *wasara*' in the Gonja dialect. Each has a symbolic meaning. Their meanings may be some forms of social commentary on life or an expression of a personal philosophy. For instance, the snake design, according to Donkulmu, literally means: *The design and the venom of the carpet viper never fade off, no matter how severe it might be beaten by rain.* It symbolically means that the user of the design is informing the general public, particularly enemies that he/she will never lose his or her power or potency and influence in society despite all difficulties or problems the one might be facing. In other words, it is the symbol of *lasting effect*. Similar wall designs like the one in Plate 28 could be found elsewhere in the traditional area.



Plate 28. The Finger Print Wall Design

The symbolisms of the following traditional cloths were also explained: *Etripowaja* from the Gonja expression *Etripo be waja* literally meaning "A poor person's cloth". Its Akan version is *Ahiafo*. The Akan version has been commonly adopted as its name.

Kutugfa literally comes from the question: *Kutuge fo-a?* (Gonja). Meaning, "Is maize matured?" It implies that the poor depend on their harvest of their maize to be able to pay for the cost of the cloth. It is therefore mostly owned by the rich, chiefs or very important personalities in society. Many other cloths like *Kichante* and *kitimitokoya* were explained. Details of these will be given later in the thesis. The loom pulley was also discussed and its symbolic meaning explained. Plate 3a, 3b and 26 show some traditional cloths of the Gonja traditional area in general.

The symbolism of a traditional white cloth and a cream coloured mat usually used for burial by the people of the traditional area were explained. Details of these have been given in chapter four. Other symbolic visual art forms used for personal protection such as the *kaale* (*kaali*) were also mentioned during this hypothesis test. They are also explained in detail in the chapter.

The test was conducted in Bole, Sawla and Jentilpe, the remaining selected towns and village respectively. Symbolic visual art forms mentioned were those used for funeral rites, marriages, birth rites, chieftaincy matters, et cetera. Apart from some of the earlier responses repeated, additional visual arts were mentioned. These included another type of funeral mat made from rushes, blacksmiths' pliers, the funeral pots and baskets, and many others.

Apart from the readiness of the sample population to answer the questions put to them they also expressed interest in the subject of discussion during the test interviews. Responses to the test questions were positive. The researcher also saw some of the symbolic visual arts himself and was as well taken to some of the visual art forms to take pictures. The researcher's personal observations and knowledge of some of these symbolic visual art forms together with all the responses in the test were enough evidence to prove the hypothesis right.

4.7.5.2 Summary and Conclusion on Hypothesis Test

A hypothesis test conducted involving some very notable towns and villages in the traditional area yielded positive results. Specific questions were used for the test to make it authentic and meaningful. The desired objectives were therefore achieved. At least, four people were interviewed in each of the selected villages. Responses were

similar with additional information revealing the presence of more symbolic visual art forms in the area. The symbolic meanings of some of the visual art forms like divinations, the funeral cloth, wall symbols, textiles et cetera were explained. The respondents showed much interest in the topics themselves and responded positively. The researcher's personal knowledge and experiences are also evidence supporting the hypothesis.

The findings of the hypothesis test have therefore given some convincing proofs on the availability of symbolic visual art forms in the area. The researcher therefore concludes basing on the evidences provided that the people of Bole traditional area have indigenous art forms that have symbolic meanings that can be explained and documented.

4.8 Analysis and Interpretation of Findings From the Field Study

The findings cover the library, museum and archival researches, the hypothesis test, the search for related literature and most importantly the administration of the questionnaires, interviews and the actual data gathered through the responses. They also involve the sample population used. The limitations have also been analyzed and interpreted. The analyses are interpreted leading to conclusions and recommendations.

