EVALUATION OF AESTHETICS OF INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURES IN METROPPOLITAN KUMASI FROM PRE-COLONIAL ERA TO THE PRESENT

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EVALUATION OF AESTHETICS OF INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURES IN METROPOLITAN KUMASI FROM PRE-COLONIAL ERA TO THE PRESENT

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE (ART EDUCATION)

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By

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OCTOBER, 1993

CERTIFICATION

Certified that this thesis is the candidates own account of her research.

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.....

Professor Kojo Fosu
(Supervisor)

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ABSTRACT

ASAMOAH ADWOAH MARGARET, Dip. Art Education, B.A. Art - Graphic Design (Hons) P/G DAE, M.A. (Art Aeducation)

EVALUATION OF AESTHETICS OF INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURES IN METROPOLITAN KUMASI FROM PRE-COLONIAL ERA TO THE PRESENT

THESIS SUPERVISOR: Prof. Kojo Fosu, B.A., M.A.

Aesthetics in architecture involves appreciation and criticisms, and forms an essential human experience which is carried out not in an isolated environment, but in a wider context of the community. Knowledge in aesthetics is an important vehicle for the educational and cultural process which contributes positively to individual and national development.

The main objectives of the thesis seeks to identify different types of indigenous architecture, document and analyse the aesthetics in indigenous architecture in Asante. A breakdown of the problem reveals the link between the people and their art which are represented in their indigenous architecture in the form of religious temples.

The research identified some Asante indigenous architecture and revealed that artefacts are composites of indigenous architecture. Some symbolic designs in the buildings showed that the elements of design were so organised as to expose balance, rhythm, contrast, symmetry, unity and harmony.

The thesis is presented in four chapters. The first chapter being the introductory deals with the problem and its setting. Chapter two surveys the related literature while chapter three deals with the history, values and aesthetic of some

selected indigenous Asante architecture. The third chapter forms the main body of the thesis and provides fresh information on aesthetics in indigenous Asante architecture. The chapter identifies the art in the buildings and how Asante architecture has evolved to date.

The research ends with the fourth chapter which deals with results, conclusion and recommendation.

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CHAPTER ONE

I N T R O D U C T I O N

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1 The Problem

The usefulness of visual symbols to educate people in any society cannot be underestimated, because throughout the ages, man has used visual arts to build and enrich his environment. The indigenous architecture in the Kumasi metropolis possesses similar characteristics. But the aesthetics in the structure of Kumasi and indeed Asante architecture has not been acknowledged meaningfully, neither has there been any documentation of them.

In the meantime, the historical significance and the aesthetic relevance of these structures are giving way to new buildings in cement construction.

It is therefore the objective of this research to:-

1.2 Objectives

1. To identify indigenous architecture in and around the the Kumasi Metropolis before colonization.
2. To appraise the aesthetic qualities that have evolved in indigenous architecture in the Kumasi Metropolis from the pre-colonial era to the present era.
3. To document the aesthetics in indigenous architecture in the Kumasi Metropolis.

1.3 Hypotheses

1. Aesthetic embellishments play an important role in indigenous Asante architecture.
2. There are identifiable elements of Asante indigenous architecture which portray aesthetic values, qualities and aesthetic awareness.
3. Aesthetic experience has enhanced the evolving architecture in Asante.

1.4 Importance of the study

1. The result of the study would help throw more light on the indigenous architecture in Asante.
2. It would unearth the artistic aspect of indigenous Asante architecture and cultural values attached to them.
3. It would instil pride in the national conscience and act as inspiration for Ghanaian contemporary building designers and construction engineers and artists.
4. It would help the public acquire aesthetic understanding for the communicative symbols in the decorations of aesthetics in Asante architectural structures.
5. It would also serve as a resource material for designers, builders and the general public.

1.5 Limitations

The scope of the thesis covered the evolution of aesthetics in architecture in and around the Kumasi Metropolis from pre-colonial era to the present time.

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It is not intended that the indigenous architecture of only Kumasi metropolis be studied. Rather, there will be specific studies of selected artistic aspects of the general aesthetics in indigenous Asante architecture.

These areas of study would examine the symbolic language in the decorations of indigenous architecture from its spiritual, psychological and philosophical connotations.

1.6 Population for study

The population for the study consisted of the seven indigenous architectural buildings identified through research readings. Three of them were visited on the field. An ancillary population made up of elders, local builders of "Atakpame" buildings, artists, architects, traditionalists and other experts in the field were also used for the study.

1.7 Sample Methodology

The researcher employed the simple random sampling technique to get the accurate representation of the population.

1.8 Research Methodology

The descriptive and analytical research methods have been used in this study.

1. The descriptive method is devoted to the various indigenous Asante architecture and their origin, plan, structure, design and embellishments. This is to help identify similarities and differences.
2. With analytical survey method, data collected through questions, interviews and literature survey were assembled, analysed and interpreted.

1.9 Data Collection

All information and facts obtained through personal interviews, field trips, photographs, cutworks, personal experience and so on served as the primary data.

Information and facts collected from bibliographical books, published and unpublished materials from public and private libraries, archives and museums also served as secondary sources.

1.10 Data Location

1. The researcher visited and made use of the following libraries:U.S.T. (Main) Kumasi; College of Art, Kumasi; British Council, Kumasi; British Council, Accra; Ashanti Library, Kumasi; Museum and Monuments Board, Accra.
2. Selected experts on art, aesthetics and architecture were consulted.
3. The information collected from the various libraries, elders, and traditionalists on aesthetics in architecture were compiled, assembled, analysed, synthesized and evaluated. Conclusions were finally drawn from them.

However, as with every human institution, some problems were encountered during the research work. In the first instance, the researcher did a lot of travelling and made visits to conduct direct interviews.

The usual traditional customs such as sheep and drinks were demanded by some elders which were far beyond the researcher's means due to limited funds. In the course of the interviews, some traditional elders considered mature with much

wisdom, lacked indepth knowledge about their culture. Hence they did not understand the philosophies, values, beliefs and so on underlying the decorations and symbols on religious temples and palaces.

Books which were very directly relevant to the thesis were difficult to come by. The researcher is very sad to say that, Asante, despite its rich tradition and architecture has no book like "Aesthetics and Asante Architecture" written by either the College of Art, Department of Architecture or African Studies Department of Legon. However, it was Professor Kojo Fosu, Dean of the College of Art, UST, who wish his rich experience in aesthetics and tradition guided the researcher on the aeshtetics while Dr. H.N.A. Wellington, senior lecturer of the Architecture Department of UST assisted in the area of architecture.

1.11 Abbreviations

C.F.A.O. - Compagnie Francaise de L'Afrique Occidentale

E.C.G. - Electricity Corporation of Ghana

K.A.T.H. - Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital

U.S.T. - University of Science and Technology

U.T.C. - Union Trading Company

1.12 Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, some technical terms used in text are explained.

Aesthetics: The study of the principles of beauty or the appreciation of beautiful in visual arts.

Aesthetic Experience: An open, passive or active confrontation with an art object or even during which the individual performs a visual analysis of the multitude of qualities

and aspects present in the situation. It is then an experience which is valued for itself.

Appreciation: A form of aesthetic response to works of art.

"Adampan": Traditional houses often with well-proportioned and decorative pillars, which assisted to give support to the roof over a house, as well as forming the proscenium.

Architecture: The art and science of building. It is also the art of enclosing space for effective use.

Beam:Long horizontal piece of squared timber supported at both ends, used to carry the weight of a building.

Contemporary: Something or somebody of the present time or age.

Column: Tall upright pillar, either supporting or decorating part of a building or standing alone as a monument.

Cornice: The projecting part above the frieze in the column.

Decorative Design: Embellishment or surface enrichment of an object. Decorative design may be inherent in structure or may be applied once the structure is completed.

Deity: The divine quality or nature, or the state of being a god.

Design: This is the organization of parts into a coherent whole.

Domestic Buildings: Buildings used by individuals for private accommodation.

Eave: The overlapping edges of a roof.

Evaluation: This deals with the appraisal, value or the estimation of the worth of a thing. It implies some degree of judgement.

Evolution: The process of opening out or developing, usually gradually.

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Facade: The exterior, usually the front or the face of a building towards a street or open place.

"Fihankra": The Asante rectangular house style with the open courtyard.

Fretwork: A work in decorative pattern usually done in wood by cutting or sawing with fret saw.

Indigenous: Ideas or concepts that pertain or belong to an ethnic group, a region or a country.

Loggia: Open-sided gallery or arcade;or part of a house with one sideopen to the garden.

Modelling: The shaping of objects from plastic material, such as clay.

Motif: The main feature in a work of art.

"Obosom" A tutelar or guardian spirit of a state, town or family.

Open Screen Work: A kind of decorative design on buildings which act as windows for ventilation.

"Pato": A house or a room with an open front.

Pattern: A repetitive and decorative surface element. Also when a motif is used over and over it becomes a pattern.

Pigment: Another name for colour.

Plastic: Something that is capable of being moulded or shaped, such as clay.

Public Buildings: Buildings used by the community in general.

Pilaster: Rectangular column that projects from a wall into which it is set.

Plinth: The square base or block on which a column or statue stands.

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Relief: A method of carving or moulding in which a design stands out from a flat surface.

Shingles: Small flat square or oblong piece of wood used on roofs and walls.

Simple Random Sampling: Is a small proportion of a population randomly selected or chosen for observation and analysis for accurate representation.

Symbol: It is anything that stands for something else. Usually, a symbol is a simplified image that, because of certain associations in the viewers mind, represents a more complex idea or system.

Symbolism: The hidden meanings contained in the artefacts.

Tradition: That which is handed down from generation to generation. It could be the beliefs of a people, their opinion, customs, method of producing artefacts and philosophies.

Visual Arts: All works of art that can be physically seen

1.13 Arrangement of text

For a better understanding of the text, the research has been divided into five chapters. Chapter one begins with the introduction which discusses the problem and setting. Chapter two surveys the related literature available on aesthetics and architecture. Chapter three deals with the aesthetics in indigenous Asante architecture, touching on concepts, significance and aesthetic considerations. The various stages of the evolution of the aesthetics in Asante architecture have also been analysed. Chapter four deals with conclusion, results, summary and recommendations.

A list of references has been provided at the end of every chapter for easy reference.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Aesthetics and architecture are subjects that have been discussed and written on extensively. It is a much treated subject by architects, planners, anthropologists, psychologists and philosophers. But not so much by artists or from the artists standpoint. Some writers have vehemently rejected the infusion of aesthetics and architecture,while others have tried to marry the two. The two areas, aesthetics and architecture, are not new to man. Some writers have also written separately on each and have accorded them their respective due.

However, it is the view of most expert writers on the subject that, aesthetics and architecture cannot be divorced completely if a proper appreciation is to be made of architecture to fulfil its dual role of form and function.

In order to clearly perceive a better understanding of aesthetics and its relationship with architecture, the two areas will be examined.

When Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten coined the word aesthetics, it was his belief that beauty was a property of things when perceived as wholes.[1] However, philosophers such as Kant, Schelling and Croce have also emphasized the creative aspects of art. The major problem in aesthetics concerns the nature of the beautiful.[2]

Webster's Third New Encyclopaedia Dictionary, vol.1 also defines it as

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> "a branch of philosophy dealing with beauty and the beautiful especially with judgement and tastes concerning them."3

Morris Weitz on his part informs us on the primary task of aesthetics as "not to seek a theory but to elucidate the concept of art."[4] He feels that definitions distort and add nothing to the understanding of art. Similar to Weitz's view, Iving Kaufman (1966)[5] also believes that the aesthetic expe-riences offer not only the pleasurable comtemplation of the "beautiful" and satisfying expression of individual "reality" but a further incentive and continuing enthusiasm for expe-tiences that in the final analysis become truly humanizing influences.

Kaufman explains that,

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> "the aesthtic concerns deal with the intrinsic qualities that a work of art possesses and the inherent characteristic response that the experience engenders."6

This goes to suggest that, to understand the role of aesthe-tic theory is not to conceive it as definitions, but rather, to read it as summaries of seriously made recommendations and to attend to certain features of art. Thus, aesthetic theories sharpen our understanding of art, since they teach us what to look for and how to look for it in art.

A similar view is echoed here by Roger Scruton in his book "Aesthetics of Ar.chitecture". He introduces aesthetic in his book thus;

> "The subject of aesthetics is as old as philosophy; nevertheless, it takes its medium form from Kant, who was the first philosopher to suggest that the sense of beauty is a distinct and autonomous employ-ment of the human mind comparable to moral and scientific understanding."7

Roger goes on to explain that, Kant's division of the mental faculties into theoretical practical and aesthetic,

> "provided the starting point for all later investigations and gave to aesthetics the central position in philosophy which it occupied throughout the nineteenth century and would but for established scholastism occupy even now."8

From the above it can be realised that aesthetic activity has been used to explain the nature and value of aesthetic taste. We are further made to understand that the first real task of aesthetics must lie in the correct understanding of certain mental capacities for experience and judgement. Scruton uses both philosophy and psychology to analyse aesthetics. He however leans more towards a philosophical one. This point is seen in how he analyses how the philosopher describes aesthetic experience in its most general terms so as to discover "its precise location in the human mind" and its relation, for instance to sensation, emotion and to judgement. He sticks to his stand (philosophical) as the basic preamble to any discussion on the significance and value of art. He believes in the concept and general significance of how aesthetic is conceived in the mind rather than any interest in "experts" concept of aesthetics.

In the same book, he explains how architectural aesthetics ought not to be confused with architectural theory. He states that;

> "Architectural theory consists of the attempt to formulate the maxims, rules and precepts which govern, or ought to govern the practice of the builder."9

He feels a theory of architecture infringes on aesthetics only if it claims a universal validity, for then, it must aim to capture the essence and not the "accidents of architectural beauty."

Scruton reinforces this claim through further discussion that, it is very characteristic of some architectural theorists from "Vitruvius to Le Corbuseir" to claim this universal validity for their laws. He believes these people, Vitruvius, Alberti. Ruskin and Corbuseir cannot all be right in believing that their favoured form of architecture is uniquely authorised by the universal understanding. He believes architecture presents

> "an immediate problem for any such general philosophical theory of aesthetic interest."10

This he believes is because, through its personal and at the same time functional qualities, architecture stands apart from other arts, seeming to require quite peculiar attitudes not only for its creation but also for its admiration and continuous enjoyment. We even begin to get the feeling that, the decorative aspects of architecture become somewhat more personal than any art of mere decoration would be.

In his book "Art and man" Irwin Edman (1939)11 takes into account the arts, out of which aesthetic reflection arises and the experiences out of which the arts grow, clarify and enhances. Irwin has chosen architecture as the best among the arts to illustrate the general principles involved in aesthetics. He believes architecture is unique and has all the seduction of all the arts. Architecture to him, has a special reality and impressiveness to which the other arts cannot lay claim. He defines architecture as "ambiguous and crucial. And that it lies on the border line between beauty and use." He continues that, it is so much a part of our daily environment that we forget often that it is an art. In fact, we are surrounded by buildings, beautiful or ugly, we live in them and therefore we accept them. So if any art conditions our aesthetic response

it is that of architecture. When we take paintings for instance, they can be hidden in museums, poems may also be unread and music unheard, but buildings, especially monumental ones, must be seen by those whom business or the routine of life oblige them to pass. Doctors, someone remarked, bury their mistakes, but architects build theirs. This goes to prove that, architecture, unlike the other arts, never forgets or allows the architects to forget that a building has a use as well as appearance. Architecture is not simply a decoration on the landscape, but a structure with appearance used by a person or a community for special functions.

Another definition of aesthetics by Fechner states that,

> "aesthetics deals with the aesthetic evaluation of pure perceptions or the perceptions preferred in the search for beauty."12

It may conveniently be said that, the discovery that aesthetic value is an evaluation, depending on a variable pattern of evaluation was most important at the time it was discovered in 1925 by Fechner and Co. But today, Sven Hesselgren[13] in his book "The language of Architecture" Sven Hesselgren thinks this way of thinking, can easily be seen as an "error". Sven thinks

> "The aesthetic verdict expresses an opinion of a value. Thus, no answer can be expected which will be valid for all human beings, such as can be expected in answer to questions of attribute such as "red" of colour.

Sven impresses upon us that an attribute of perception will change when it is made up of a greater unit and that it is these more completed units which are evaluated and not an aspect.

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As a result of these considerations, it cannot be expected that, for instance, a colour or form which is beautiful in one context, and on one occasion necessarily remains beautiful in other situations. The above statement of Sven is in conformity with Roger's philosophical standpoint which disagrees with Vitruvius and Compqny's notion which lays rules for the systematic combination and ornamentation of the parts of a building.

Infact, such precepts assume wrongly that we already know what we are seeking to achieve. Roger again opines that, with such notions, "then, architecture presents an immediate problem for any such general philosophical theory of aesthetic interest." He seems to disagree with generalised theories of aesthetic interest. However, it is natural to suppose that "representaional arts, such as painting, drama, poetry and sculpture give rise to an interest unlike the interest aroused by the supposed abstract art as music and architecture.

Even music is supposed to have expressive, sensuous and dramatic powers common with representational art. In this case it is only architecture which seems to stand wholly apart from the other arts by certain features that cannot fail to determine peoples attitude towards it.

In their book, "Art Fundamentals - theory and practice" Ocvirk and others wrote that "the experiencing of a work of art, when it is enjoyable, persuasive, stimulating, disturbing or otherwise evocative of our senses, is an "aesthetic" or artistic experience."14 This is meaningful and of value to us because itis really what we hope to experience when we look at works of art.

The universality of aesthetics and how aesthetic growth or awareness has and could be developed are pertinent to this thesis.

Commenting on aesthetics, John Dewey (1958) comments on aesthetics as

> "To experience as appreciative, perceiving and enjoying. It denotes the consumer's rather than the producer's standpoint. It is Gusto taste; and as with cooking, overt skillful action is on the side of the cook who prepares, while taste is on the side of the consumer, as in gardening,there is a distinction between the gardener who plants and tills and the householder who enjoys the finished product."15

A similar view is expressed in the Collier's Encyclopaedia Vol.1 as

> "the study of what is involved in the creative appreciation and criticism of art."16

Therefore, the concept of aesthetics should not be viewed in isolation but should relate to the changing role of art and other human activities and interests.

Writing under the meaning of aesthetics, Viktor Lowerfield (1975), stated:

> "Aesthetics is an active perceptual process, it is an active interaction between an individual and an object which provides a stimulating harmonious experience."17

This statement becomes very apparent that we cannot teach aesthetic values unless we are aware of the individual and his cultural environment. As a sociedty, we have inherited a good deal of our feelings about art from European traditions. One of the most influencial books dealing with the story of art (Gombrich, 1978) barely touches upon art outside that framework, and then only as it influenced the European tradition. Yet

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art and aesthetics are universal.

The New Encyclopeadia Britanicca (1988)[18] conceives aesthetics as the "theoretical study of beauty and taste comprising a branch of philosophy." It is further explained how aesthetics was derived from the Greek word perception (aisthesis). The word was introduced by the 16th Century German philosopher Alexander Bangaten[19] to denote what he conceived as the realm of poetry and concrete knowledge in which content is communicated in sensory form. Later the term was applied to philosophical study of all the arts and manifestations of natural beauty. This means aesthetics is conceived with understanding beauty as it is manifested in art and its evaluation. Aesthetics has thus developed into a broader field of knowledge and inquiry.

In all these, it is supposed that a better understanding of architecture as an art will aid us to have an insight into both aesthetics and architecture.

First among the distinguishing features about the topic is the form and function of architecture. Buildings are supposed to be places where human beings live, work and worship. A certain form is therefore imposed right from the onset by the needs and desires that a building is designed to fulfil. Comparatively, from the point of view of art, while it is not possible to compose for example, a piece of music without intending that it should be listened to, and hence appreciated, it is certainly possible to design a building with the intention that is should be looked at, even where there is an attempt to apply aesthetic standard in architecture there is still a strong symmetry with other forms of art.

Architecture itself has been defined by J.S. Curl, a renowned architect in his book "Art and Architecture of Freemansonry" in the following context,

> "Architecture implies much more than mere buildings. It signifies the art or science of construction (or making designs for such edifices) that have aesthetic-pretentiohs; that have qualities on a higher plane than those of purely utilitarian structures, and that have complexities, aspects capable of moving the beholder and an intellectual rigour raising them to heights considerably loftier than those of the 'bicycle-shed' or similar mundane buildings."20

Curl believes architecture must definitely have aesthetic pretentions and not be a mere building.

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A clear study into the history of architecture indicates that, architecture is actually a record of continuous evolution,beginning with the simple and constantly repeated form of Egypt; followed by more highly developed temple buildings of Greece; passing through the complex types of imperial Rome, through the ages of Christendom, when Mediavalists reared cathedrals and castles; until the men of the Renaissance reverted to the classic types of the varied buildings of this great period in human development.

Citing the numerous changes in architecture, Sir Burnister (1959) emphasized that;

> "Architecture, striding down the ages was evolved, moulded and adapted to meet the changing needs of nations in their religious, political and domestic development."21

Infact, a glance along the perspective of past ages reveals architecture as a Lithic history of social conditions of mankind, religion and the events which are landmarks in the history of mankind. It is realised that architecture is in all periods intimately connected with national life, the

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genius of a nation is unmistakably stamped on its architectural monuments, whether they are Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Medieval/or Renaissance.

The same author informs us that, the study of architecture opens up the enjoyment of

> "contemplating buildings with an appreciation of their purpose, meaning and charms, and every structure conjures up the conditions of past ages."22

In the high ranking position of architecture in the realm of arts, Burnister explains that, it is the "one art" with which we are all brought into daily contact. It shelters man from hostile elements, gives us home and also enshrines the sacred symbol of all religions. Architecture is said to be the "mother of the arts" by Burnister. Many of the world's great rulers have been the patrons of architecture and some, like Rameses the Great, have used architecture as the symbol of their personal power.

Brons Zavi[23] (1941) in Christian Norberg's book "Existence, Space and Architecture," defines architecture as the "art of space" and "as a succession of 'Space conceptions'". He explains further that, the process by which spatial images can be transposed into emotional sphere is expressed by the spatial concept. It yields information on the relationship between man and his environment.

In all these definitions and theories about architecture, there seem to be a theme running through. Ideas seem to be pointing to form and function. This theme of form and function is also echoed by M.B. Elliot[24] (1977) who explains architecture as

> "the art of enclosing a space for effective use."

She believes, since the first man inhabited cave, the different styles in which space has been enclosed has been largely responsible for, and responsives to, the richness, effectiveness and variety of human life.

