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HISTORICAL EVOLUTION AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF AHWIAA INDIGENOUS WOOD CARVING PRACTICES, GHANA: 1960S AND BEYOND


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Historical Evolution and Cultural Heritage of Ahwiaa Indigenous Wood Carving Practices, Ghana: 1960s and Beyond

Abstract. In many communities around the globe, woodcarving contributes significantly to livelihood, cultural sustainability, religious exhibition and historical antecedents. It is in the light of this that this study delves into the historical evolution of indigenous wood carving in Ghana from 1960 to present, with a focus on the Ahwiaa wood carving community to explore the transformations, continuities and innovations that have shaped the wood carving tradition in this renowned wood carving community. The study was situated within the qualitative approach, with a combination of historical and case study as the research methods used.

Woodcarvers, woodcarving buyers, Users of wood carving, Opinion Leaders, Woodcarving Traders/ buyers in Ahwiaa constitute the population of the study. A sample size of 13 were selected from the target population through purposive and convenience sampling methods a technique under the non-probability sampling. Data for the study was collected with interviews and observation as the tools. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the date with two coding system axial coding and In Vivo coding adopted for the study. Findings of the study were presented descriptively and showed that the beginning of indigenous wood carving in Ghana traces its roots to the Ashanti people, with Ahwiaa emerging as the prominent woodcarving centre. The study recommends that this knowledge needs to be safeguarded in an explicit mode for preservation and sustainability of the woodcarving heritage.

Keywords: Ahwiaa, Cultural heritage, Indigenous knowledge, woodcarving, Ghana.

Evoluția istorică și moștenirea culturală a practicilor indigene de sculptură în lemn Ahwiaa, Ghana: anii 1960 și perioada de după

Rezumat. În multe comunități din întreaga lume, sculptura în lemn contribuie semnificativ la modul de trai, sustenabilitatea culturală, expozițiile religioase și antecedentele istorice. În lumina faptului dat, acest studiu analizează evoluția istorică a sculpturii în lemn indigene din Ghana, din 1960 până în prezent, concentrându-se pe comunitatea de sculptură în lemn Ahwiaa, pentru a explora transformările, continuitățile și inovațiile care au modelat tradiția sculpturii în lemn în această renumită comunitate de sculptură în lemn. Studiul a fost situat în cadrul abordării calitative, utilizând o combinație de metode istorice și studii de caz.

Sculptorii în lemn, cumpărătorii de sculpturi în lemn, utilizatorii de sculpturi în lemn, liderii de opinie, comercianții/cumpărătorii de sculpturi în lemn din Ahwiaa constituie populația abordată în studiu. Un eșantion de 13 persoane a fost selectat din populația țintă, prin metode de eșantionare intențională și convențională, o tehnică de eșantionare neprobabilistică. Datele pentru studiu au fost colectate cu ajutorul interviurilor și observației. Analiza tematică a fost utilizată pentru a analiza datele, utilizând două sisteme de codificare: codificare axială și codificare in vivo. Rezultatele studiului au fost prezentate descriptiv și au arătat că începuturile sculpturii în lemn indigene în Ghana își au rădăcinile în poporul Ashanti, Ahwiaa devenind centrul proeminent al sculpturii în lemn. Studiul recomandă ca aceste cunoștințe să fie protejate într-un mod explicit pentru conservarea și sustenabilitatea patrimoniului sculpturii în lemn.

Cuvinte-cheie: Ahwiaa, Moștenire culturală, Cunoștințe indigene, sculptură în lemn, Ghana.

1. Introduction. Wood carving is an ancient human art dating back to the Middle Paleolithic ages, originating from wooden spears and eating gadgets such as spoons [1; 2]. It has been a significant part of culture, religion, governance, education, tourism, and identity [3; 4]. Wood is a plentiful renewable and valuable resource for many nations due to its diverse physical, chemical, and mechanical properties and colors [5; 6]. Its versatility in industrial uses makes it a valuable resource for carving and sculpturing [7]. Woodcarving significantly impacts global livelihoods, cultural sustainability, religious exhibitions, and historically significant events [8]. In Mexico, it contributes $2500 per year to carving households, while Indonesia exports $100 million. India has a $65 million wood carving industry, with over 50,000 people involved. In Sub-Saharan Africa, wood carving expresses traditional life, engages ancestors, and facilitates initiation rites, festivals, and funerals [6]. It is a ubiquitous traditional art practice in Sub-Saharan Africa, passed down through apprenticeships [1]. The industry employs many people in designing and producing various objects, including stool regalia, drums, and animal forms. In Kenya, over 60,000 woodcarvers produce commercial carvings, providing significant household income. In South Africa, woodcarving contributes to household income of $500-2000 per year [9; 10]. In West Africa for instance, wood carving is prominent in Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Ghana [11].