4.8.1 Preliminary Findings

4.8.1.1 Library Research Findings

At the main library of KNUST, many books were either jumbled up or they were nowhere to be found on the shelves although their titles or names of the authors could be found on the library catalogue. The librarians themselves sometimes even found difficulties tracing certain books. Reasons given were that some students had either borrowed them and had not returned them on schedule or they were probably re-

positioned on the shelves by some individuals for easy access to themselves alone. This appalling condition in the library appears to come from the negligence of the librarians. The librarians need to ensure that the arrangement of books on the shelves are checked and re-organized periodically. Books missing from the shelves should either be traced immediately or their names must be removed from the catalogue. There is the need to devise a mechanism of checking students who send library books back to the shelves themselves with the intention of hoarding them. Students must also be continuously educated on the need to return books to the library on schedule and also to avoid hoarding books on the shelves. Conditions of referencing at the Ghana Collection section were quite satisfactory. However, one had to look for a seat at the undergraduate section after signing to use a book from the section. That was not conducive. There should have been some furniture at the Ghana Collection itself for people who wish to stay inside there to do references. If the undergraduate library was filled up with students reading, researchers or students at the Ghana Collection had no choice but to stand and read. Worse still was that, the number of art textbooks there were woefully inadequate and that needs serious consideration. Internet services at the main library was a problem for the researcher because he was not conversant with the computer and the attendant was not also able to assist him to retrieve the needed information.

The attendant had problem retrieving the material herself. It was either pretence from that attendant or she also had problems retrieving Internet material on art education. To avoid the recurrence of such situations with future art education researchers, computer education should be made part of the programme of the Department of Art Education for people running the Post Graduate Programmes.

At the library of the University College of Education of Winneba – Kumasi campus, only two books were found relevant to the topic. There were almost no art books in their library. The implication was that they had nothing to do with art at the Kumasi campus. Art needs to be given the necessary recognition in the Kumasi campus for the fact that Art Education is one of the University's Programmes at the Winneba campus.

Only a book on the Ashante kingdom and its symbolic visual arts during the colonial era could be found at the Tamale Regional Library. That was again a reflection that art was not regarded an important subject in the north. The only art book found in the library probably got there by chance. The worse situation was experienced at the Tamale Teachers Training College where art was being taught as part of the vocational programme being run there. The researcher could not lay hands on any reference book on art there. The only reference made was from the Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 1999 from the personal library of the Head of Art Department. He had no art textbooks to support the scanty material. One can therefore fancy the constraints the art teachers in that college in particular and the north in general face in getting informational material for teaching the subject. The lack of art textbooks in the libraries and the schools is also a problem of lack of documentation in the visual arts.

The Tamale Institute of Cross-cultural Studies appeared to place importance on art because it deals with art and culture. Very useful art textbooks on almost every subject area of visual arts were found in their library. A lot of related literature was therefore found in that library. Researchers and art educationists can therefore rely on the library as a good source of ~~referencing~~.

4.8.1.2 Museum, Archival and Gallery Researches Made

The badges of symbolic value at the Ghana Arm Forces Museum and Archives of Kumasi were quite impressive. These badges were either from Europe or designed by the colonial masters aimed at motivating their African soldiers in the colonies as well as maintaining discipline. That means that even the colonial masters found African visual art symbolism functional and valuable and decided to use the idea to promote discipline in their armies.

It is regrettable to say that documentary sources like archives, galleries and museums which were expected to be found in a cultural centre like the Centre for National Culture in Tamale were not there. There were only the symbols of the five major kingdoms of the Northern Region in mosaic executed on a short wall near the conference hall. Those were works of Dr. Alhaji S. Y. Peligah. All the researcher could also find at the National House of Chiefs were again some paintings of the very symbols already found at the Centre for National Culture, on the walls of the gate and inside their durbar hall. All that the researcher wants to get across is that there was almost nothing of the northern cultures, especially their symbolic visual arts, to be seen in the two cultural places of the region. That was again the problem of lack of documentation. That problem reflected at the Regional Archives and the Regional Statistical Service Department when the researcher failed to get satisfactory literature or information on the traditional area under study. That was a highly disappointing situation in documentation. The Northern Regional Administration, the National House of Chiefs, the Centre for National Culture, the Statistical Service in Tamale and NGOs in the Region must be much concerned with documentation and researches in the cultures of the Region.