The views expressed by Brons Zavi on architecture as a "succession of space conceptions" and Elliot's idea of "enclo sing space for effective use" really calls for further analysis. When these definitions are compared with Roger's definition of architecture having"aesthetic pretentions and complexities" then one comes to realise that architecture needs more than just enclosing of space. On the other hand, when we consider Elliot's explanation of the different styles of enclosed space, and how it has enhanced man's life, then we again begin to understand that there is more to the writers definition of architecture.

Commenting on architectural beauty and aesthetic consideration, Irwin expresses the opinion that, the fact that architecture is termed as an ambiguous art, however, is not a qualification of its beauty. He states that;

> "The fact that a building has to appeal to the imagination with respect to its function simply gives an additional dimension to architectural beauty.
> A building appeals not simply by its size, form and colour, but by its apposition to its human and social intention."25

This goes to prove that, the beauty of architecture and the focus of aesthetic attention which it provokes, moves between ornament and structure though structure is always predominant. This implies that the aesthetic component in architecture lies between the structure as well as the establishment.

In analysing architecture, another writer, Edman opines that a sound architecture, "one plastically beautiful,

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imaginative and structurally honest" is actually one of the best and clearest indications of the state of civilization. He feels the way a nation builds its structures and the character of its favourite architectural motifs tell us more about a people and their life. Even the quality of man' life a great extent revealed and indeed determined by the form and function of their buildings or lack of it.

The researcher realises that the various meanings and definitions expressed by most of the referred to writers, all do point to form and function. It is therefore appropriate to stress here that, it is highly expected of the succeeding generation to fashion out the architecture of today into aesthetically pleasing buildings capable of great monument of the past, yet expressive of our time and worthy to be handed down to future generation. This can be done by using genuine traditional symbols with proper and accepted meanings. Such symbols with cultural significance could conveniently be used to enhance modern Ghanaian architecture.

A similar view as expressed by the researcher, is expressed by Scruton, in his book "Aesthetics and architecture", he states that,

> "Architecture can be new, but it cannot be modern in the peculiar sense of that term which has been aupplied in recent Western music. Architecture becomes new by creating new expectations, and in general this requires the modification of some pre-existing style (as happened in the case of the Gothic...) or else through the imitation of some previously successful manner."26

The ability to adapt to this advice depends largely on aesthetic tastes. This is not a precise statement or law,

that one must follow as what constitutes the aesthetics of architecture. Rather, it pays to use the past to build the present. A builder definitely has to "fit" his work into some pre-existing arrangement of unchangeable forms.

It is in this context that the researcher seeks to bring to the fore, how some of the indigenous architectural symbols could conveniently be incorporated in new designs to portray the aesthetic thinking and aesthtic purpose of our time.

In actual fact, there are a lot of books dealing with architecture and aesthetics. Almost all or most of these books talk either about architecture and aesthetics respectively or discuss the two areas as one topic. It can therefore be ascertained from the above review that architecture means more than just mere buildings. It connotes both aesthetics and function. This includes traditional symbols and motifs which also give a proper assessment of an architectural period.

In view of these considerations, the researcher therefore seeks to identify and appraise the aesthetic qualities that have evolved in Asante architecture before and after independence.

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CHAPTER THREE

AESTHETICS IN INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTURE IN ASANTE

Generally, for any work of art to be fully appreciated for its aesthetic value, it must be capable of sustaining the interest of the spectator. This brings to mind the concept of design. The design of a work of art must have not only a momentary aesthetic response, but must rather be enjoyed over a lasting period.

This is the quality of Asante architecture. In indigenous Asante architecture, form, space and surface are given the most attention. Nearly all Asante traditional architecture are characterised by rectilinear forms. Originally these were adopted from the prototype of the Adansi open courtyard houses in the country. Indeed the name Adansi implies "house builders". The Adansi courtyard plan of the Asante was known popularly as "Fihankra".[1]

The Fihankra plan normally consists of four separate rectangular single-rooms buiding set around an open court whose inner corners of adjacent buildings are linked by means of sprayed screen walls. Internally, the buildings consist of single unit, all-purpose sleeping rooms. A large verandah is usually created in front of one of the front buildings for receiving guests. This is known as "Pato". There is also the "Bama" which is a raised platform for seating purposes.

There is normally no openings other than a single entrance which leads through a passage way to the inner court. Each of

the four units is raised on a solid platform of clay, some three feet above the level of the court. These are approached by steps of varying heights. Screen walls function as windows that allow free movement of air into the courtyard. The courtyard plan, with overhanging eaves which protect the wall surfaces from direct sunlight, helps to give a pleasantly cool building. Both mud and thatch are good insulating materials, and the constant polishing of the floors also helps cool the interiors. Thus the materials used for building are greatly dictated by the climatic conditions of the tropics. The combined arrangement of the four unit buildings form the "Fihankra."

The first consideration of a "Fihankra" is to provide protection against external interference and also to ensue maximum communal family living. These are some of the reasons why the Fihankra is built around an open courtyard. The open courtyard serves the practical purpose of a common play ground for children, a kitchen and a reception hall for all family members residing in a particular building. This plan positively encourages family togetherness, harmony, sharing and belonging. In all cases, the residents are extended family members rather than a single unit family. This formed the basic shapes of all buildings, whether they were domestic abodes, religious temples or royal palaces. (Plate 1).

Most of the early domestic houses in Asante were embellished. They remained in their natural textured state. But religious temples and royal palaces received the most elaborate decorations. The decorations are either figurative, depicting images of both animal and human deities or geometric abstract motifs symbolizing social, religious or political ideals on the interior and exterior facades.

The decorations are characterised by motifs which have been used to form unique visual patterns. This is evident in the open screen work which provides an energetic visual texture. The emphantic overlapping shapes which the patterns create have a powerful, almost overwhelming effect on the viewer. The other dramatic forms and shapes seem to be constantly moving, thereby encouraging the eye to follow their rhythmic pattern.

The high and low relief motifs in which the decorations have been excecuted are another common feature in the decorative designs found on the buildings. Using relief patterns, clay has been aesthetically translated into an artistic expression. Some of the motifs have been repeated to form patterns closely entwined in the elaborate design that seem inseparable. This helps to unify the whole configuration of designs to establish balance among diverse elements and to create a sense of rhythm and movement.

The use of animated forms and other different designs at the base of plinths are another characteristic feature of the decoration on the temple and palaces. In much the same way, the rectangular plan of the building coupled with the open screen work strike notes which are common to most of the temples and palaces. They never fail to attract the viewer. These are some of the characteristic features of the decorations.

The Asante built very modest religious temples in scale but elaborate treatment of wall surface. These are often in relief modelling excuted painstakingly on the front facing of buildings. Very good examples can be found in some of the existing releigious temples and royal palaces. These models decorate mostly the exterior entrance and interiors of rooms

facing the interior courts. The lower parts of the walls have a facing of clay which is three or four inches thick and usually about three feet high. This forms the plinth or "bama". It is strongly modelled most commonly with variations of design made up of a series of spirals termed "nkyinkyim" in Asante language literally meaning twisting.

Representation of birds and animals occur in the decorations, either fairly naturalistic or else highly stylized. Motifs of leaves, birds, crocodiles as well as geometric shapes are used especially on column bases. The lower parts of the walls and the floors are finished with a rendering of red ochre clay. The surfaces are then smoothened and polished with liquid clay "ntwuma" to give a dull red shine. The polishing, according to the temple keepers at both Dakwa Jaachi and Kentenkronu,[2] were retouched daily to protect the floors and to give them an appealing look.

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Upper walls and beams are decorated with a variety of designs in low relief. These are exceedingly intricate symbolic interlacing geometric designs, but representation of other animated symbols also occur. Designs are set freely rather than in exact dimensions. This is meant to allow for free flow of rhythmic designing. On completion, all the upper walls, columns and beams are finished in a wash of white clay "hyire". Most of the decorative patterns of different styles and varying degrees of boldness used to enhance indigenous Asante architecture are symbolic. Points such as entrance fronts are guarded by the greatest use of protective symbols. Opening in walls, particularly the entrance are the most in need of protection.

Some of the decorative motifs and patterns found on wall surfaces at Kentenkronu, Dakwa Jaachi, and Bodwease for instance include the following: "Adwenninmmen" (Ram's Horn) "Pampansie" (Unity in Strength), "Odenkyem" (Crocodile), "Anoma" (Bird), "Ntesie, Nkotense or Mate masie" (Wisdom and Knowledge), "Krapa" (Good Fortune), "Sankofa" (Correct a mistake), "Bese Saka" (Bunch of Colanuts), "Akoma Ntoasoo" (Agreement). Others include bats, Snakes, raffia, palm leaves as well as a host of spiral forms and shapes. Most of these decorative symbols have philosophical, psychological and spiritual meanings while others are purely decorative.

The indigenous architectual religious temples, with their numerous symbolic decorations are strongly linked with the social and political system of the Asante. The Asante rectangular house plan based on the "Fihankra" symbol (Plate 2) aesthetically mounted acts as a break to monotony which would have been caused by a straight plan. Thus the injection of the right angles (Plate 3) in the final plan of the structure. The rectangular plan alone forms a unique spatial relationship. The plan helps break the monotonous stretch of the walls. The vertical lines of the height of the structures contrast with the horizontal shape of the central courtyard.

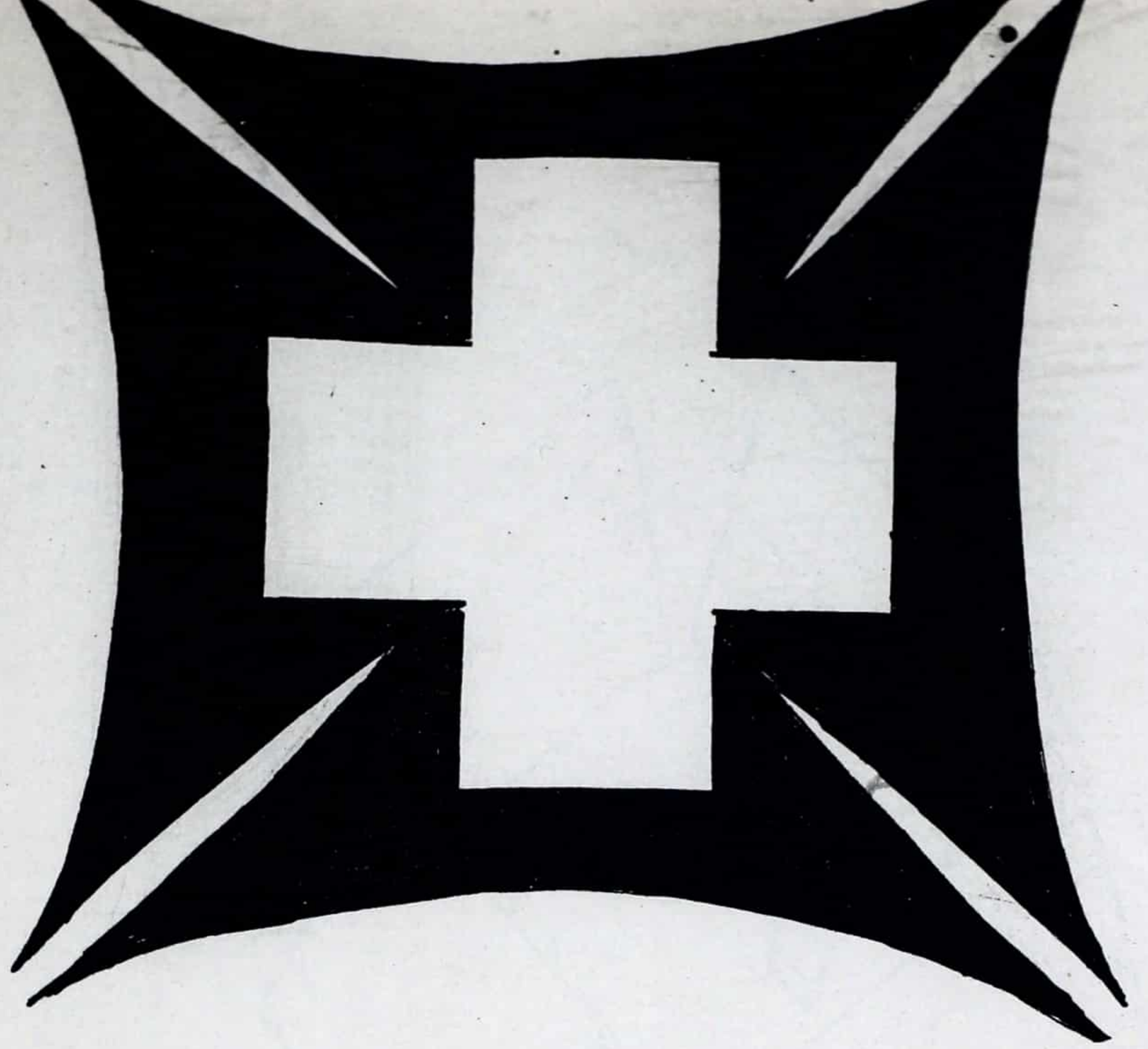


Plate 1
The Fihankra Symbol

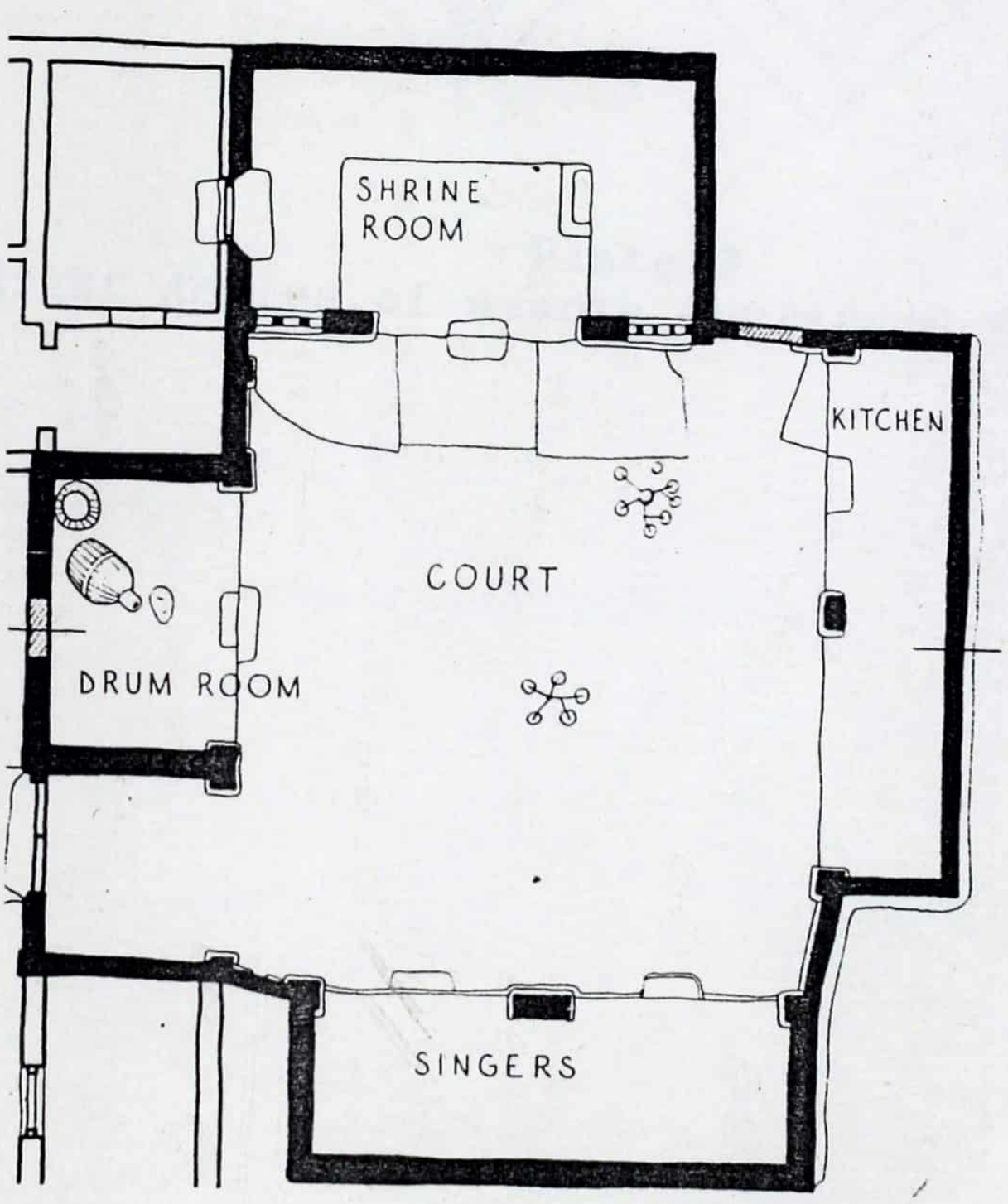


Plate 2
The Asante Rectangular House Plan

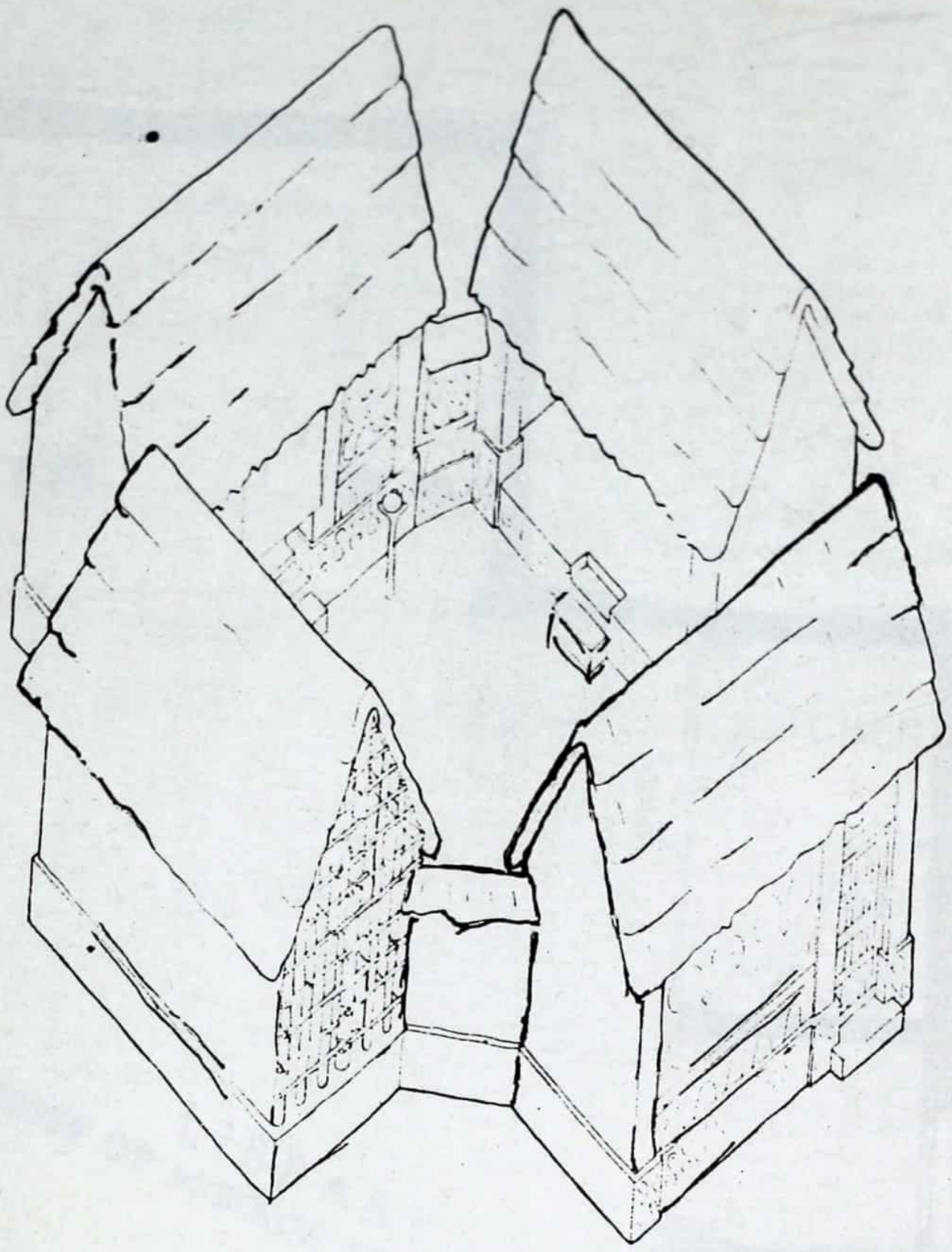
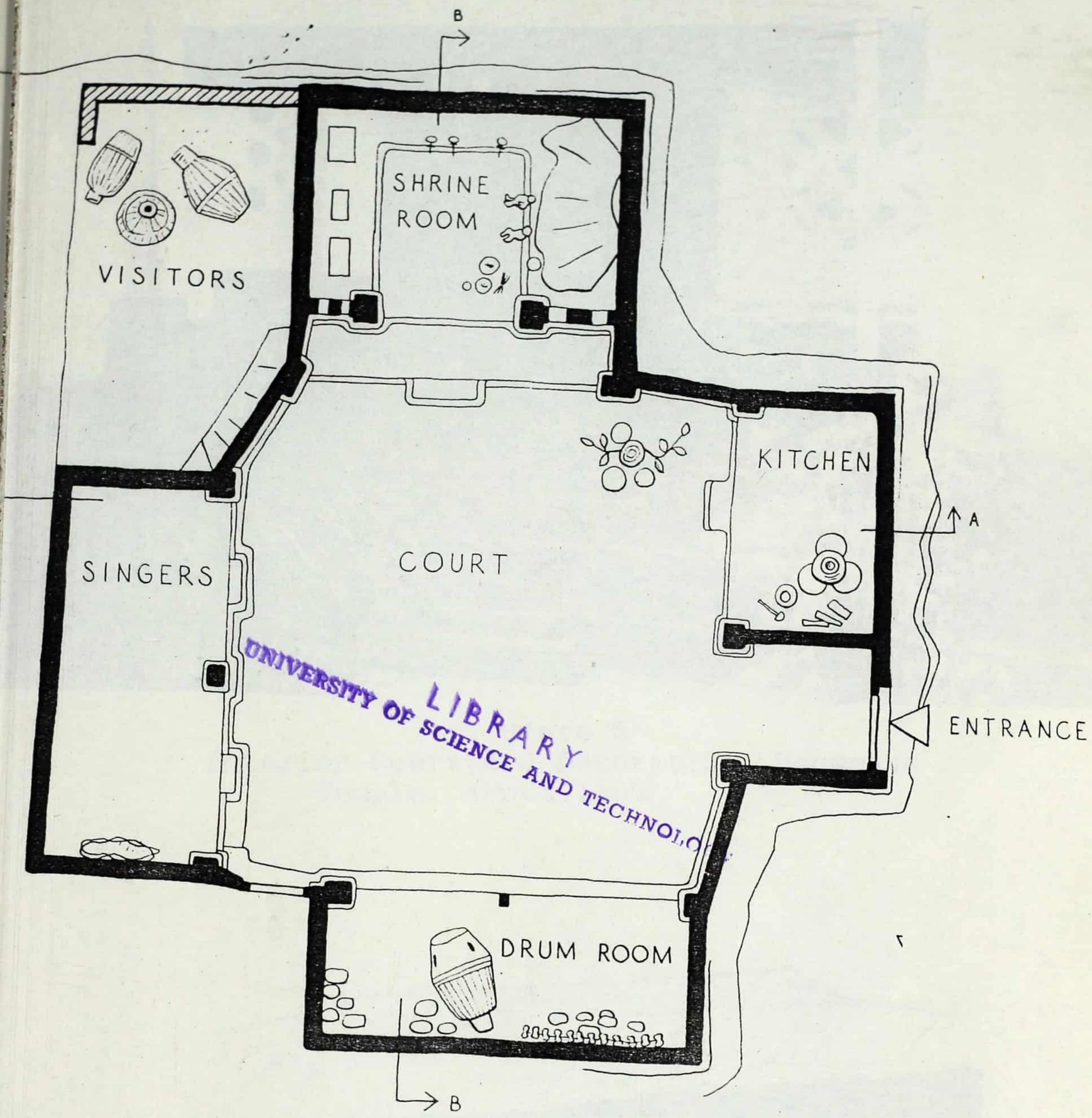