Indigenous wood carving has been an artistic mode of expression in the Ghanaian art and culture. In Ghana, traditional wood carving has been an ancient industry [12]. It started with the belief that; trees are somehow sacred expressions of the creator. Since ancient times, trees in Ghana are considered dwelling places of supernatural spirits and powers, both benevolent and malevolent [12]. The trees fell for carving or to be given space for any other developmental project like road or building construction are given certain ritual purification rites [4]. Woodcarving is an ancient craft with a rich cultural heritage in Ghana, particularly among the Akan people [13]. The communities of Ahwiaa and Aburi located in the Ashanti and Eastern regions of Ghana, respectively, have been renowned for their exceptional woodcarving skills for centuries [14]. They specialize in sculptures for individual use, family symbols, chiefs, and traditional ornaments, and their furniture making business is a significant source of income. These communities produce various objects like stools, drums, furniture, statues, and fertility dolls as a way of expressing their knowledge in wood carvings and furniture makings.

The wood carving industry is however, struggling to realize the potential it used to enjoy as a viable and vibrant economic activity in Ghana in days gone by. The diminishing interest of the youth in the industry and the lack of innovative skills among carvers and the artisans are not left out of the reasons for the dip [4; 15]. The paper examines the historical evolution of indigenous wood carving practices in the Ahwiaa community in Ghana, focusing on their cultural practices and economic influence in the 21st century.

1.1 Indigenous Knowledge and Art

Indigenous knowledge is a complex concept that encompasses biological and cultural ties to ancestral lands, struggles for self-determination, and resistance against colonialism [16; 17]. Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is a unique local knowledge unique to a culture, tradition, or societal way of life [8]. It is not static and is dynamic due to changes in environment, development, taste, function, and cultural integration [18; 19; 20]. However, it has been historically marginalized, causing devastating consequences for indigenous culture, languages, and ways of life [21]. This study explores the historical forms of Indigenous Knowledge in wood carving in Ahwiaa, aiming to raise awareness and adapt to contemporary development patterns.

Indigenous art, a diverse range of artistic traditions, reflects the cultural, spiritual, and historical experiences of indigenous peoples [22; 23]. Despite colonization, forced assimilation, and cultural suppression, indigenous art continues to face challenges like cultural appropriation,

exploitation, and marginalization [24; 25; 26]. Indigenous artists and communities are striving to regain control and develop new models [27].

1.2 Indigenous Wood Carving in Africa

Woodcarving is a significant socio-economic and cultural activity in Africa, particularly in Egypt, West Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya. Originating from ancient Egyptian culture and mythology [28], it involves the use of log trees to create various items like mortars, cooking utensils, drums, awards, and masks [29]. Wood species, availability, and return on investment significantly impact the wood carving industry [11; 30; 7]. Woodcarving in Ghana has a significant economic impact, providing small-scale sustainable jobs and livelihoods [12]. The tradition is centered in the Ashanti region, with small villages like Ahwiaa and Aburi being notable centers. Traditional Ghanaian carved items include drums, masks, fertility dolls, mortars, and stools, often featuring Adinkra symbols. Carvers work 10 hours a day, 7 days a week using iron and steel tools [8]. The woodcarving tradition in Ahwiaa, Ghana has transformed from a secrecy-stretched trade to a highly skilled craft accessible to anyone. The tradition has lost historical aspects, such as sacrifices and taboos [31], and has shifted to apprenticeship as the primary source of education. However, the technique of carving, tools, and religious symbolism remain fundamental. The traditional mechanics of woodcarving in Ahwiaa emphasize the importance of proper tool handling and techniques in creating high-quality products. The disappearance of traditional religion, education, and social institutions has also contributed to the transformation of the craft hence the need for a historical evolution study.