Plate 3
Right Angles of Asante Courtyard Plan



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Plate
Courtyard Plan of a Religious Temple at
Bodwease

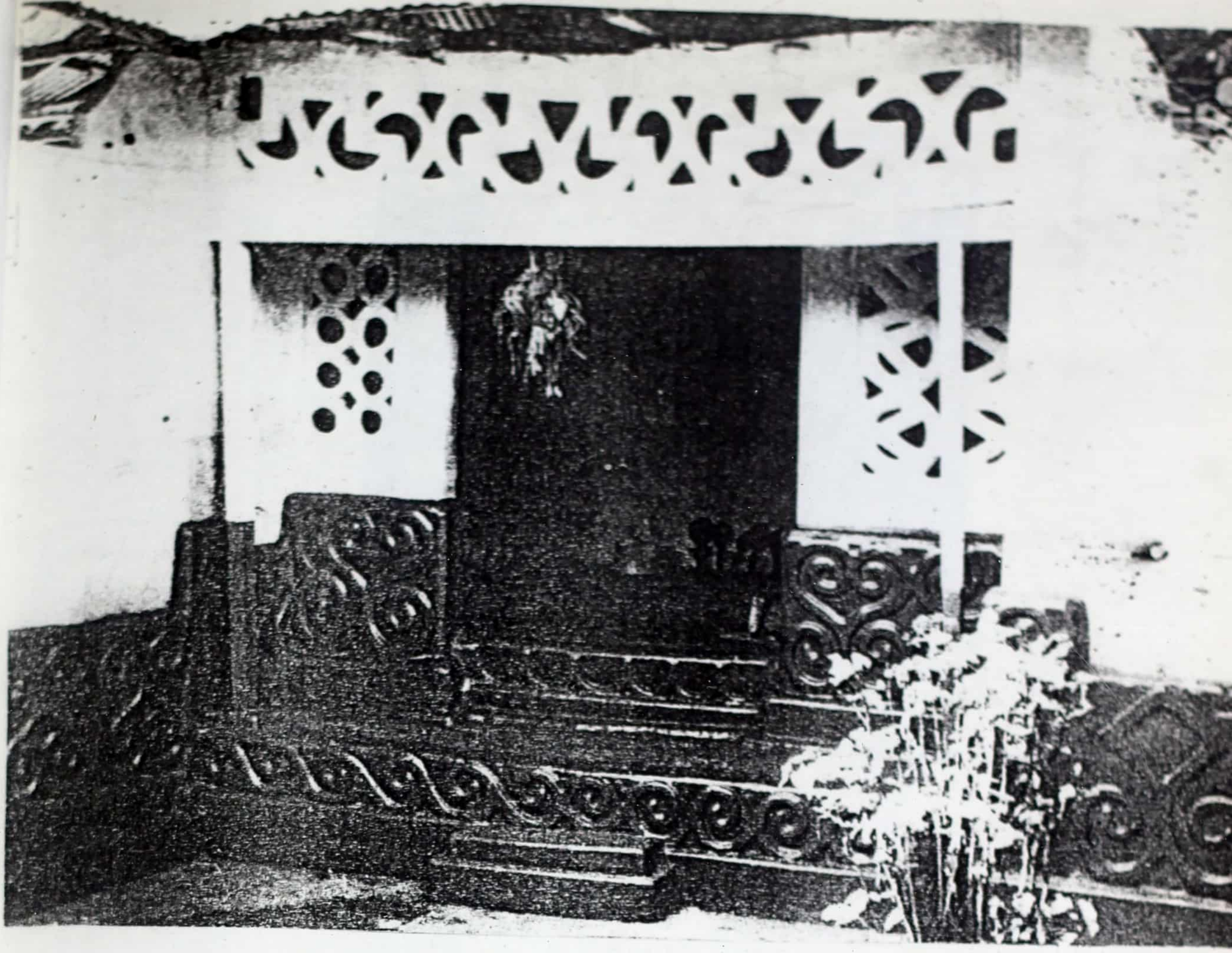


Plate 5
Interior Courtyard Decoration. Bodwease Temple. About 1905

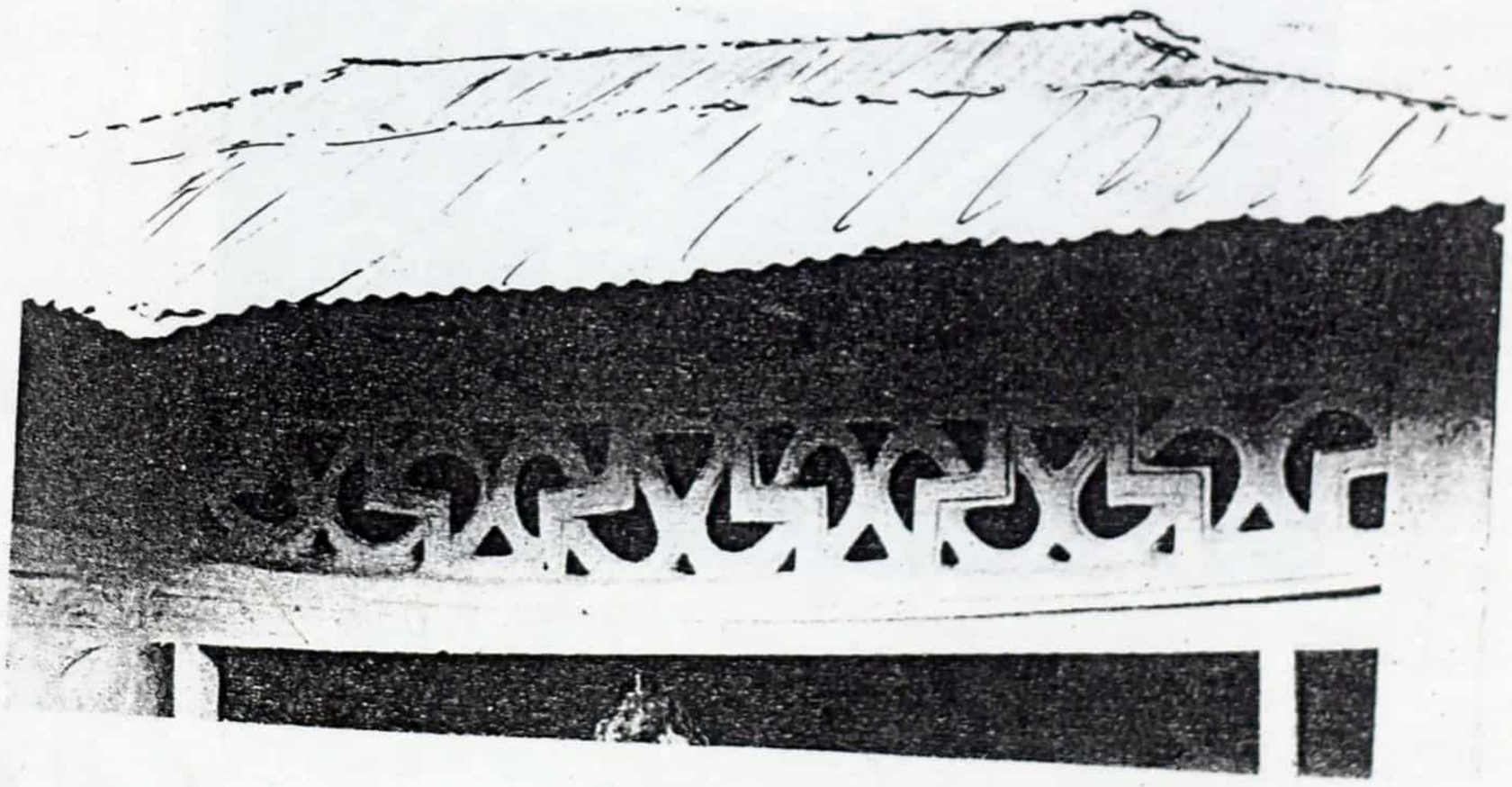


Plate 6
"Dwarfstool" Motif Decoration. Bodwease Temple
About 1905

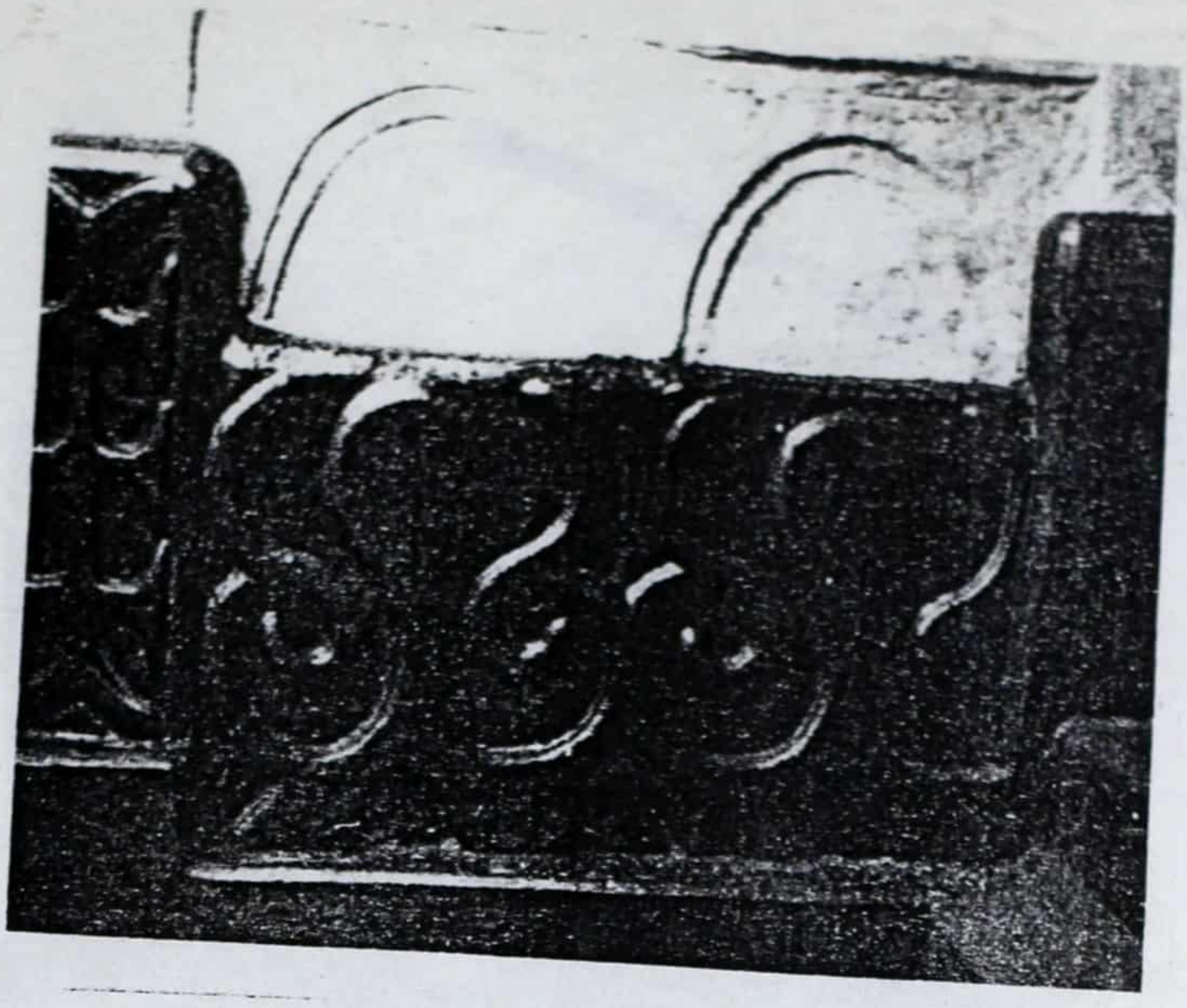


Plate 7
The Snake Climbs the Raffia Palm and the
Bat Design

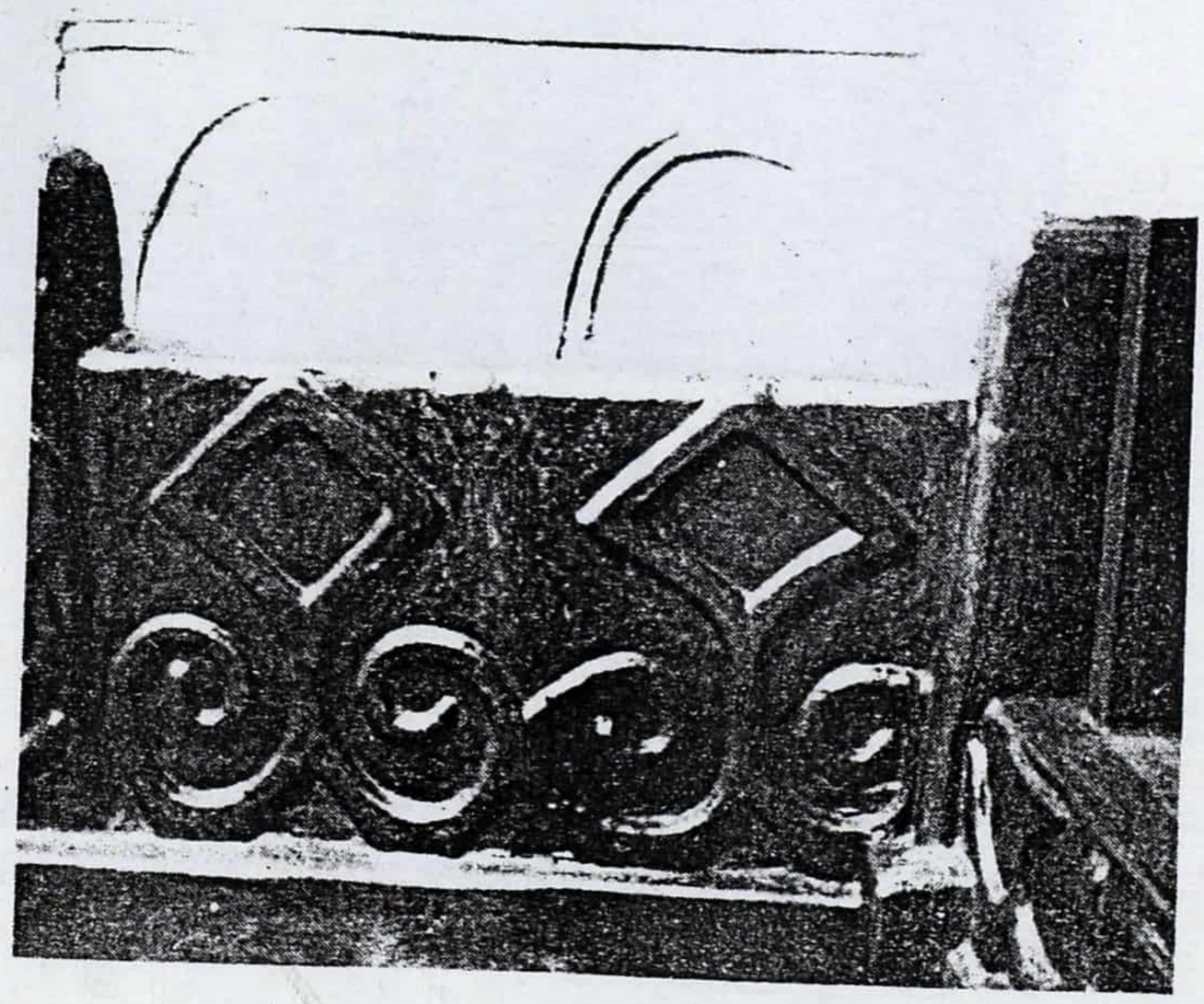
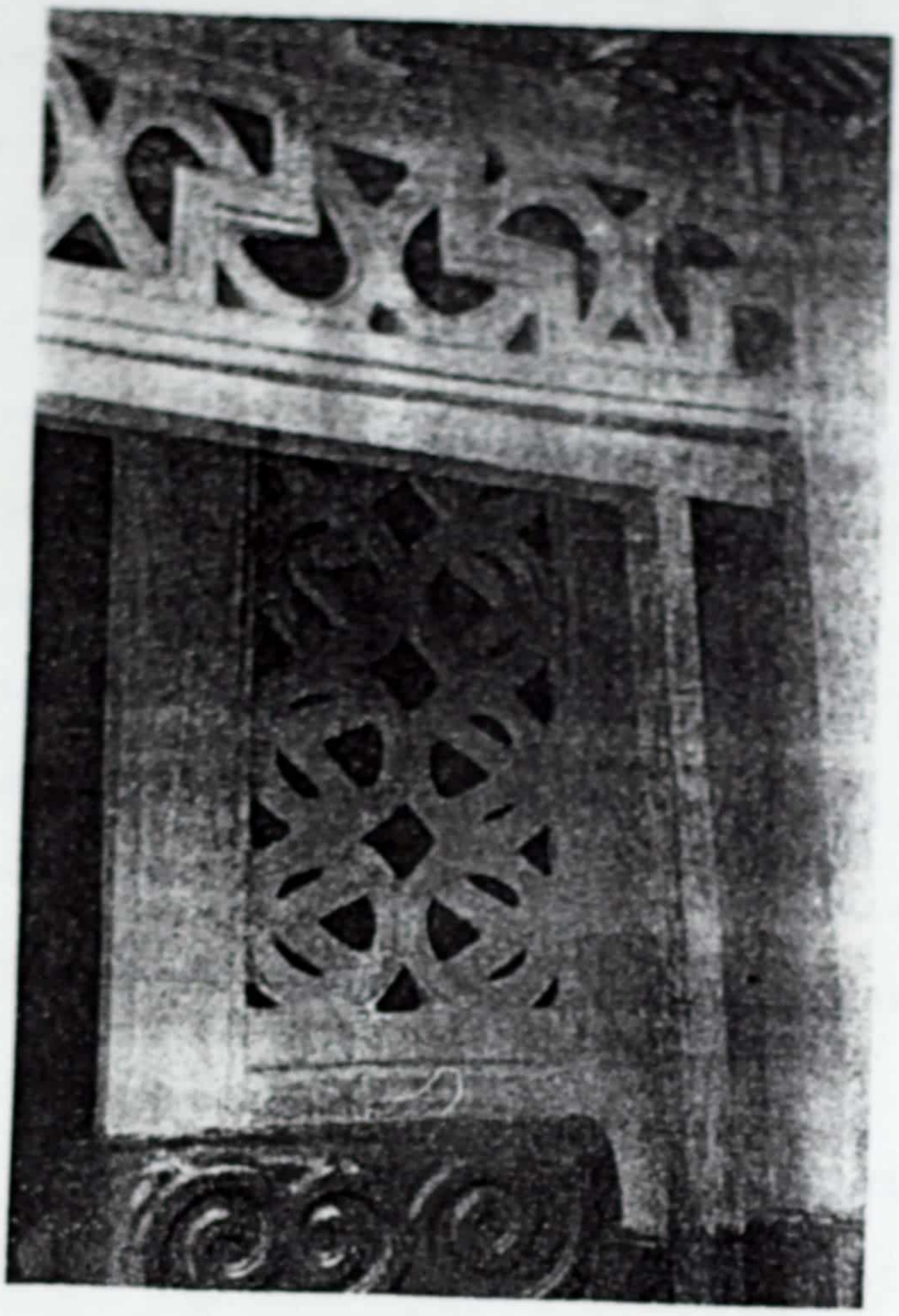


Plate 8
The Queen's Fan Design

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Plate 9
Open work Screen to the Temple
Entrance. Bodwease, 1905

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According to available historical records[5] on the temple at Bodwease, the original temple was badly damaged during the Yaa Asantewaa war. The current temple was therefore restored after the war in 1901.

The temple symbolically acted as a link and opportunity for the people and their arts as a form of expression or group consciousness. The ritually based, multi-media, socio-political expressions of the symbols on the Bodwease temple can be likened to Borgatti's term "art event" (1976)[6]. In artistic terms, embellished architectural buildings are organised display of artistically designed buildings. Therefore, the decorations of the Bodwease temple fit into Borgatti's term. In this temple, a spontaneous overflow of inner feelings has been expressed in a medium that leaves the beholder, bewildered. Different forms and shapes have been manipulated into visual symbols to convey ideas, moods and general emotional experience. (Plates 7, 8 & 9).

At Abirim (which lies north-east of Kumasi) neither interviews nor photographs were permitted. But photographs in R.S. Rattray's [7] book "Religion and Art in Ashanti" show an example of a model of three of the original indigenous buildings in the 1920s (Plate 10). The entrance facade from ground to eaves maintains its original decoration. But the roof was covered with shingles which is an indication of an intermediate development between the original thatched and the present sheeting. (Plate 11).

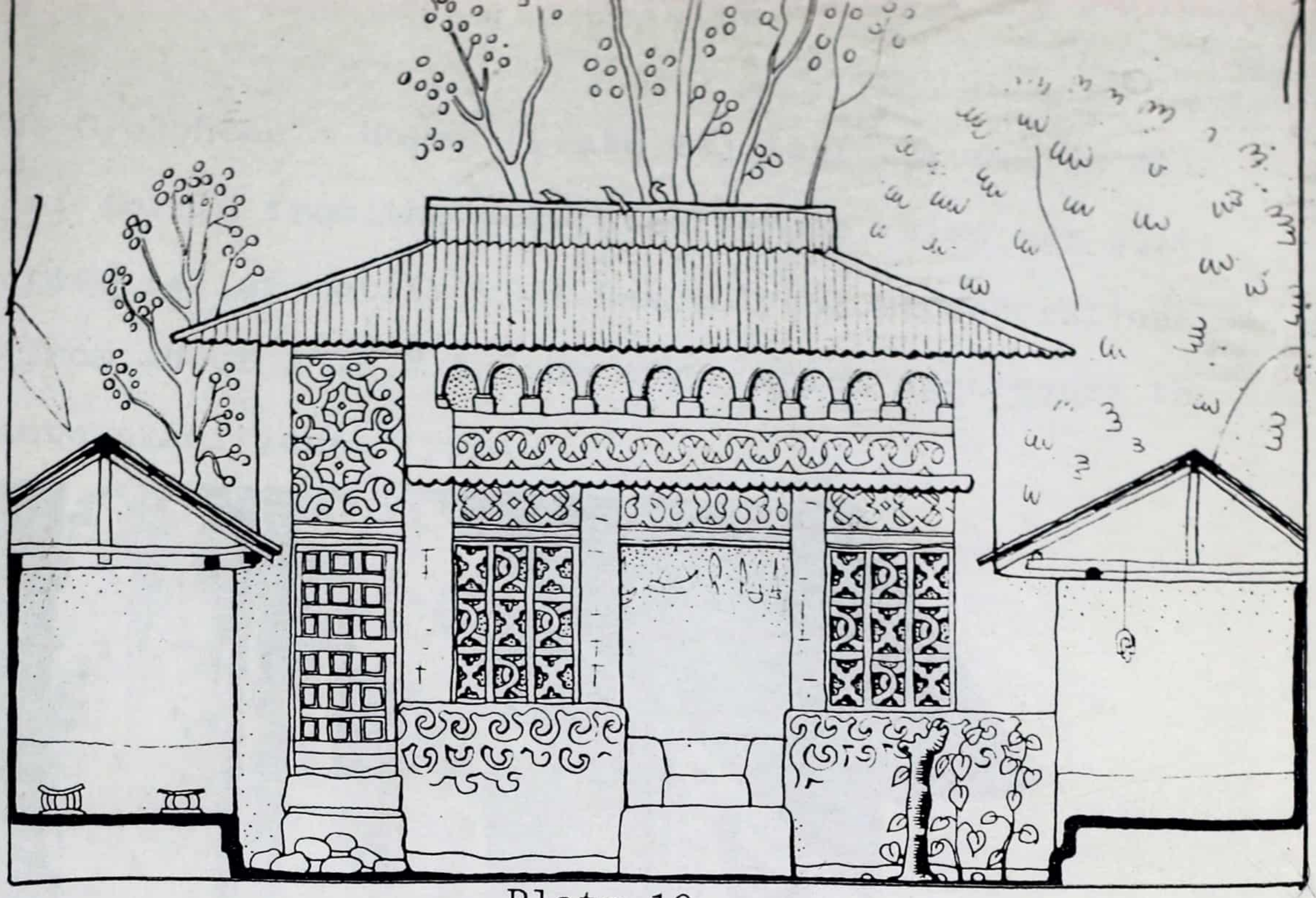


Plate 10
Illustration of Decorated Abirim Temple

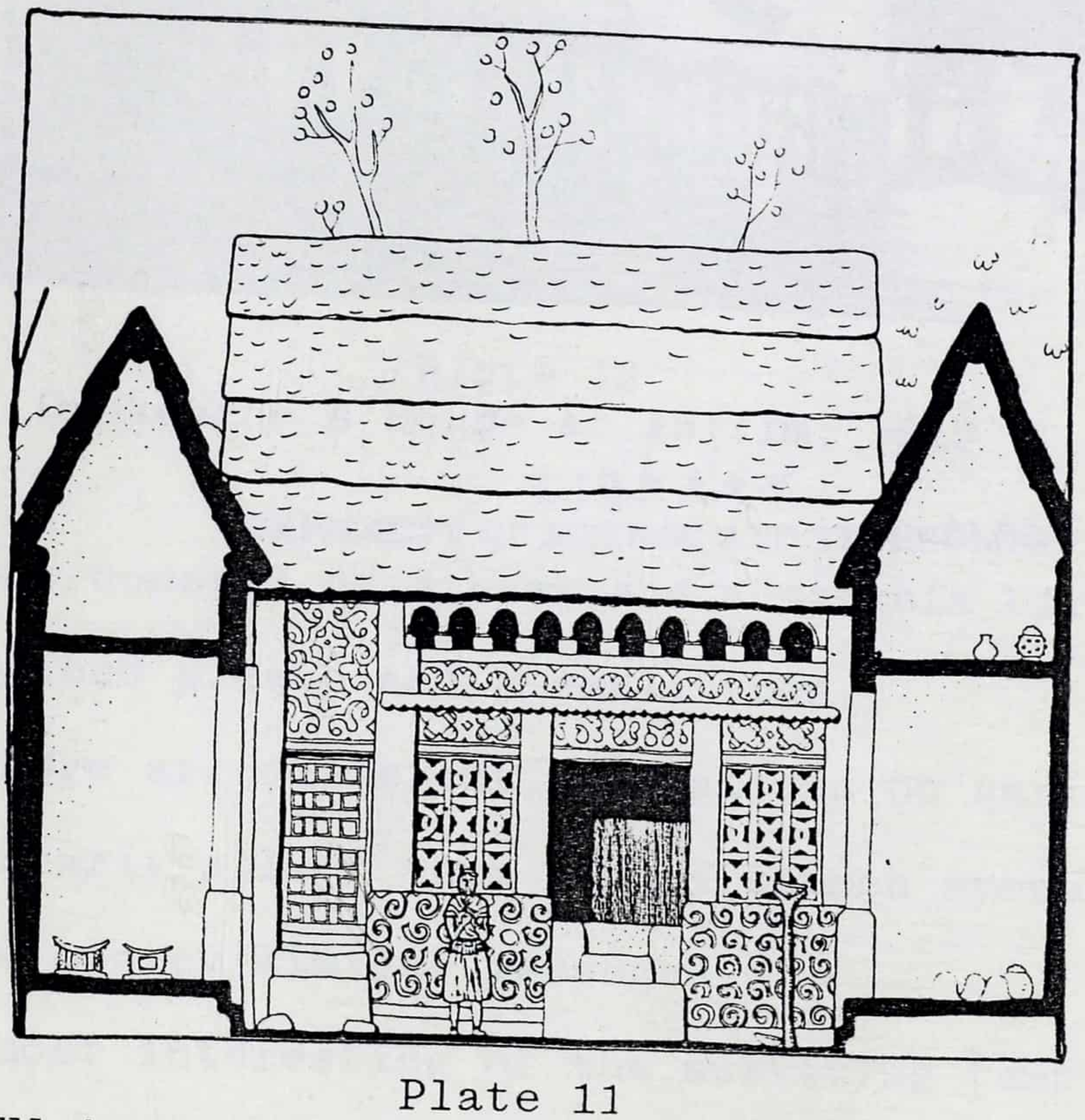


Plate 11
Elaborate Decorations from Grounds to Eaves. Abirim Temple. 1919

The Oyokohene's house (Plate 12) just across the main street of Abirim from the decorated temple, also has quite distinctive relief motifs. It has polychrome decorations dating from about 1919,[8] in the style which supersedes the old Asante traditional type.

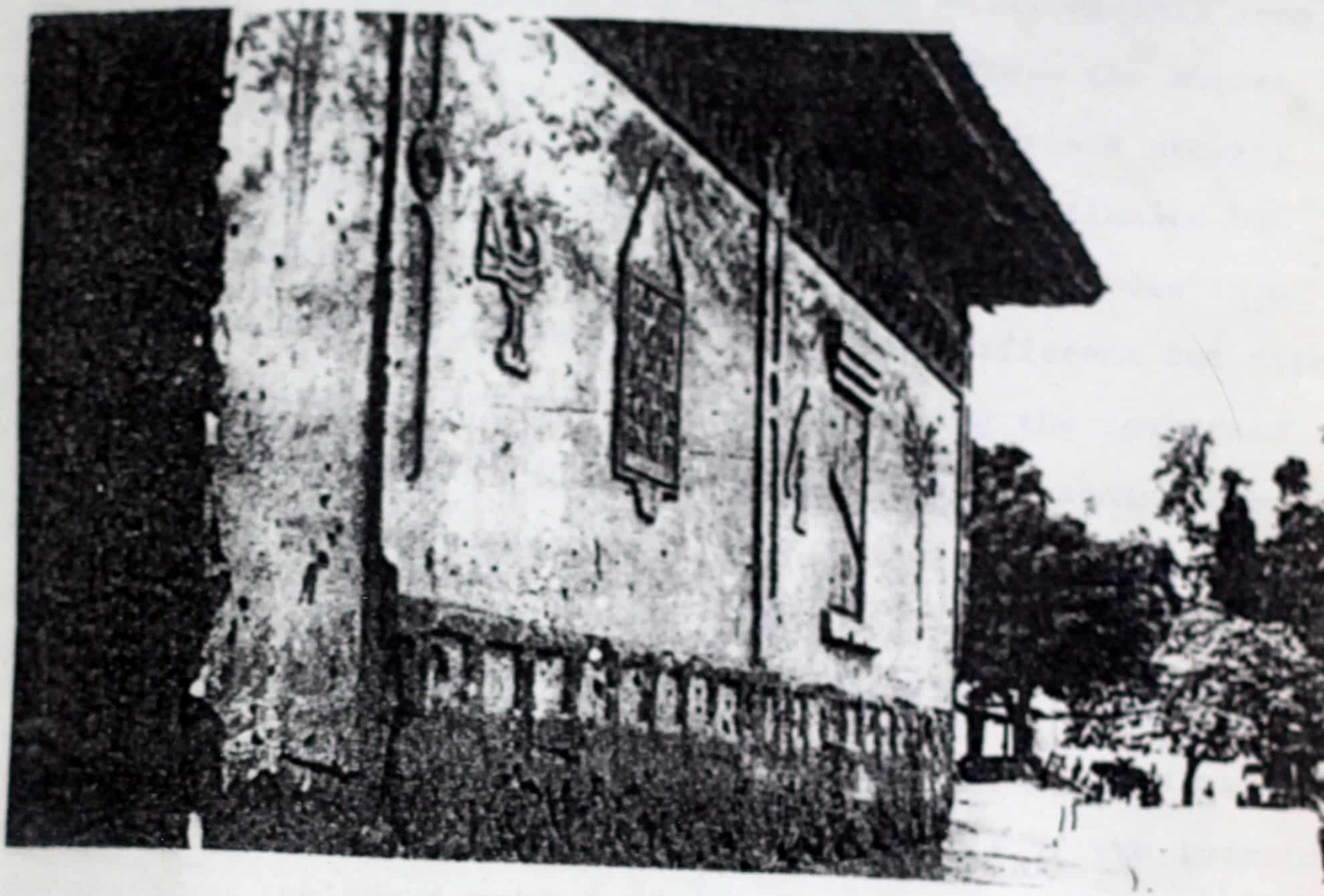


Plate 12
Oyokohene's House at Abirim, 1919

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The decorations consist of a hawk and a sankofa bird relief motif,an inscribed plaque and a small tree.

Though there are different decorations on various temples and palaces, nearly all of them employ common symbolic themes. They therefore convey similar messages.

Another most interesting of the surviving temples in Asante is that of Dakwa Jaachi. (Plate 13). Here, the main court is joined to an outer court which now serves as a touris attraction.

Evidently, this was a temple of considerable popularity, according to the Queen mother Nana Ama Achaa.[9] This popularity is due perhaps to the attraction of the old wall decorations, which appear to be well maintained. Through interviews, it came to light that the older buildings were constructed about one hundred and seventy years ago and they still exhibit greater variety in their decorations. The room where the shrine of the deity Kwasi Sima was kept has a fine entrance archway (Plate 13) decorated in a motif of crested birds flanked by open work screens. That on the right part of the house is of interesting and complex designs. All three different but distinctive decorative designed open rooms facing the courtyard have decorated plinths and no two of the beams spanning the openings are alike in their designs. A screen wall opposite the entrance is boldly modelled in high relief of two crested birds. The birds were explained to be a version of the Sankof bird or "Toakyire afa" bird with pebble-like eyes standing on either side of a tree. The other relief motifs of the interio decorations include a myriad of representational shapes such as a hunter with a gun, a lion, and an elephant. Another part of the unit consists of snakes, leopards, siamese crocodiles and various repetitive motifs which frame the edges of pilasters, doors and windows.

All the designs bear stained pigments of blue and red. The very laboriousness of the early techniques seem to have imposed a greater discipline which the restored outer court decorations lack. Similar painstaking decorations are evident on the walls of other temples and palaces in Asante.

Historical accounts available indicate that, most of the temples in reference were fully or partly destroyed during the long series of Asante wars with the British which began in 1806.[10] Most of them were restored after the war in 1901. But surprisingly, oral tradition indicates that the temple at Dakwa Jaachi, (Plate 14) was never affected by the series of wars. Again according to oral history, Jaachi, then a small village at the time was never a part of the "indigenous Asante nation" that went to war with the British. This accounts for that temple still standing intack and popular.

Taking this account into consideration, it would not be far fetched to conclude that the temple at Dakwa Jaachi might even be older than when in 1819,[11] T.E. Bowdich, the first Englishman to visit Kumasi, published his book "Mission from Cape Coast to Ashantee" in which he wrote and illustrated extensively about "fetishism" in Asante.

Besides, the death of the high priest of the shrine in 1935[12] did not lead to the neglect of the temple. The temple, though unused, has been properly maintained by those in charge.

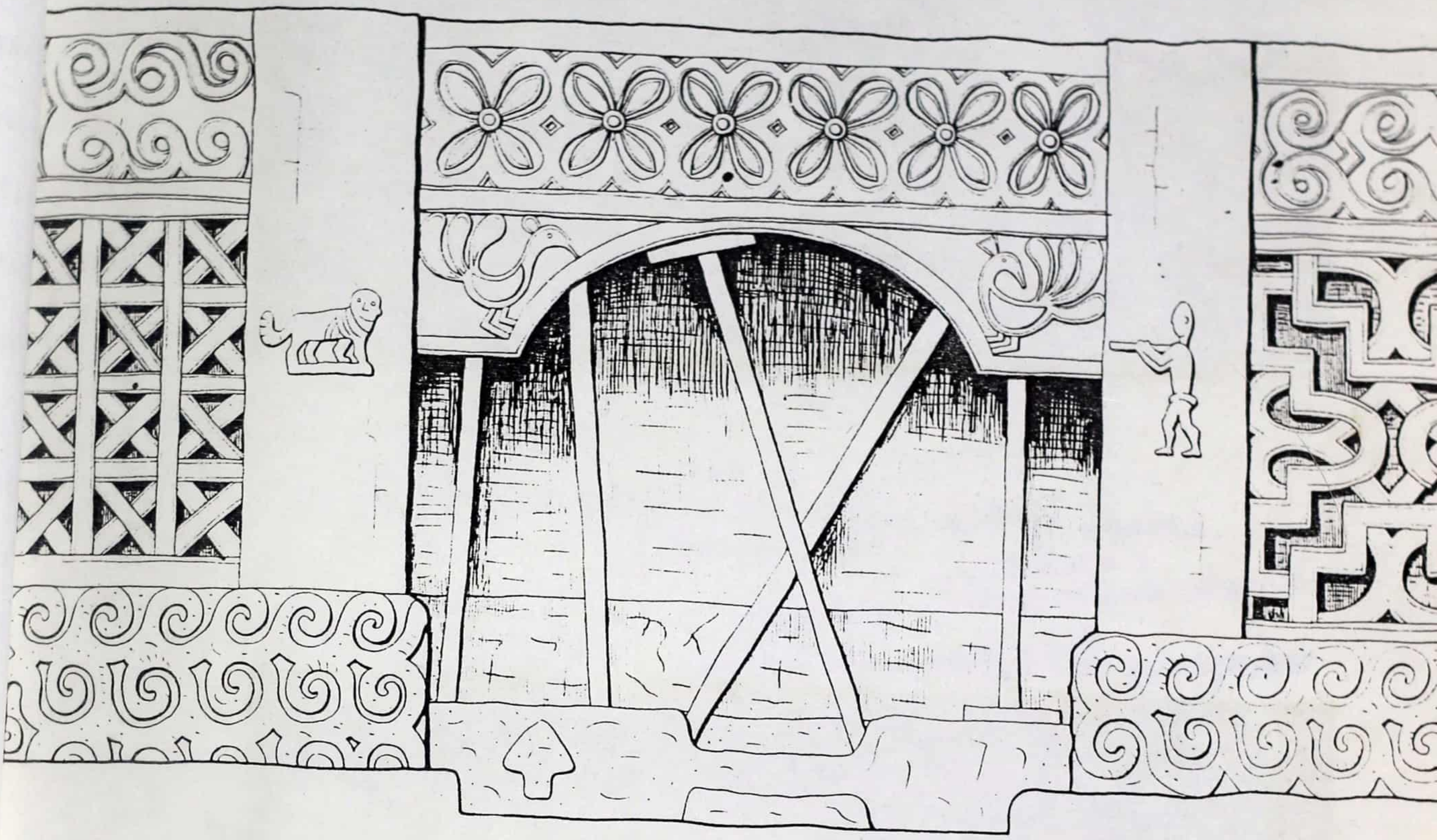


Plate 13A

Decorated Temple Entrance. Dakwa Jaachi



Plate 13
Decorated Temple Entrance. Dakwa Jaachi.
About 1870

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Plate 14
Another Unit of Temple Room Entrance.
Dakwa Jaachi. 1870