2. Methods. The qualitative research design was adopted for the study. Qualitative research is a form of research method that studies the way individuals interpret the world and define their social construct [32]. Qualitative research offers the opportunity to carefully communicate with and capture the experience of the interviewed participants [33]. Historical and Case research methods were employed for the study. The historical research method allowed for a systematic recapture of the complex nuances, the people, meanings, events, and ideas of the past that have influenced and shaped the present state of woodcarving in Ahwiaa [34]. A case study enabled the researcher, to put spotlight on the Ahwiaa wood carving community as shown in the map (figure 1) for the historical evolution of indigenous

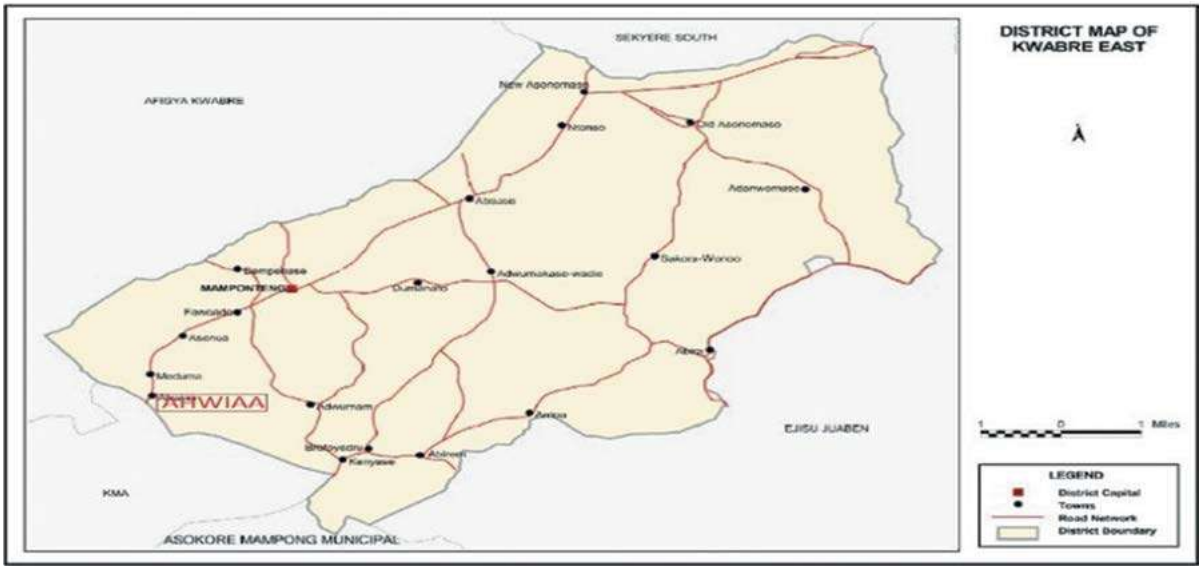


Fig. 1. Map of Kwabre East Municipality. Source: Ghana Statistical Service GSS (2012).

wood carving practices in Ghana from 1960 to the present. A sample size of 13 participants were selected using purposive and convenient sampling techniques. Seven (7) participants were purposively sampled while six (6) participants were sampled through convenient sampling.

The researchers adopted a naturalistic observation approach to observe participants in their natural environments and to collect data on a wide range of behaviours, to capture a great variety of interactions, and to openly explore the evaluation topic [35]. Additionally, the researcher adopted the structured approach of an interview with the objective of developing clear, focused questions aimed at collecting data around the study. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and followed up by phone and social media handles. All the interviews that were conducted in this study had a similar quality time with an average questioning time of approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The researchers used narrative and thematic data analysis to identify patterns and themes in the data, to understand participants in indigenous wood carving in the Ahwiaa community, analyzing their stories and feelings towards the industry since the 1960s [35; 36]. Respondents' concerns were addressed before interviews and confidentiality was assured and maintained [37].

3. Results and Discussions. From the data analysis of the study in the Ahwiaa community, brought to the fore the following themes; the beginning of woodcarving, and the source of ideation; the medium, tools, and equipment used; the techniques, themes, and functions of works employed; the finishing, promotion, and marketing of woodcarving works; and lastly, the association, partnership, and collaboration of the woodcarving industry.