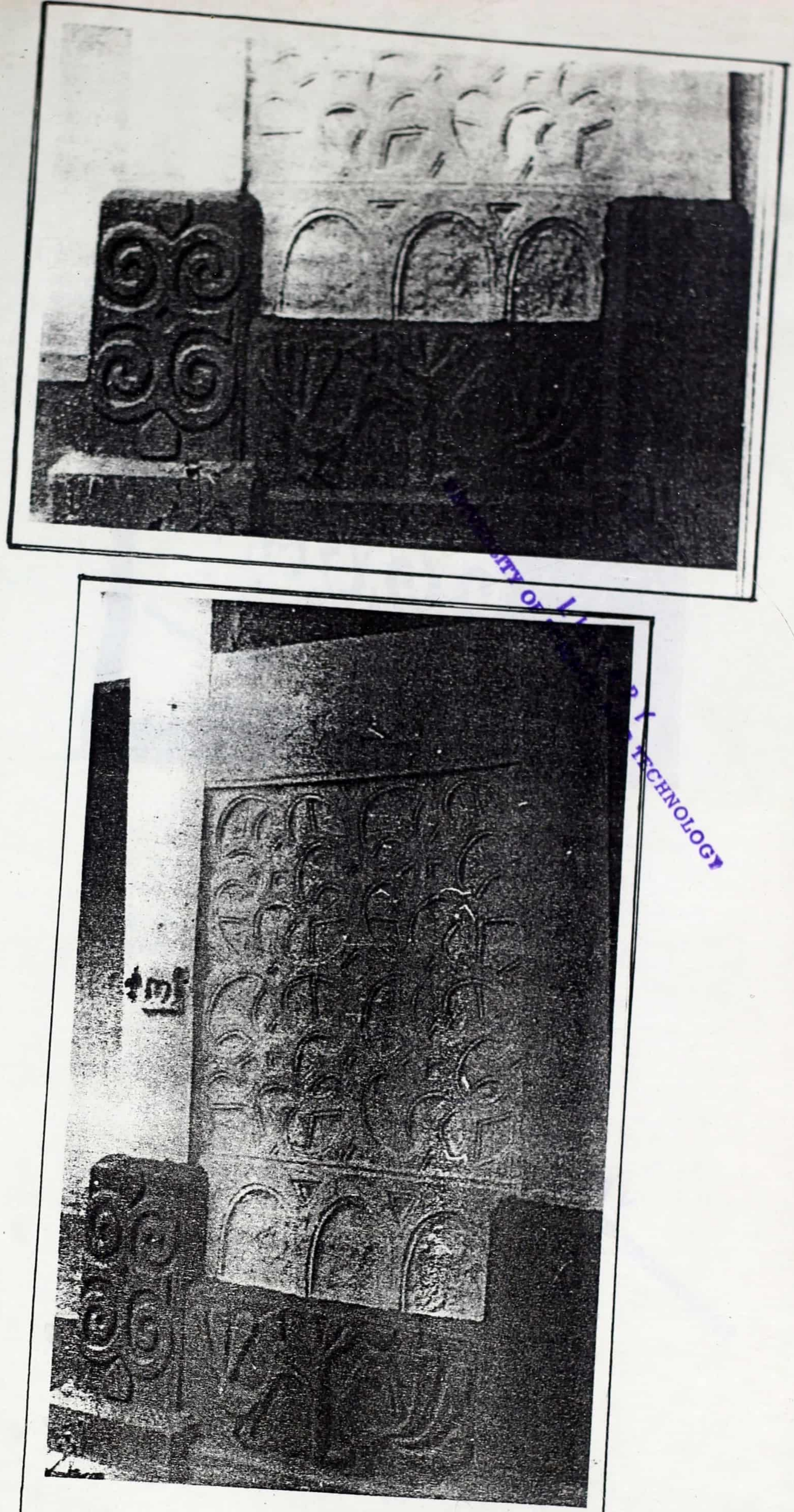


Plate 15
Plate 14 Illustrated

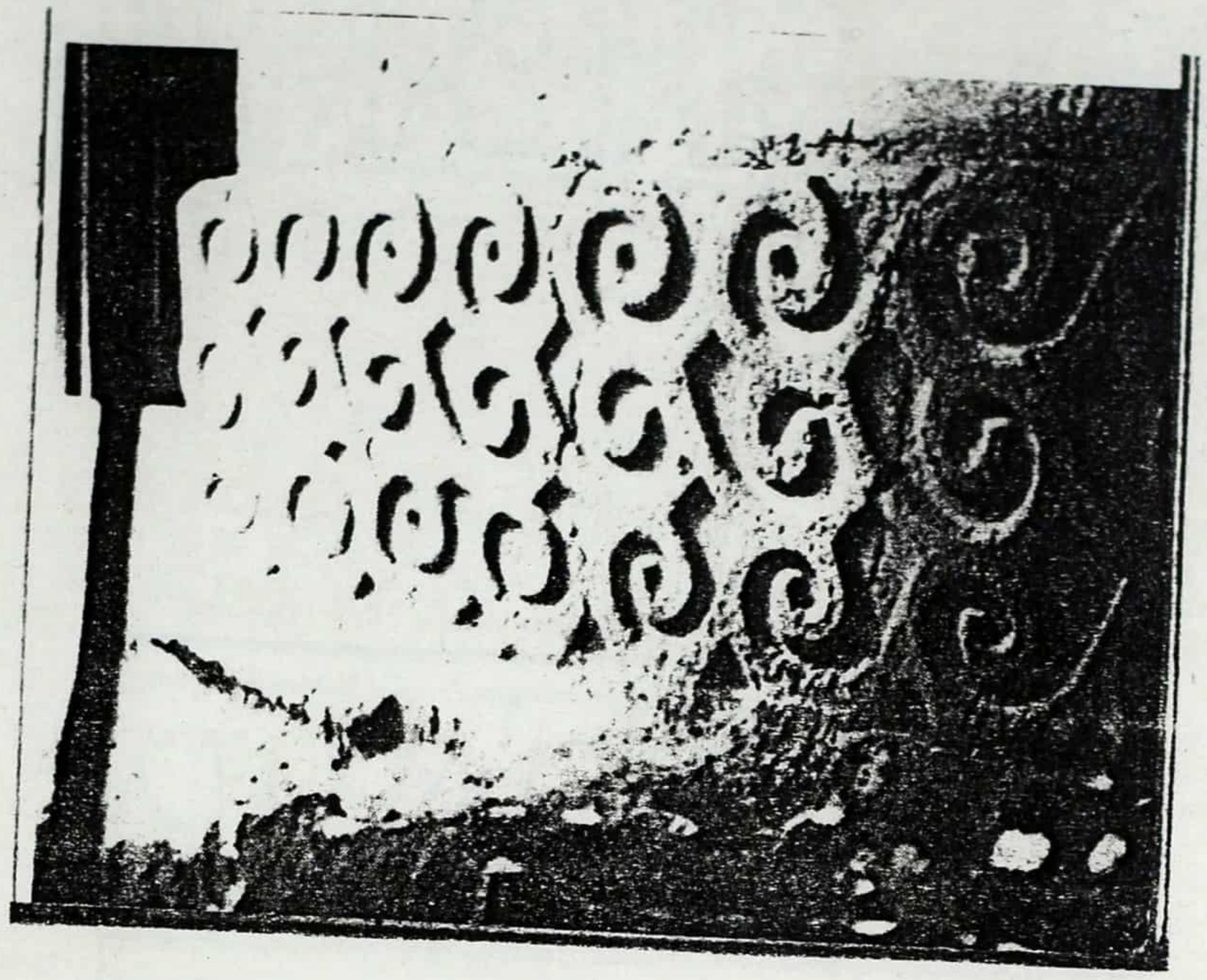
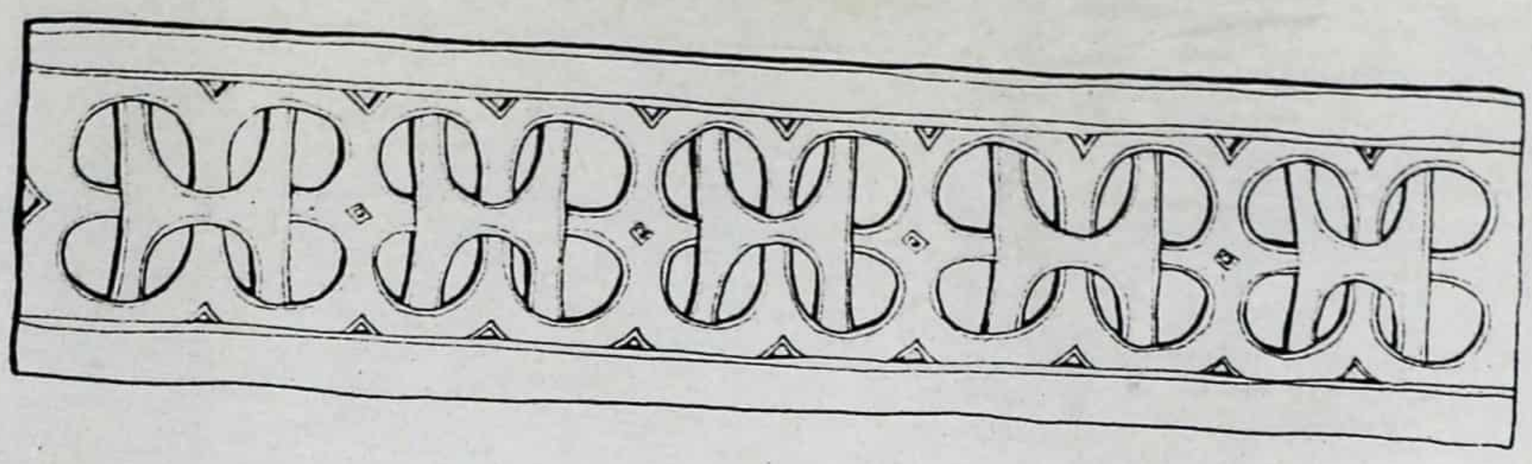
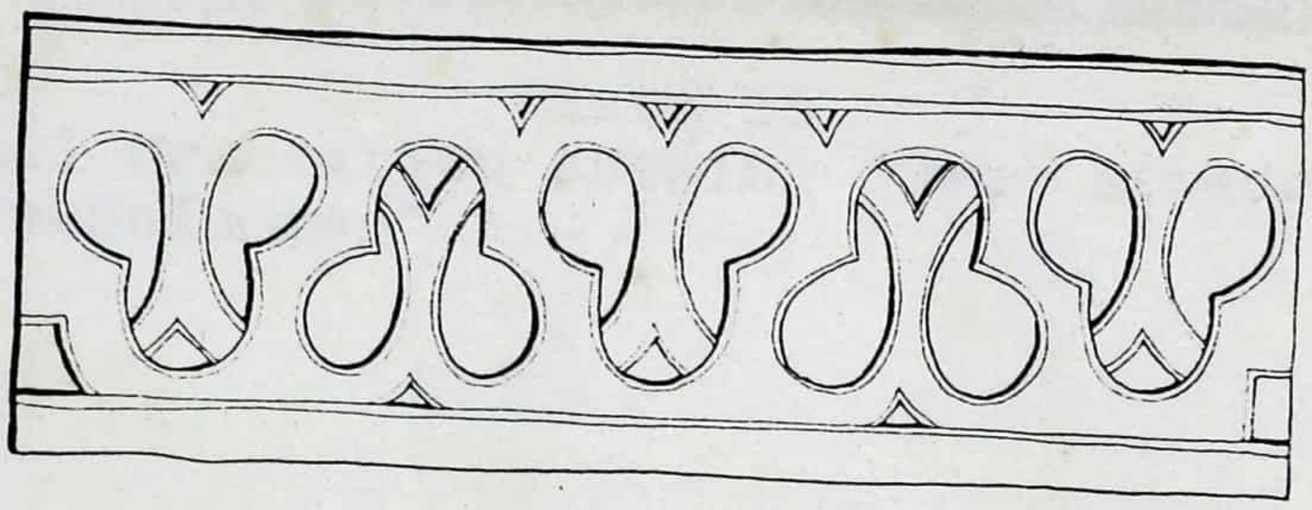


Plate 17
The Spiral Symbol Showing
Movement and Rhythm

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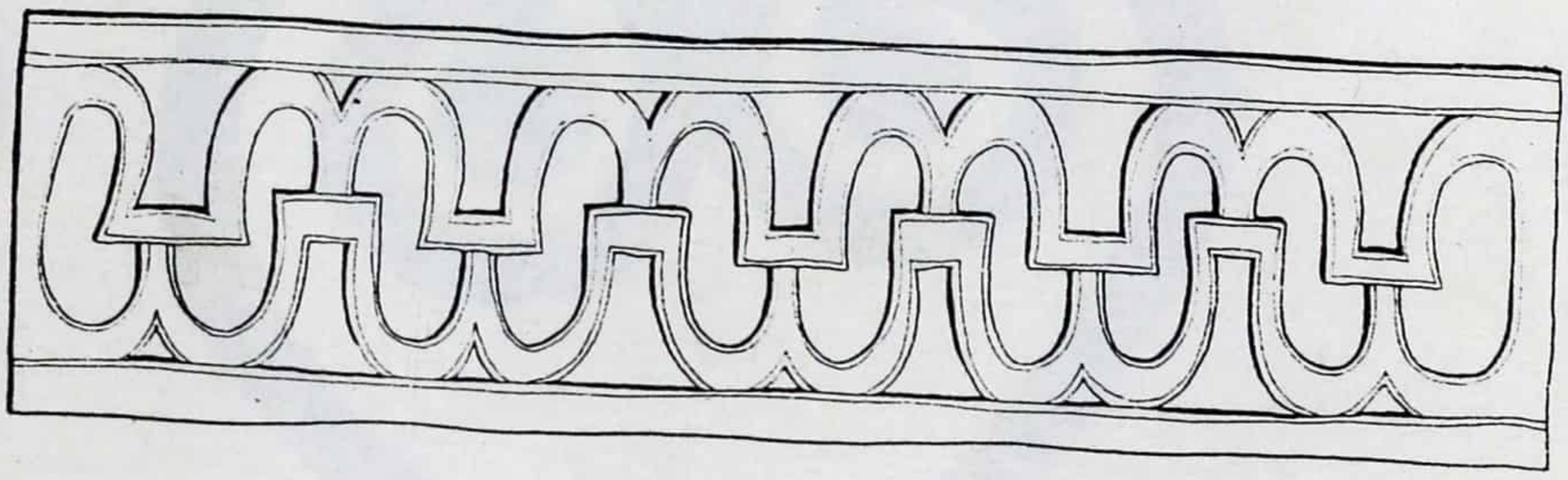


Plate 18
Details of Three of the Beams that span
across the fronts of open rooms. Dakwa Jaachi
Swithenbank.



Plate 19
Wall Decoration showing "Owuo atwedee"
"Dwenninmmen"



Plate 20
Sankofa Symbol - Geometric



Plate 21
Sankofo Symbol - Bird

At Kentenkronu near Kumasi, the front wall of the temple room is decorated with various symbolic geomdtric forms and has an open loggia in front. (Plate 22). Also on the other side of the wall of the same temple that faces the main street in the village is a motif of a crocodile with a fish in its jaws. (Plate 23). According to the high priest of the temple[13] the crocodile's original diamond eyes have been removed for safe keeping. (Plate 24)



Plate 22
Decorated Front Wall of Temple Room
Kentenkronu



Plate 23
The Temple Building with a Motif
of a Crocodile on the wall facing
the main street in the village.
Kentenkronu.

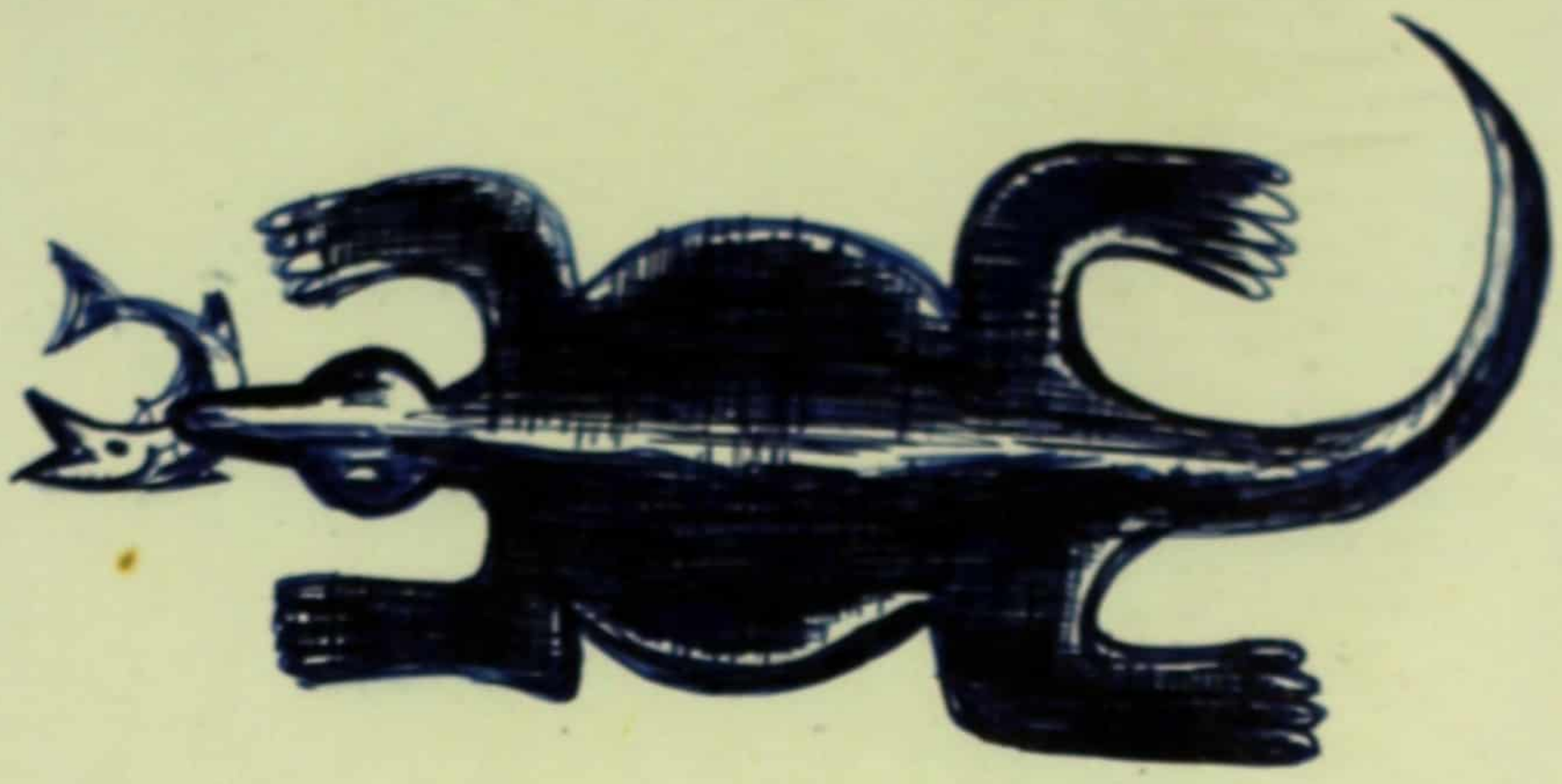


Plate 24
The Relief Motif of the Crocodile with fish in its Jaws. Kentenkronu, Kumasi Elevated

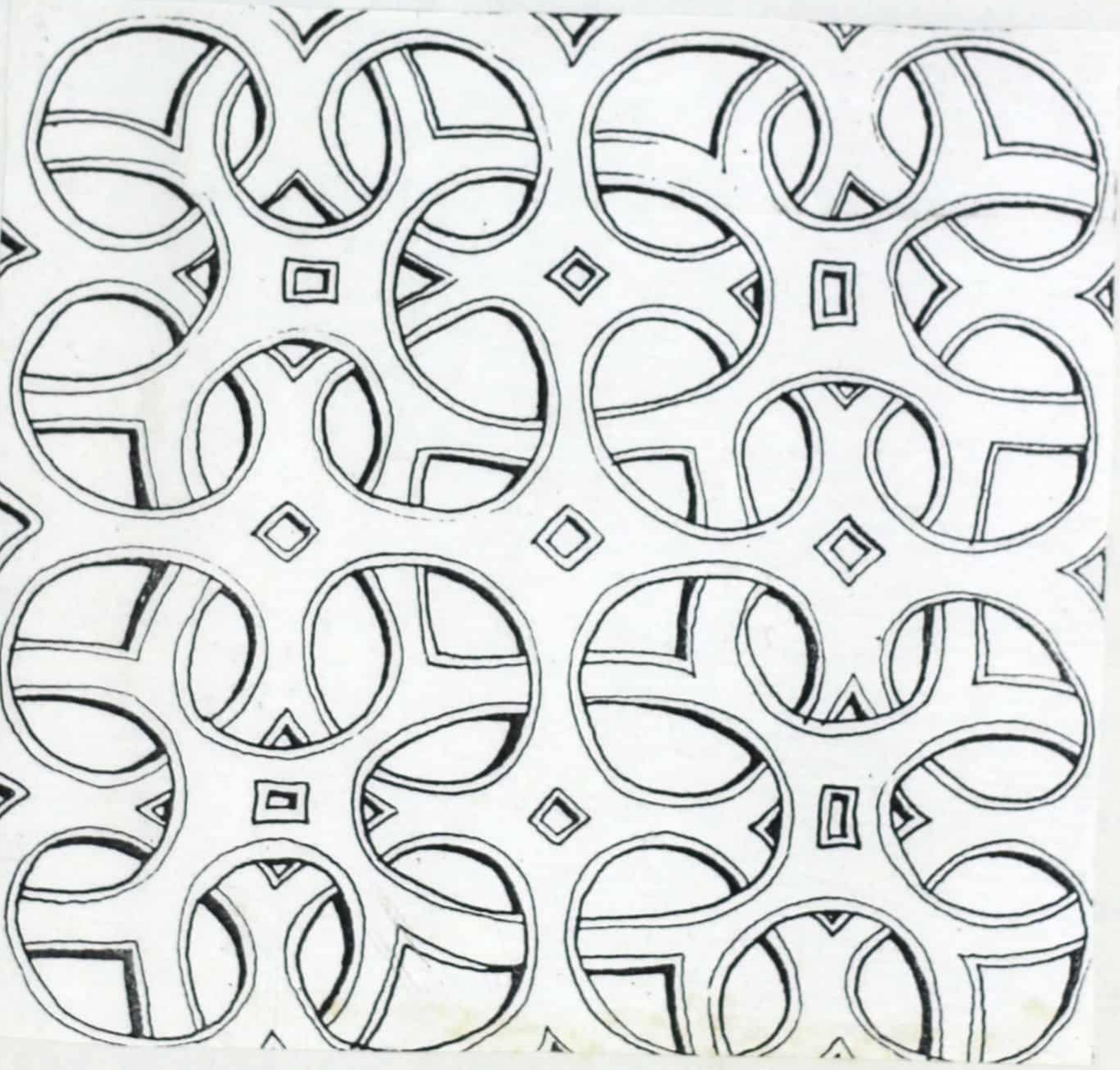


Plate 25
Another version of "Yennyinna Nkwanta Mpe Mmanifoo" Kentenkronu - Kumasi

Plates 24 and 25 are some of the general motifs and repetitive patterns common to the decorations on some temples and palaces in and around Kumasi as at now. The general design generates aesthetic as well as emotional responses. Some also have symbolic meaning peculiar at the time, to the needs of the people.

Aesthetics in Decorations

The general appearance of the decorations on the temples and palaces gives an impression of a common theme holding all the elements in the decorations together. The rectangular plan of the building also forms a unique spatial relationship which always fascinates.

The decorations are in reality the underlying factor that distinguishes the traditional Asante religious temple from other domestic buildings. The resulting phenomena of these decorations often reveal a well designed pattern that baffles the understanding of many observers.

The incredibly complex designs seen in the decorations could also be described as functional since they deal with physical, emotional as well as moral interrelationship.

Clay, which forms the basic building material is plastic as well as porous. This makes it possible for execution of various decorations to be made while still wet. The porosity of the clay also lends itself to coolness. Thus the structure and the decorative functions are closely wedded to achieve a harmonious design because of the common material, clay.

In Plate 13, both the vertical and horizontal lines of the wooden structure have been used to lead the eyes to certain specific creative points in the building. The vertical wooden structure supports the horizontal roofing of the building. In Plate 24, similar lines of the structures are repeated to create a visual pattern as an energetic texture on the walls. The manipulation of lines to form patterns creates a powerful effect on the viewer. Here, individual lines are not perceived, but rather the dramatic forms they suggest with their direction convey an aesthetic emotional response. The seeming horizontal lines in the sturdy cross beams of one part of the temple at Dakwa Jaachi, for instance, tend to suggest repose, stability and calm (Plate 13). 14

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In the creation of the rectangular shape of Asante house (Plate 2), space was manipulated to demarcate and to achieve the shape of the building. Thus establishing a spatial relationship between the positive and negative space and shape of temples. The thick mudwalls also created a rigid barrier between the outside and inside space, an aim the temple achieved, while the courtyard plan also gives a visual access to several areas in the house. One could almost say that this plan is more of an enclosed space.

The use of "ntwuma" to polish the base of the plinths and the lower part of the building in general psychologically engaged our senses, just as the (white clay)"hyire", used on the top section of the inner court harmonises with the immediate environment and affect the overall sensory experience of the viewer (Plate 14).

The interwoven appearance of some of the decorations (Plate 29) for instance unifies the designs and establishes balance among diverse elements. This unity has been achieved by the variety of designs held together by various repetitive motifs. The repetitive decorations have been subtly exeeuted to avoid stilted appearance. All the same motifs have been varied in the relief decorations on the temples to produce a mixture of architectural unity.

Geometric designs have been complemented with round-like patterns (Plate 25 and 29) for variety, just as animated forms have also been created to draw attention to them. This in effect keeps the eyes moving. Spiral forms have been designed at bases of columns to show continuous movement. All these are combined to produce a unique indigenous Asante architecture.

However, the names of the builders and decorations remain anonymous, because none of them signed their products. However, both the symbolic motifs and their associated meanings have become commonplace. Again most of the temples and palaces were rebuilt after the Yaa Asantewaa war of 1901, except probably the Dakwa Jaachi temple which has been maintained up to date.

Meaning of Symbols

Most of the relief decorations on temples and palaces, apart from their aesthetic values as discussed above, do possess symbolic connotations. These architectural temples with their numerous symbols are strongly linked with the social and political systems of the people. The Asante

rectangular architectural plan based on the "Fihankra" symbol for instance, denotes protection and security (Plate 1).

The commonest decorative symbol identified in almost all the temples is the "Sankofa" symbol in varying forms. Some of the forms are geometric, animated and abstracted (Plates 20 and 21). Despite their variations, the "Sankofa" symbol simply symbolises the use of the past to build the future. It is actually never too late to correct a mistake. Traditionally known as "Toakyire a fa", it goes further afield to mean commitment to a course once initiated. The two birds, looking forward with the other's head turned backwards, shows the searching powers of the "Obosom" of the deity of the temple. The symbol again cautions against hasty undertakings.

All these networks of Asante beliefs, values, rites and practices in the symbolic architectural designs are an integral part of their way of life. These aesthetic values of Asante life are found to be represented visually in physical forms of buildings, sculptures and paintings which reflect the philosophical, spiritual and psychological attributes of Asante culture. An example is the "Ntesie or Mate masie" (Plate 26) relief symbols found on the plinth and column base of large temples which signify wisdom and knowledge. It is a common belief among the Asante that, there is no way one's secrets would be revealed if one confides in the deity. The symbol therefore is supposed to endow the temple with powers to impart confidence and assurance as well as to cure

the sick and advise the needy.