3.1 Beginning of wood carving in Ahwiaa Community. Ahwiaa is a town located in the Ashanti region of Ghana. It is within the Kwabre East Municipality. Ahwiaa is among the notable towns with special crafts, thus woodcarving in the Kwabre East. The town is well noted for its exquisite wood carving products such as profiles, drums, animals of different kinds, *oware* (traditional game), traditional masks, linguist staff, and totemic animals. The themes are built on the indigenous knowledge and cultural values of the Asante people of Ghana. Wood carving was introduced to Ahwiaa in the 18th century by Akwasi Yoyo after the Ashantis conquered Ntim Gyakari, the King of the Denkyira, in 1701. Opanin Akwasi Amoako, a 69-year-old man said;

"Wood carving was brought to Ahwiaa from Denkyira by a young man named Akwasi Yoyo whose lineage is believed that at Ahwiaa he hailed from the Ahwiaa Asona Royal family. Who according to the narrative migrated from Denkyira after the defeat and fall of the Great King Ntim Gyakari by the Ashanti's during the Asante-Denkyira war." (Opanin Akwasi Amoako: Ahwiaa, Personal communication, 15th June, 2023).

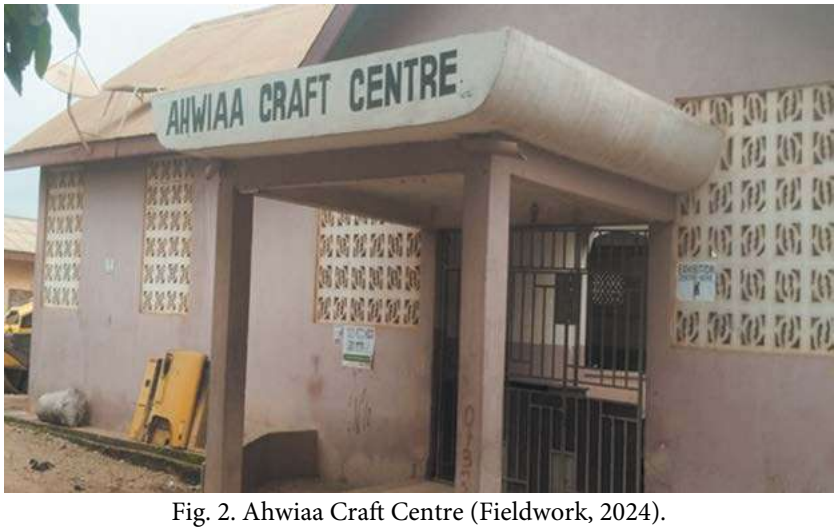


Fig. 2. Ahwiaa Craft Centre (Fieldwork, 2024).

This narrative was also supported by the chief carver Nana Frimpong Boadu, that;

"There were huge trees and well grown trees which served as raw materials for our work. You could easily count the indigenes within the Ahwiaa community with carvers emanating from the Asona family. During the early 1960s carvers were using trees within the community without travelling long distances as experienced today." (Nana Frimpong Boadu, Ahwiaa, personal communication, 15th June 2023).

The above narratives are in variance with the claim by Amoah (2017), Nketia (2019), and Appiah (2018) that suggest that Akwasi Korankye, a 17th-century wood carver from Bonwire, introduced the craft to Ahwiaa. However, undocumented oral narratives suggest the Ashanti people of Ahwiaa used carved mortar and pestle for utilitarian purposes, umbrellas, war drums, stools (*asesedwa)*, palanquins and wood carving tools before the 18th century. Aamir (2018), opined that a diverse use of wood can be traced back to almost all civilizations with varying degrees of application. These narratives which are in tandem with claims by Amoah (2017), Nketia (2019), and Appiah (2018), strongly demonstrate that wood carving in Ahwiaa as portrayed in (Figure 2, 3 and 4) perhaps started long before the 18th century.



Fig. 3. Side view of Ahwiaa Craft Centre.

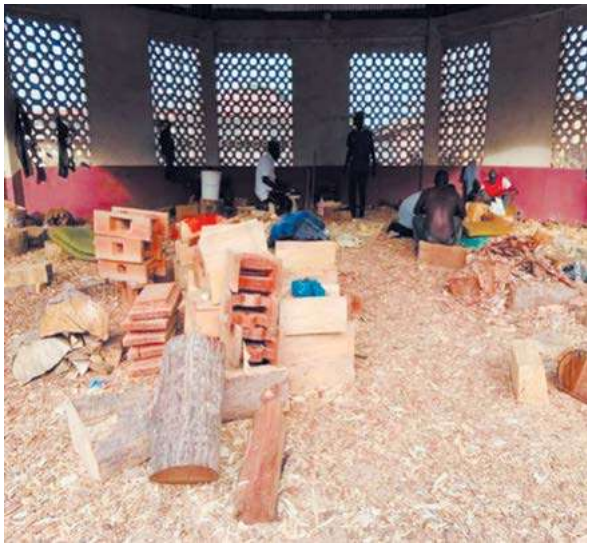


Fig. 4. The inner working area of Ahwiaa Craft Centre.