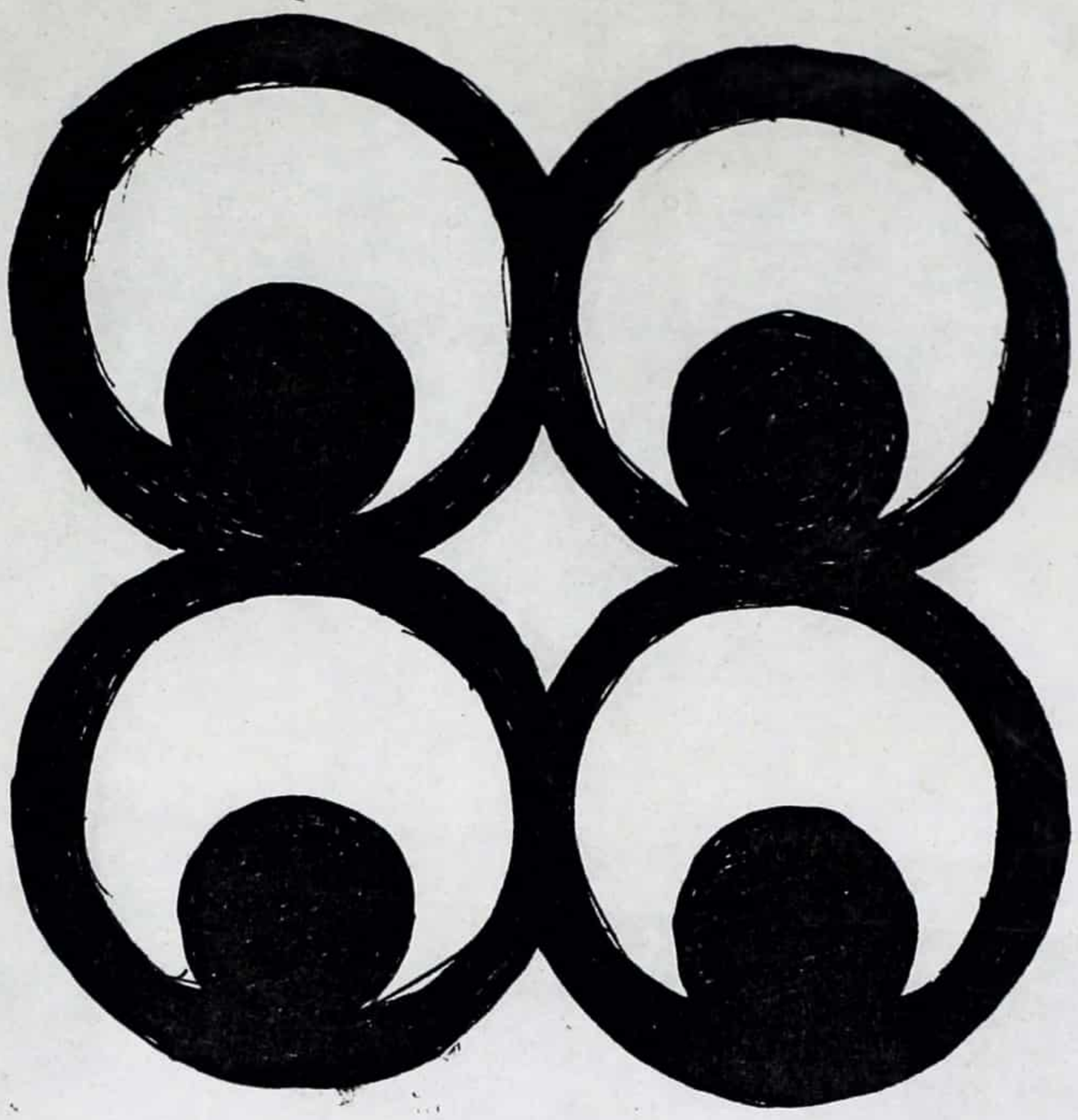


Plate 26
"Mate Masie or Ntesie" Symbol

When the general decorative appearance of the religious temple at Dakwa Jaachi for esample is considered, it is noticed that, there is a long beam over the temple room entrance with a "Bese Saka" pattern. It is believed that, anyone entering a religious temple or palace for whatever reason must have known the conditions attached to seeking assistance from the temple. So apparently, the broad repeated motif symbol of the "Bese Saka" (Plate 27) meticulously designed on the Facade of the inner house is indicative of generous arms expected of visitors to such places. "Bese" or cola is a favourite of the people of Northern Ghana. "Bese" was formerly used by people to barter for goods and as such a currency. Therefore, a bunch of colanuts as indicated on the temple shows how probably one has to pay for services rendered at the religious temple.

The relief figure of a lion (Plate 28) on the wall between the "Bese Saka" on the right and the geometric designs on the left, indicates protection of the interest of the temple and its content. Symbolically, the motif denotes the fearless and courageous qualities of the lion. In this case, the might and power of the deity of the temple, who might, if need be, deal spiritually with any undesirable element that intentionally crosses his path is portrayed in the lion.



Plate 27
"Bese Saka" symbolic pattern
(A Bunch of Colanuts)

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since many people perceive the religious temples as mystic.

The figure of the hunter (Plate 29) placed on the left side of the screen to the entrance of the temple, holds a gun to caution people. This is an apt reference to the hunters cautious trap for animals. Literally meaning, patience achieves success or patience moves mountains.



Plate 29
Yennyina Nkwanta-Dakwa Jaachi



Plate 30
Relief motif - "Yennyina Nkwanta
(Kentenkronu)

The ladder of death motif (Plate 31) symbolises the inevitability of the death of man. It is simply an advice against rejoicing at the misfortune or death of others since misfortune or death could befall all. The design is evenly patterned on the plinth to support the column. These aesthetically pleasing designs set onlooking clients into meditative mood. Just by the left side of the ladder of death design is another version of Sankofa (Plate 19).

The palm frond relief motif (Plate 32) also symbolises strength and durability. There is a popular saying in Asante tradition that, all trees shed their leaves except the palm tree which always maintains its fronds. "Nnua nyinaa woso a ebeka abe". Its message is straight forward; that is,

If all avenues fail the temple house permanently offers hope. It can always be relied upon. This motif design is modelled in relief using a simple repeated motif to achieve a unique surface quality that is balanced on both sides. The seeming gentle swaying movements of the frond invokes a feeling of a moving gentle calmness.

The "Funtunfunafu ne Denkyemfunanfu" is a symbol of the siamese crocodiles. (Plate 33) It appears on walls as decorations, It again illustrates a belief in interdependence of various members of the family. Literally, it refers to the many mouths that must swallow food into a communal stomach. The crocodiles share one stomach, yet they fight over food. The symbol makes fun of greediness and egoism. The food goes into the same stomach, no matter which of the crocodile takes it. There is a common saying that the enjoyment of food involves not only the stomach but the palate-as well. However, the symbol'a significance on any indigenous architeture emphasises the need for unity especially where there is a common destiny. This-unity according to some temple keepers is what the deity of the temple seeks to achieve in society.

The "dwarfs' stool" (Plate 35) is a design of an open work beam. The stool in Asante culture symbolises the soul of society. Therefore, its association with indigenous architecture, such as the temple, serves as a symbolic link between the people and the spirituality of the temple. The symbol of the stool as designed on the beam, though abstracted, is very proverbial. Dwarfs are associated with traditional religious temples in Asante, therefore, it is believed that

during proceedings at the temple, dwarfs invisibly sit on the stool to oversee the general proceedings. The motif used for the stool has been repeated to form a decorative pattern. The design conveys a feeling of rigid mobility yet aesthetically appealing.

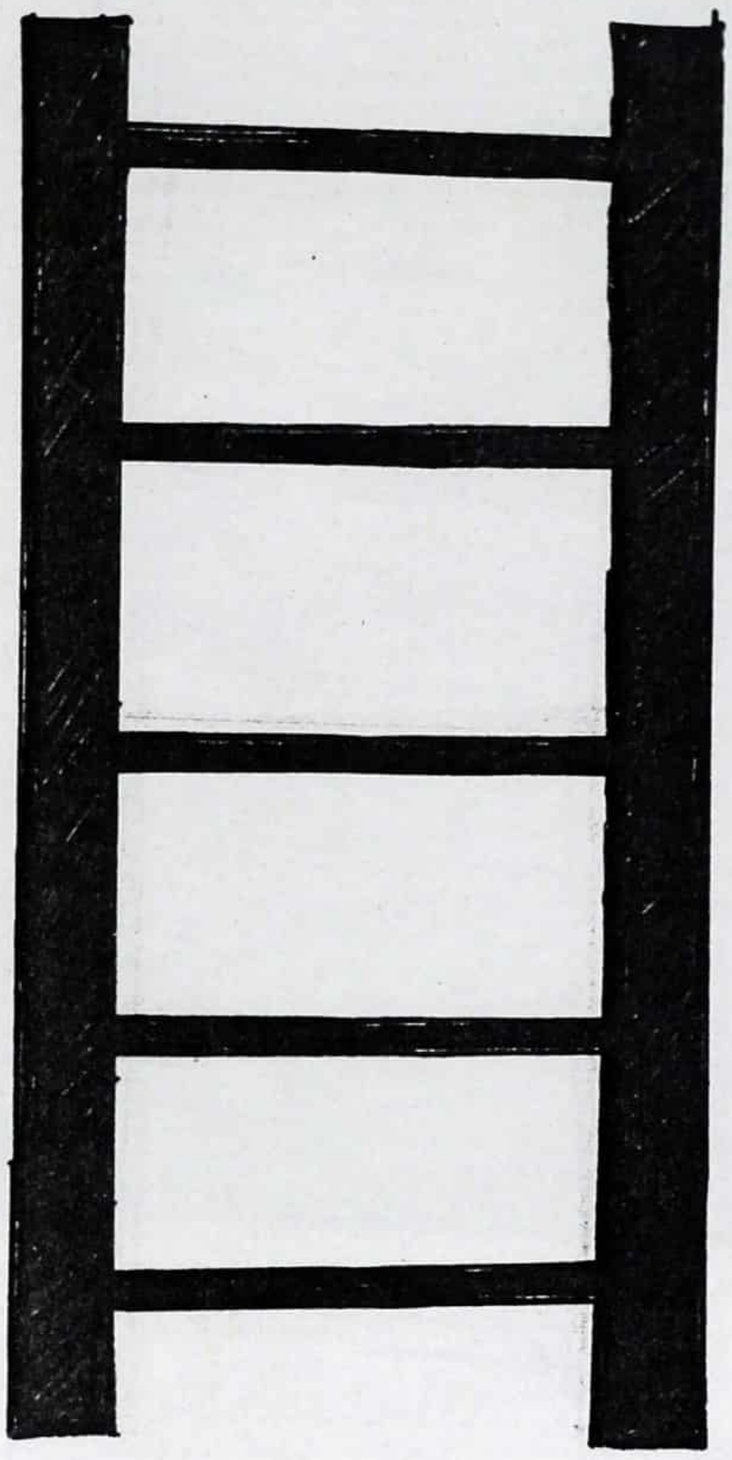


Plate 31
"Owuo Atwedee" - Ladder of Death
Pattern



Plate 32
Palm Frond Motif

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Plate 33
"Funtumfunafu ne Dekyemfunafe" on the Temple Wall (Siamese Crocodiles)

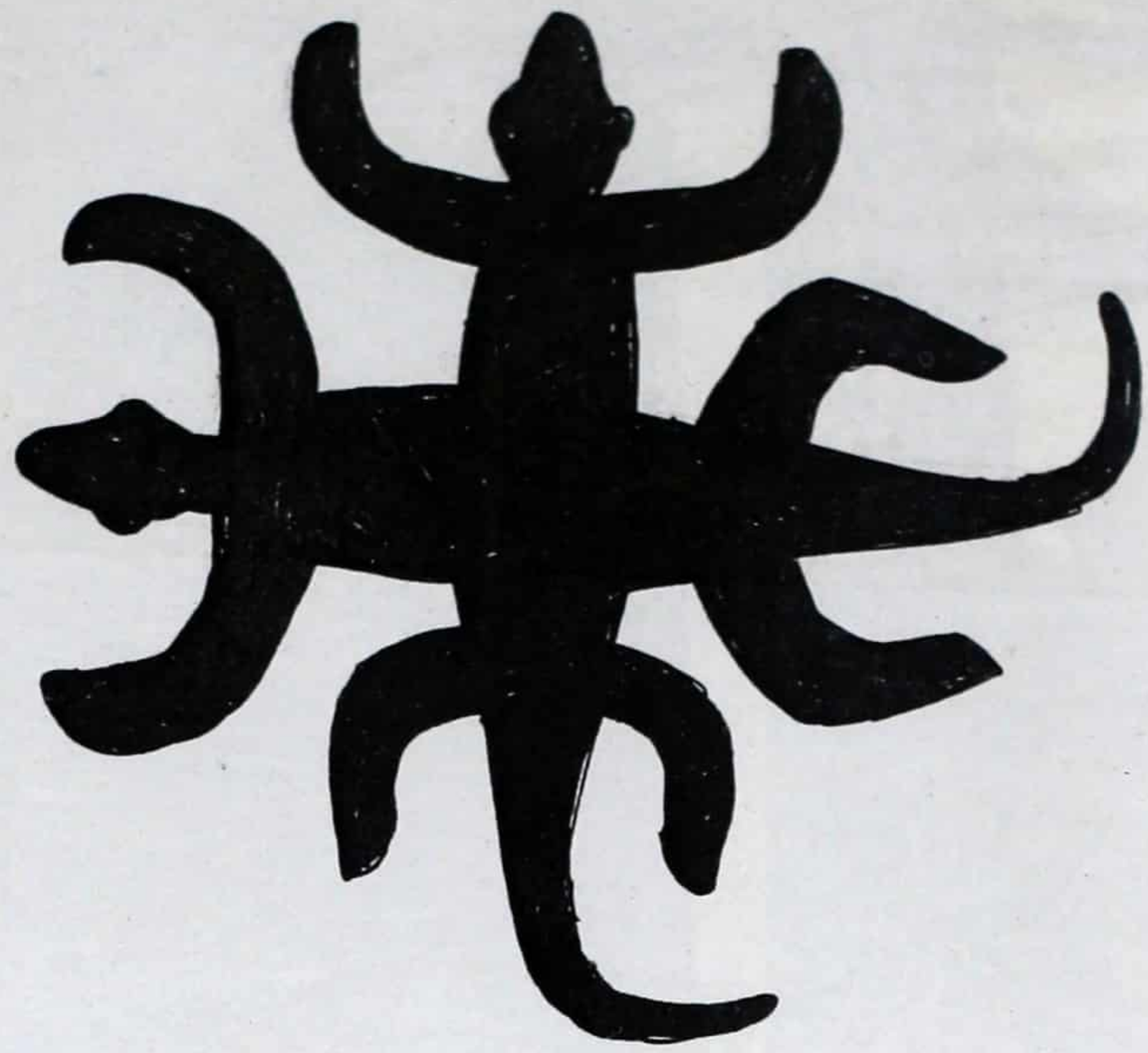


Plate 34
Siamese Crocodiles - Elevated

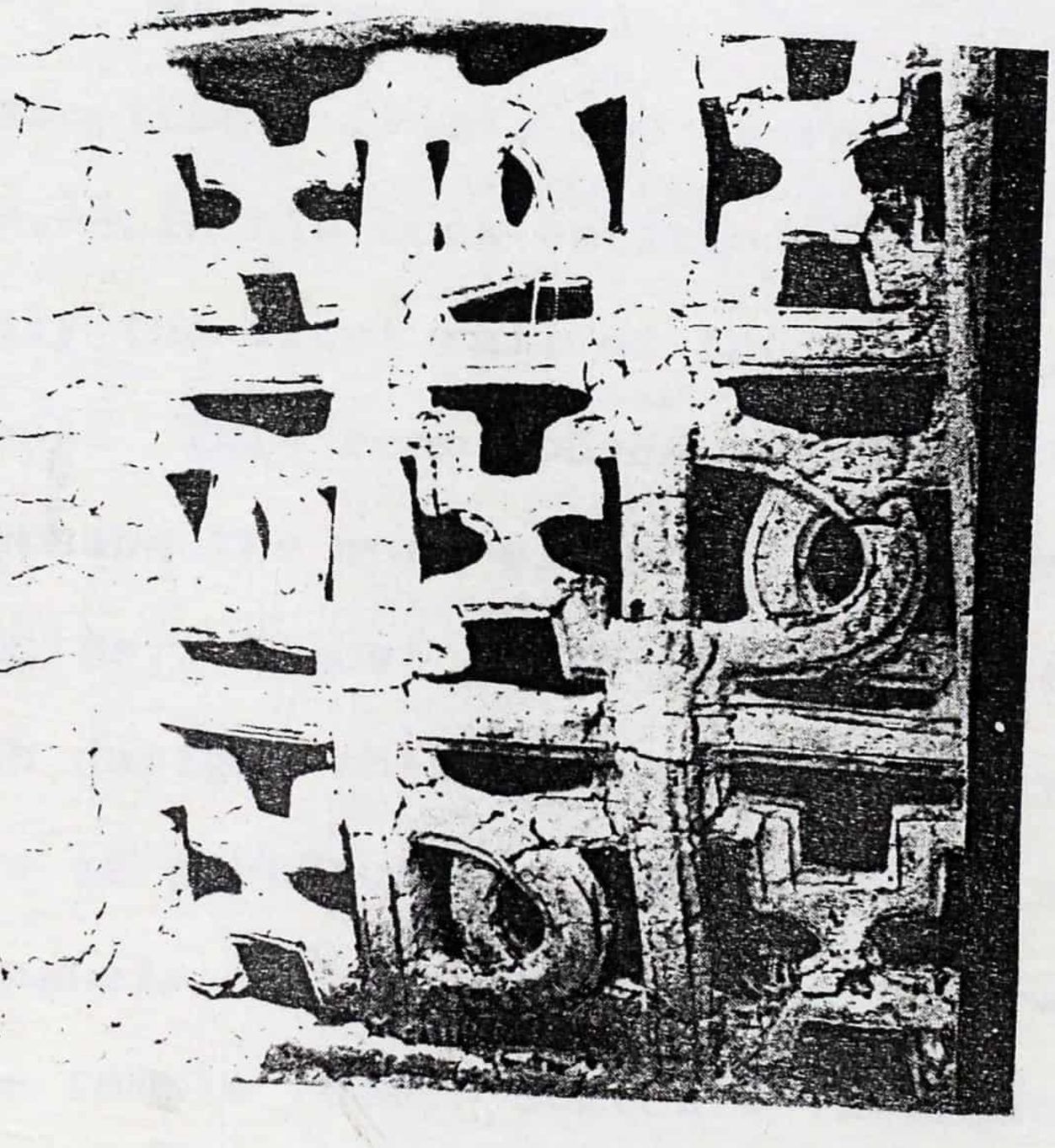


Plate 35
"Mmoatia Adwa" - Dwarf's Stool
Pattern

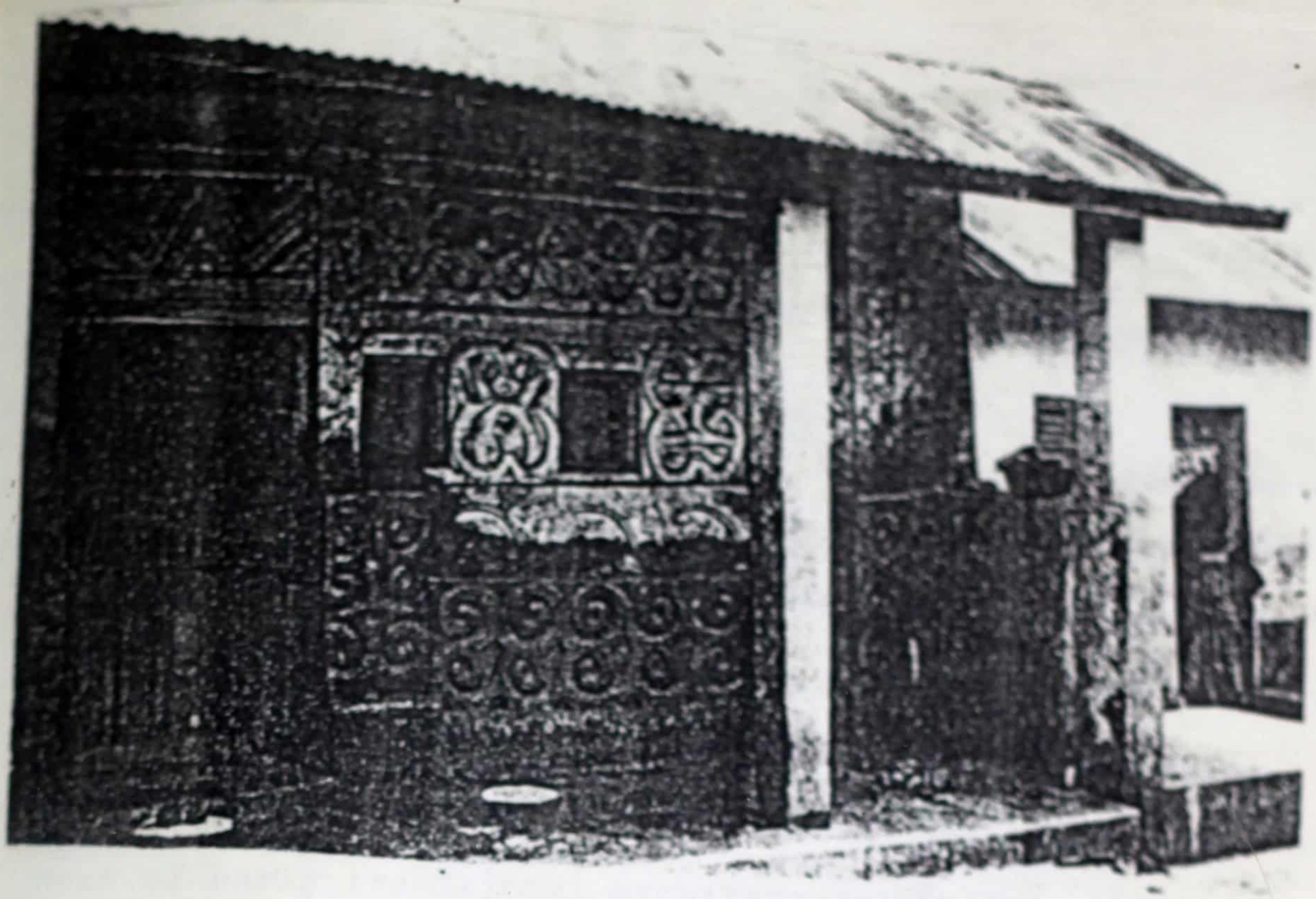


Plate 36
Decorated Front wall of Kenyase
Religious Temple

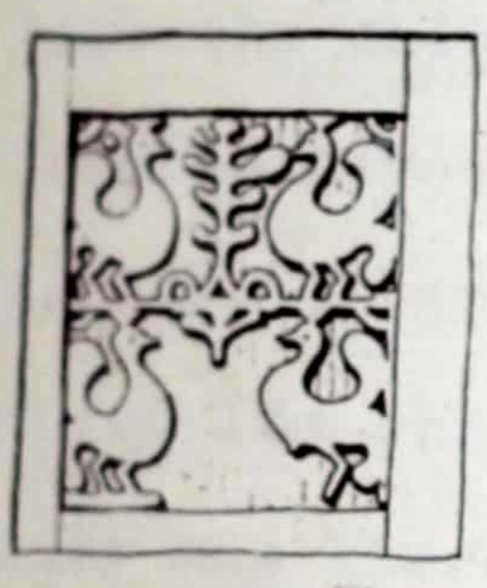
The Kenyase temple (Plate 36) as recorded in 1969 by Swithenbank,[14] in his book entitled "Ashanti Fetish Houses" has only the front wall of the temple room left with decorations. This room houses the deity "Domaa", which has what is perhaps the most elaborately decorated facade of all the temples. Almost every part of the front wall is covered with designs which exhibit great variety and balance. There is particularly a series of six fine different designed panels on the upper part of the wall above the entrance to the temple room. Some are interlacing designs, a creasted long necked bird and a wheel-like design. The door to the deity's room is the only remaining example of carved wooden shutters still in position (Plate 37). They have beautiful fretwork decorations of birds and foliage of an almost Byzantine character. The shutters have been painted

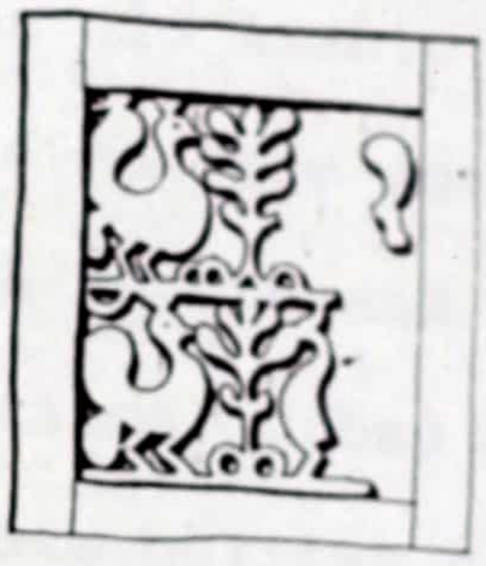
and gilded to enhance the appearance of this indigenous Asante architecture.

The decorative symbols on the Kenyase religious temple house are quite similar to most of the other temples. The carved shutters seem unique by their intricate carved details. The aesthetic appeal of the carefully cut out pattern of two sets of birds encircling a flower-like tree in a regular pattern, has given credence to the high aesthetic consciousness of early traditional architectural buildings.

However, apart from the variety of desigs in this particular building, the symbols have been artitrarily placed and are not in exact dimension as seen in the urban Kumasi architectural decorations in the early eighteenth century, as recorded by Bowdich.[15] in Switchenbank's book "Ashanti Fetish House."









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Plate 37
Elevation of Kenyasi Religious Temple with Carved Decorated Shutters

In Kumasi itself, the capital of Asante where the tradition of decorative building was supposed to have started in Asante, none exists today. Although there is a popular belief that, the old section of the Asantehene's present palace contains relics of some of the decorative symbols on the walls of his inner chamber, there is no public access to ascertain its validity.

However, available historical records on Kumasi indicate that there were exclusive polished indigenous architectural structures in Kumasi under King Osei Tutu before the original settlement was sacked by the English expeditory forces under Sir Garnet Wolseley in 1874.[16]

Kumasi is the home of the Golden Stool. It was conceived by its founding fathers as the royal city to symbolise the existence of the old Asante Kingdom. It is therefore believed that it had no true indigenous residents. Rather, it attracted both Asante and non-Asante, who constituted its original traditional urban population.[17] The city has therefore been cosmopolitan since its inception in the 1600s. Inspite of the violent historical transition, it continues to attract people of diverse ethnic and national origins.

Notwithstanding, Kumasi possesses a distinctive traditional architecture which has made it a unique urban entity since the 1600s.[18] Historical records[19] indicate that the symbolic function of Kumasi was by no means taken for granted. King Osei Tutu and most of his royal descendants continuously made extensive and conscious efforts to undertake architectural projects to ensure that the physical and visual features

of the nucleus city of Kumasi were manipulated to be in unison and congruence with its royal symbolic role.

Bowdich,[20] on his first visit to Kumasi in 1700, encountered Kumasi in its ancient glory. He made an observation of the impressive civic designs that manifested in various forms of spatial arrangements. These arrangements were visually reinforced by the broad streets, structured dwelling houses and public buildings (Plate 38).

Furthermore, it could be observed that, space configuration, both in and outside structural buildings, had been undertaken, to effect divergent "sense of place" in several sections of Kumasi. The palace was the most dominant architectural entity, which was reported to have covered an area of about two hectares in 1840.[21] The other architectural buildings therefore evolved around it to relate both visually and functionally to it. This might be the reason why most of the early buildings in Kumasi were similarly decorated to match that of King Osei Tutu's royal palace

This careful planning left in its wake not only aesthetically decorated buildings but also aesthetically pleasing, well laid and neat traditional urban Kumasi.

As can be ascertained, Bowdich's sketches of building seen during his visit to Kumasi, captured the zenith of the development of traditional architecture in pre-colonial Asante. The drawings show forms and details which reflect excellent consideration for the employment of architectural techniques to manipulate and articulate space. For example Odumata's house (Plate 39) located on Odum street, which opened into the royal principal street, was seen to have been

a beautiful piece of Asante traditional architecture. The house had well proportioned arches which were carried by decorative columns and connected to well treated and colourful textured plinths. Sections of the house also had cornices and balustrades fixed to walls with intricate geometric patterns and low relief decorations which are similar to some of the decorations found on some of the existing religious temples situated outside Kumasi. Some of the well decorated houses belonged to captains in the Asante army,and the houses were traditionally known as "Adampan".[22]

This distinctive decorative feature contributed no doubt to the quality of the aesthetics of the traditional urban Kumasi. These houses furthermore reflected considerable amount of affluence by having at times window frames cased in gold.[23] Conscious attempt at good maintenance was undertaken by regular application of "ntwuma" (red ochre liquid clay) to polish the plinths of buildings where erosion tended to affect most.

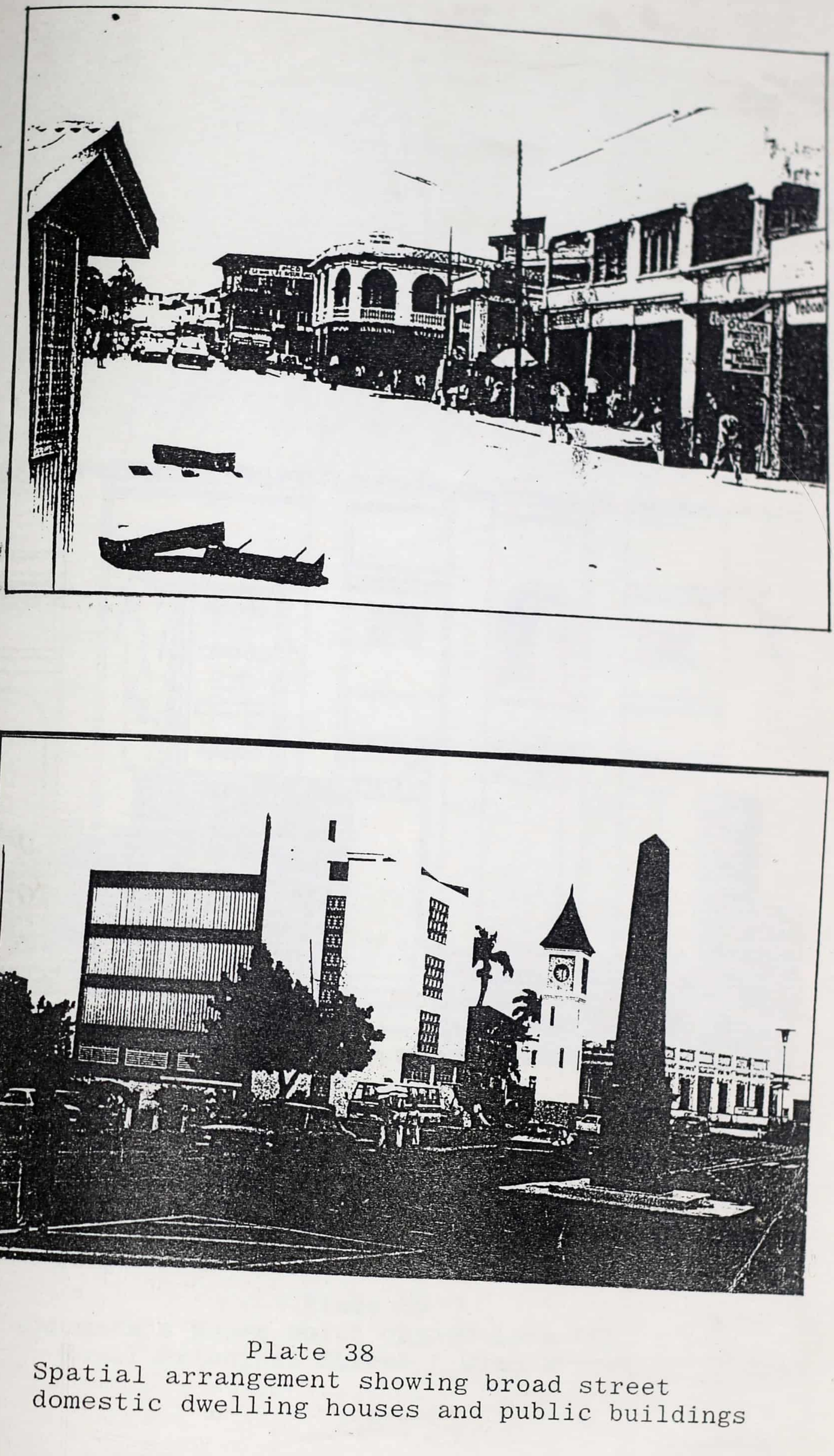
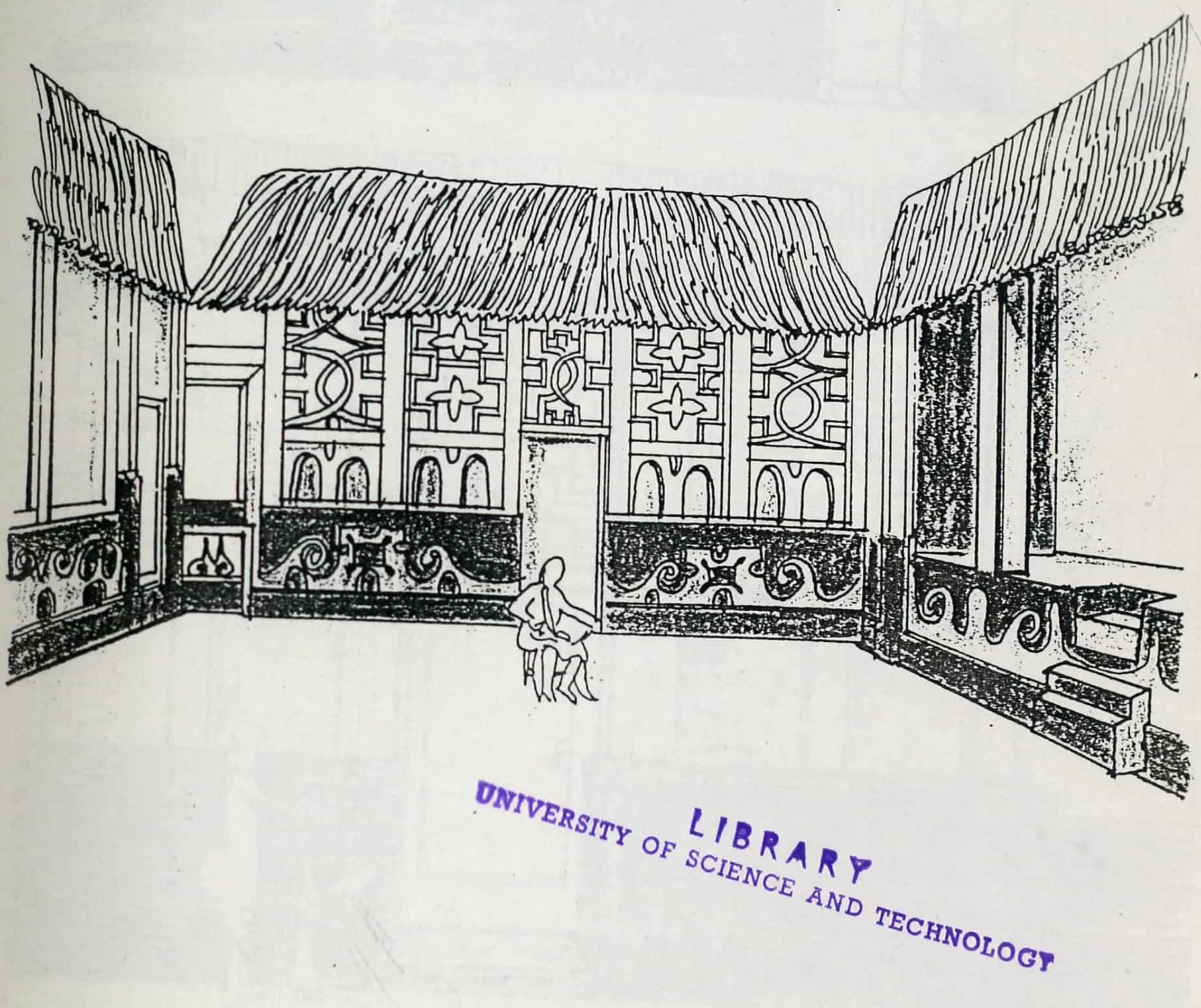


Plate 38
Spatial arrangement showing broad street
domestic dwelling houses and public buildings

Impression of Urban Houses of Kumasi in 1817
Showing Architectural Detials



Plate 39
Odumata's House which opened into the
Royal Principal Street - Odum Street



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Plate 40
Inner Court of Apookoos House - Odum Street. Apookoo was an Asante Army Captain

Impression of Urban Houses of Kumasi
in 1817 showing Architectural Details

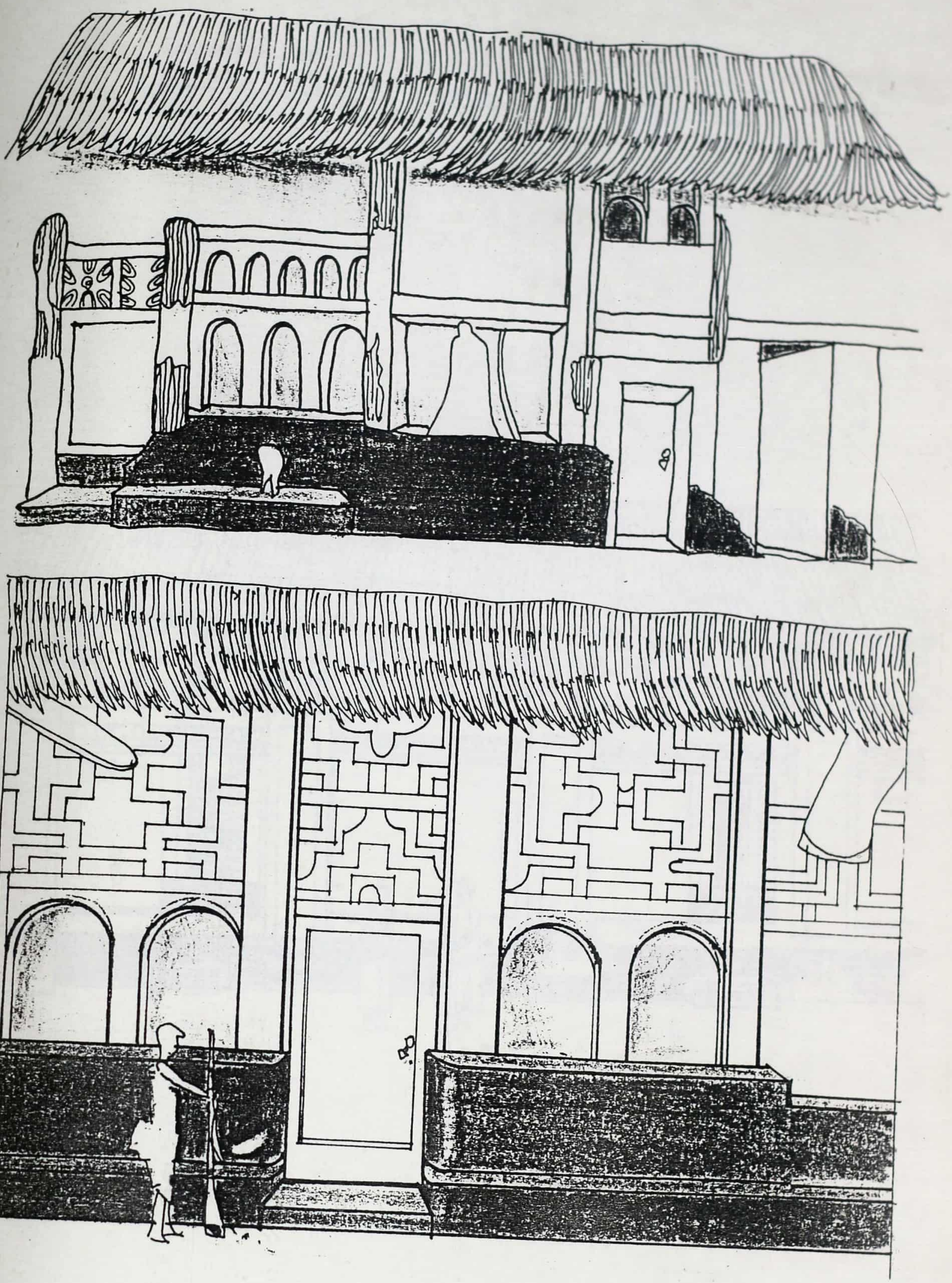


Plate 41
The Oldest House in Commassee
(Bowdich T.e.)

Impression of the Kings Palace as seen
in 1817 showing details of Civil Design

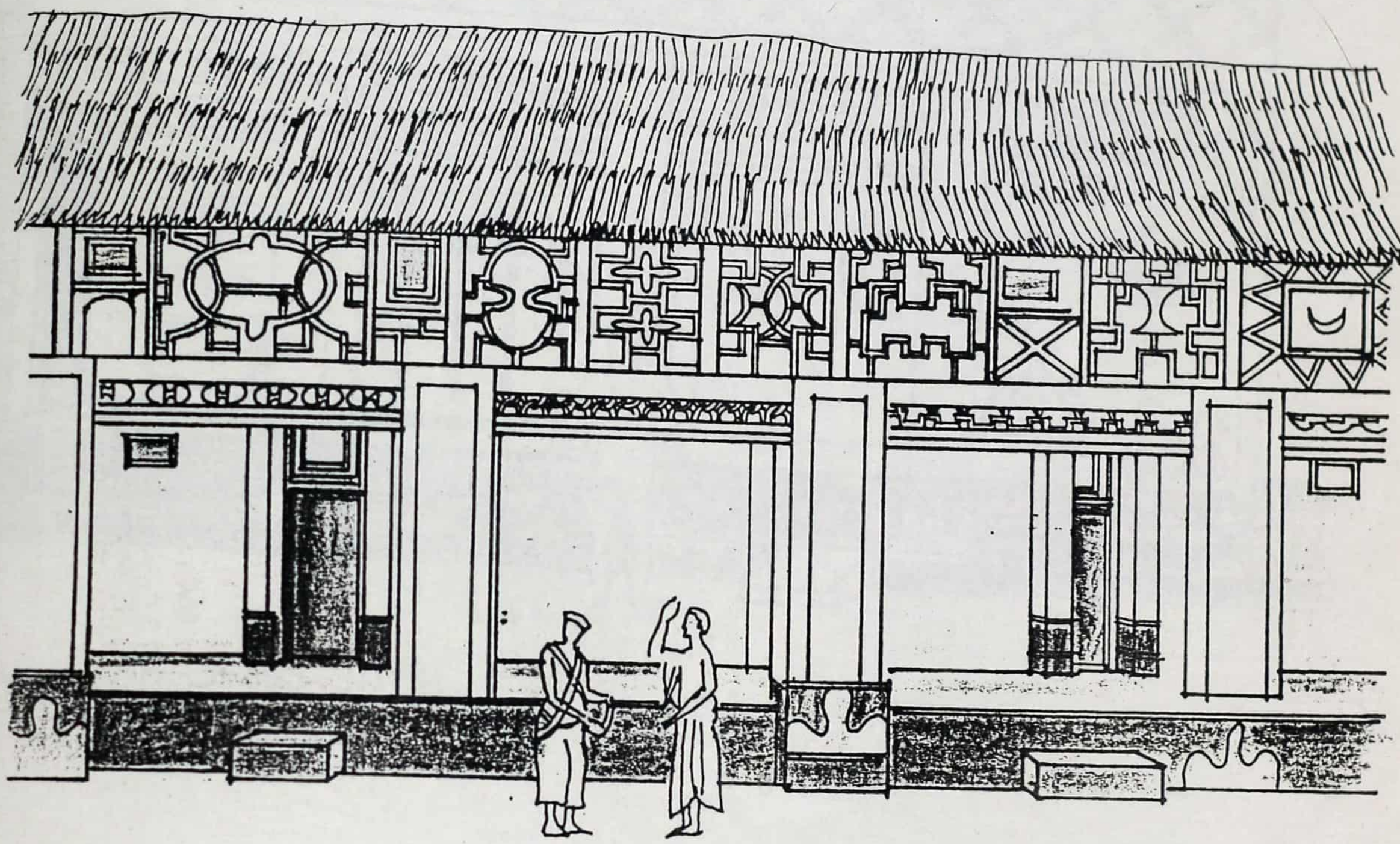


Plate 42
Part of the Quarters of Plate 41

Impression of the Kings Palace as seen
in 1817 showing details of Civil Design

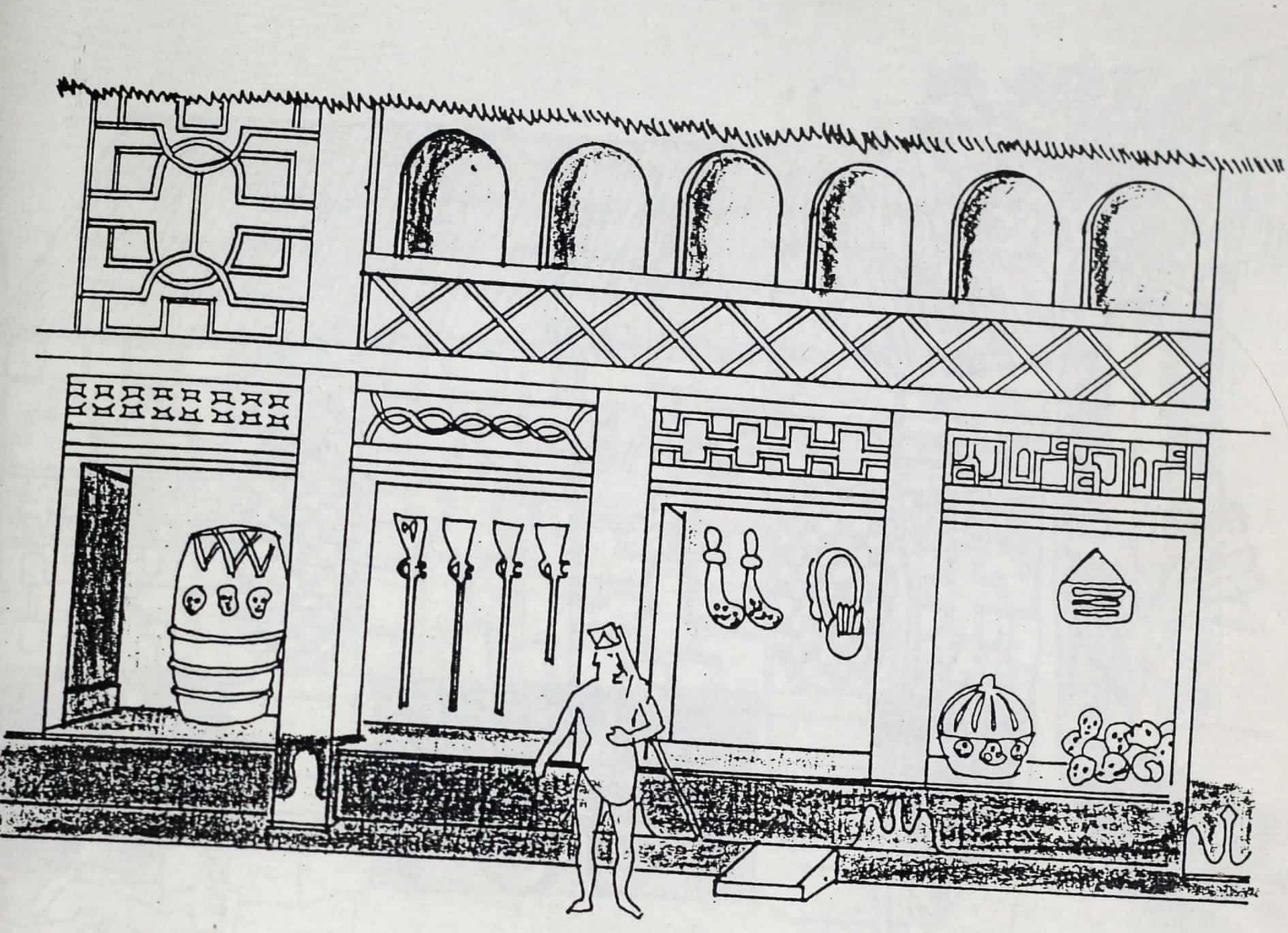


Plate 43
Part of a Piazza in the Kings Palace

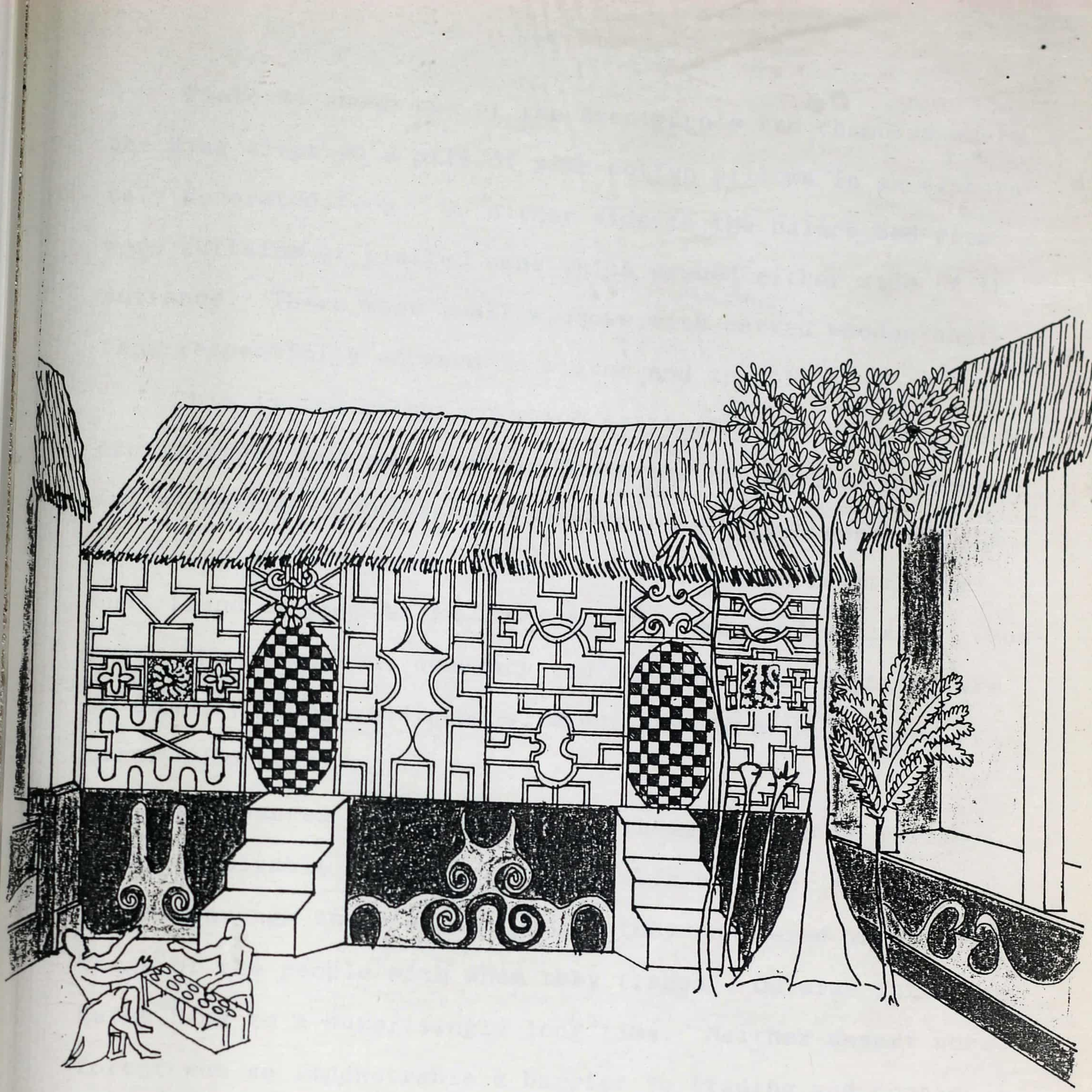


Plate 44
The Decorated Front Wall of the Kings
Sleeping Room

Plate 44 shows one of the Asantehen's bed chambers where the King slept on a pile of silk-cotton pillows in an elaborately decorated room. On either side to the palace bed room were curtains of plaited cane which graced either side of the entrance. There were small windows with carved wooden shutters respectfully encased in silver and in gold.

This is the extent to which Asante indigenous traditional architecture was embellished. The geometric designs on upper walls and the spiral forms found on important houses and the King's palace are again, almost all similar in form to the ones found on temples in other Asante towns and villages. However, the precision, accuracy and the well laid architecture in Kumasi, though indigenous, might have been influenced by other culotures.

The Asantes have always shown themselves to be particularly hospitable to customs and beliefs of other cultures, either through those of the people they conquered in war or those of the people with whom they traded. Outside influence dates back to a surprisingly long time. Neither desert nor forest was so impenetrable a barrier to trading and contact for the Asante.

Bowdich[24] commented on the similarities between Asante architectural design and decorations and customs, and those of other earlier recorded civilization in North AFrica. That, similarities do exist is undeniable, although, this might be due to early contacts rather than migration. Islamic influence has been strong in this area for some considerable time.

Some interlacing designs as well as the open screen works and the open beams seen in indigenous Asante architecture have equivalent in Muslim buildings introduced in the Sudan and Northern Nigeria (popularly known as [Hausa] architecture).

Apart from originally drawing inspirations from limitless natural designs around them to suit their socio-cultural needs, Asante wars of conquests with Dormaa, Denkyira, Banda, Gyaman - where most "adinkra" symbols were adapted for architectural decorations, - Gonja, Dagomba, Akyem, Assin and Tafo, 25

might have been a contributory factor that influenced their architecture. The Asante is believed to have adapted the best aspects of the architectural culture of these nations without hesitation in the same manner as she did with the Adansi rectangular house plan to create her own unique architural style.

However, as culture is not static but dynamic, the old order should at times change and yield place to new so that new architectural aspirations can be fulfilled to suit the present needs of the people and the changing world.

It is in the light of this cultural change that the progress of Asante architecture must be discussed. Changes in the progress of Asante indigenous architecture are therefore appreciated.

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The Transition Period

The transition in indigenous architecture started in urban Kumasi with the introduction of colonial building structures. The first of such structures is the Kumasi Fort (Plate 45) built in 1897 as a defence and an ammunitions depot.

The Fort, acting as the central part of colonial power, a conscious attempt to rebuild the city from its nadir with definitely foreign urban architectural design conceptions was initiated around 1903.[26] The location and presence of the Fort on the South-West of the sacked city began to direct and influence a new structural and morphological arrangement for Kumasi.

The architecture of this era developed with the emerging structures becoming the organising unit for the modern town planning. Houses were built to enhance the character evolving out of the restructured colonial Kumasi. These mixed residential and commercial buildings, which began to be developed had detailed architectures, originating from the old Asante architecture. These were based on the "Adampan" indigenous house style. The distinctive features of the Kumasi urban architecture contributed to the quality of the aesthetics of the colonial city.

The buildings maintained the single storey structure supported by columns, the plinth of which are broadened for extra strength. Instead of the laterite, burnt bricks were the dominant building material. Hard planks of wood were used for the flooring of the upper floor. Wooden shutters were employed for windows, especially those of the upper floor. The indigenous thatched roofing was replaced with a more permanent material made of corrugated iron roofing sheets.

Also, the indigenous rectangular house style was incorporated into the new evolving architecture style of

the Asante in Kumasi. For instance, multiple entrance doors were now provided, instead of the former single door to traditional houses.

For instance, the courtyards of the new style served other purposes of a warehouse and a parking lot for cars of the emerging commercial concerns that were springing up in the new cosmopolitan town. Aslo, the upper floor was used for residential accommodation while the ground floor was used for trading shops.

In place of the former intricate decorative relief patterns that distinguished community buildings from domestic houses, reliefs of the date of construction and the name of the owner of the house were boldly displayed on the beams that faced the main street. Such was the architectural situation in Kumasi during the early stages of British colonization.

These changes also affected the designing of domestic houses. There began a fashion of plastering houses. Burnt bricks and concrete blocks became the new building materials for domestic houses. This situation invariably led to the gradual and final replaeement of the traditional classical Asante decorative houses.

The evolving architectural style manifested itself in some prominent buildings in Kumasi, which the surrounding villages also copied. Some of such buildings include that of Nana Prempeh's residence (Plate 46) at Odum in Kumasi often called Kumasihene's residence. The building a mixture of autochthonic indigenous Kumasi urban architecture and the Greco-Roman classical style. Inspite of its

alienation to the Asante traditional family unity, it added a very remarkable innovation to Asante architecture.

Others were the Wesley Methodist Church, the Ramseyer Presbyterian Church, and the Barclays Bank and other commercial and residential structures. All these were mostly situated in the central commercial Kumasi.



Plate 45
The Kumasi Fort - Kumasi. 1890



Plate 46
Nana Prempeh's Town Residence
Prempeh II Street, Odum, Kumasi
About 1906



Plate 47
Wesley Methodist Church Building
Kumasi. After 1901

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Plate 48
Ramseyer Presbyterian Church Building
Kumasi. About 1900



Plate 49
UTC Departmental Store Building
Kumasi - About 1900



Plate 50
Barclays Bank Building, Kumasi. 1900



Plate 51
CFAO Building, kumasi, 1910

Because of the amalgamation of the old Asante and the new colonial changes, there developed a unique Kumasi architectural style. For example, the new structures were more dignified and gave a very pleasant character to urban space. The conscious integration of the citing of the buildings with the topography helped to reinforce the positive evolution of space in architecture. These were enhanced by the contrasting and harmonious painting of the walls of the structure to give a pleasant decorative effect to the environment.

Post-Colonial Era

Modern architecture in Asante began in the 1950s after the attainment of political independence by Ghana. During this period, the government of Ghana initiated a number of modern institutional structures in Kumasi which began to exercise some influences on domestic architecture in Kumasi as well. For instance, the laterite walls of both the interior and exterior were plastered. The monolitic wooden doors were replaced with treated designed plywood whilst painted corrugated iron roofing sheet replaced asbestos and thatched roofing in domestic architecture.

Institutional buildings such as the Regional Office of Electricity Corporation, the Law Courts and the Ghana Commercial Bank, incorporated honeycomb precast concrete designs and mural painting decorations of the outer walls of the building (Plate 52) for aesthetically pleasing embellishment.

Other such public buildings with honeycomb designs include the Medical School Hostel, the Glad Tidings Centre

at Nhyiaeso (Plate 53 and 54) all in Kumasi.

The honeycomb design is a derivation from the indigernous architetural decorative open screen concept.



Plate 52

Electricity Corporation Building, Odum
Kumasi. After 1957



Plate 53
Medical School Hostel, UST at K.A.T.H.
By Dr. Wellington, UST, 1989



Plate 54
Glad Tidings Centre, Nhyiaeso - Kumasi
By Dr. Wellingson, UST, 1992.

The honeycomb in Plate 59, is found on the fenced wall of the"glad tiding religious centre." In an interview with the architect, Dr. Wellington,[27] he indicated that the motif has a religious connotation to suit the needs and activities of the then rel igious temples. The motif has therefore been selected and refined to connote contemporary ideas of present day Christian religion.

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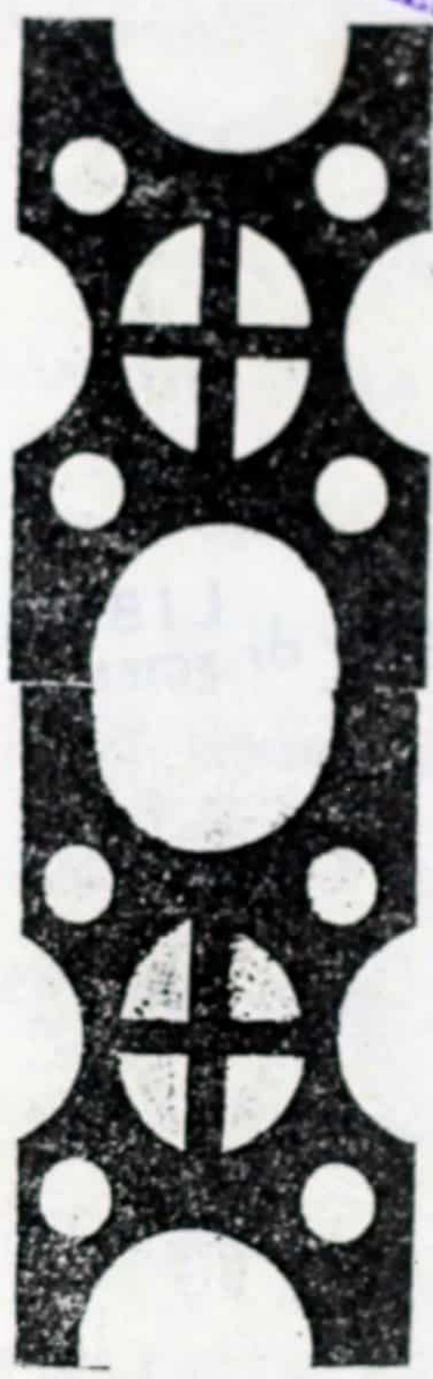


Plate 55
GOD THE ALL SEEING

Domestic Houses

The post-colonial changes in public architecture affected domestic dwellings as well. There has actually been some basic fundamental changes in Asante domestic architecture beyond the post-colonial era. The original courtyard plan has gone through significant changes where external balconies were added to each of the four unit structures. These changes have affected the relevance of the "Pato", because they have now been converted to sleeping rooms to satisfy the extended family accommodation demands.

In Kumasi domestic architecture, for instance, most of the houses facing major streets have been converted to stores with interior connecting doors that join the main courtyard of the house. Again, this indicates another alteration to the original "Fihankra" plan. These were innovations that evolved out of necessity but have added to the aesthetic appreciation of domestic structures.

Another innovative addition is the storey houses. These structures continue to maintain some aspect of the indigenous traditional architectural character which often also regionalized the houses. The Asante extended family system appears to influence a new structural designing that can safely be termed a neo-Asante architecture. For instance, the monolithic like structure, popularly called "Boys Quarters" tended to separate the original four unit Asante house style. Therefore, to create the idea of the original courtyard, an outer wall is built around the main structure to open up space for courtyard activities as existed in

ancient prototypes some of the outer walls are decorativ honeycombed designs of symbolic motifs, while the interi wall decorations consist of paintings and murals.

The epoch in Asante architecture is an expression o Asante lucidity and creativity dictated to by the enviro mental needs of families. In the light of this, the rese cher deems it fitting to record that these symbolic deco can be regarded as a means of bringing into focus one of the aesthetically artistic features of the people of Asan Because it is through indigenous architecture that the pe ple have the opportunity to exhibit one of their art form

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CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Results

The major findings of this research are that the aesthetics of the indigenous Asante architecture has been evolving since contact with Adansi and that Asante possessed the ability to adapt other cultures and blend them into their own. This process resulted in a classical Asante architectural vocabulary that is uniquely their own. This vocabulary is characterised by the open courtyard style and the decorative motifs of symbolic connotations.

The degree of aesthetic relevance to architectual structures is dependent on the form and function of the structure. The palaces and temples were more aesthetically pleasing and elaborate than those of residential or domestic structures. It will therefore suffice to say that these religious temples and palaces had aesthetic pretentions. The integration of various symbols in architecture as portrayed in these buildings has expressed the cultural characteristics of the Asante people. The philosophy which underlined the structures was the touch-stone of the Asante cultural heritage.

To prove the validity of the hypotheses put forward, chapter three identified and analysed the aesthetics in the architecture of indigenous Asante religious temples and palaces. Temples at Bodwease, Kentenkronu, Dakwa Jaachi,

Kenyase and their symbolic significance were dealt with among others. The general evolution of aesthetic development in Kumasi, in both public and domestic architecture to date was also discussed and analysed.

However, in modern Asante, the strict adherence to the functional design and decorations has given way to a free design of architectural structures. This sense of liberation has ushered in a new and free spirit of designs. Thus in modern Asante, architecture is experiencing a healthy and creative resurgence, the aesthetic value of which is unlimited.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The indigenous symbolic architecture among the Asante is a cultural heritage which serves as a landmark of their ethnic group. The identity it brings to the people as a link between the past and the present proves its importance and the need for its proper preservation and improvement.

However, as problems are bound to rear their head in every human institution, there is a drastic sign of neglect in all the symbolic religious temples visited. This according to some temple keepers is due to the changing cultural values of the people. People have refused to have any dealing with the temples due to erroneous conceptions. This has gone on to a point where almost all the religious temples identified, presently have no religious priests for continuity of the old system. This is the problem.

Since a culture that does not re-create itself eventually becomes a dead culture, the heritage of the past must

therefore subject itself to constant renewal through challenges and new opportunities that stimulate the creativity of contemporary carriers of tradition.

A progressive society is not static, nor should it be duty bound by tradition and custom. Changes and modifications are inevitable and should be expected with the passage of time. But these should not erode the essential elements of the philosophical and spiritual meaning of the symbolic Asante architecture.

This view has also been expressed by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Peter Akwasi Sarpong. In his book "Ghana in Retrospect" (1974), he emphasizes the return to traditional customs. He believes

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> "The salvation of Ghana, I submit, is in a judicious return to the religious atmosphere of the past; The good in the past should carefully be separated from the evil, and make the most of it."1

The "good in the past" referred to,might mean rectitude which the researcher is aiming at. It should lead to evolve a programme that seeks continuity with the past as far as possible but which also encourages adaptation and refinement of the old in the light of new values.

Indigenous Asante architecture, as an institution has shown a remarkable capacity for survival in spite of the social and cultural changes that have taken place as a result of the impact of Western cultures, technology and education. Again, indigenous Asante architecture provides one of the vital links of the changing contemporary world with the past and a major channel for the expression of renewal of cultural identity.

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They serve as monuments for the people therefore neglecting or destroying them will mean destroying the very basis of Asante communal life, the continuity of life and losing a noble heritage. Indigenous Asante architecture binds together the people of a community, not just by residence but by common beliefs, values, aspirations and common artistic expressions. These play a vital role in nation building and more especially in the evolution of cultural expressions that are at once meaningful on local, regional and national levels.

From the discussions and information provided on indigenous Asante architecture and the role art plays in them, one can easily recognise the various formalised ways in which ideas, concepts, values, feelings and emotions are combined for communication in architecture. The historical, social, psychological, religious and philosophical underpinnings, which when considered in terms of enculturation could also be used as innovations in our attempt to infuse proper aesthetic sense in the people. The aesthetically artistic designs in these buildings, when properly restructured in the philosophy of the nation can become more relevant to the needs and aspirations of individuals and the society at large. The aesthetic experiences derived from the study of the symbols and design of indigenous architecture will also go a long way to enhance the appreciation, transmission and transformation of our cultural heritage for a better tomorrow.

It is therefore hoped that a better knowledge of aesthetics will be encouraged among the people to foster a

better understanding of Asante sybolic architectural designs and their artistic language.

The Ghana Museum and Monuments Board, who are supposed to be the custodians of these temples, should also have a second look at the attempt they made in the 1970s to protect the temples. The aesthetics in these architectural structures should be maintained to serve as an educative medium to both Ghanaian and foreigners.

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