3.2 Source of Ideation on Ahwiaa Wood Carving. The findings of the study that show that Ahwiaa wood carving is rooted in the tradition and custom of the Ashanti are restricted in their creativity to always conform to what tradition demands them to exhibit. The Ashanti myth, proverbial symbols, folktales, the adinkra symbols, and religious themes are the various sources of ideas that drive the Ahwiaa wood carving. A master carver (Opanin Amoako) at Ahwiaa revealed that:

"The Ahwiaa people and for that matter the Ashanti's perceive the art of carving as a spirit-led activity, as a gift from the ancestors and God (Nyame), hence, the family endowed with such ancestral gift usually look down upon people or the younger ones who fail to learn the wood carving. This is evident in the wood we use to carve "Nyame Dua" (Gods wood)." (Opanin Amoako: Ahwiaa, Personal communication, 17th June, 2023).

In corroboration, Okrah (2022) asserts that there are different types of products that are carved, and most of these portray the Ashanti's traditionally adored symbols and designs for communication. The empirical evidence from the study suggests that the Ahwiaa wood carvers are deeply immersed in the Ashanti traditions where folktales, storytelling, and Ashanti mythology play significant roles that permeate their works. However, during the era of economic recovery in the early 1980s, foreign tourists influenced their practice. The carvers needed to work to the satisfaction of their patrons. The idea of Pan- Africanism and thinking beyond the borders of Ghana inspired the Ahwiaa carvers, thereby incorporating works (See figures 5 & 6). Africanism and thinking beyond the borders of

Ghana inspired the Ahwiaa carvers, thereby incorporating works (See figures 5 & 6).

The craft of Ahwiaa wood carving has seen a shift from traditional spiritual elements and taboos to exploring new ideas within the industry.

3.3 Media, Tools and Equipment used at Ahwiaa. In describing the type of material that carvers at Ahwiaa used at the inception of wood carving traditions, Opanin Akwasi Amoako indicated that:

"Akwasi Yoyo started with the stem of a plantain and mostly carved it into any imaginative designs using simple knife used for cooking to carve and whittle. This attracted the attention of many passers-by and neighbours but unfortunately the material used for the carving could not last long, it shrinks and withers away few days after carving out his design. Mostly it either rot or dries early and shrinks and this made him to discover an alternative which was the use of wood in making such designs. Later, Akwasi Yoyo moved into the use of wood due to the non-durability of the plantain stem." (Opanin Akwasi Amoako: Ahwiaa, 16th June, 2023).

Nana Frimpong Boadu the chief carver maintained:

"Wood is the main material used to produce works. However, soft wood is popular choice used as compared to hard wood. Depending on the type of work to be carved there are other materials which are introduced to be part of the carved product to make it complete, for instance, in the making of a drum, it is completed and refined when animal hide (leather) is used to cover the drum." (Nana Frimpong Boadu: Ahwiaa, Personal communication, 18th June, 2023).



Fig. 5. The Globe (Fieldwork, 2024).



Fig. 6. Unity in nation building (Fieldwork, 2024).

The outcome of the study has shown that Ahwiaa carvers have a special liking for particular types of wood based on its hardness to bring out the intricate designs that are desired to be achieved. Examples of such wood are *sese*, mahogany, *tweneboah,* and teak. Adu-Agyem (2019) posits that hardwoods, such as oak, mahogany, and teak, are favored for their durability and ability to hold intricate details in stools carved with adinkra symbols. Wood has been the key common material for Ahwiaa as shown in (figures 7, 8, 9), and its choice is crucial, as different types of wood possess varying characteristics; these can be seen through the grain pattern, density, color, and durability of wood. The hardness of the woods is also a significant consideration in indigenous wood carving, where hardwoods such as teak, oak, and mahogany are tailored for carving royal stools in Ahwiaa. These woods can withstand moisture by drying



Fig. 7. Sliced logs of wood for carving (Fieldwork, 2024).



Fig. 8. Packed logs for seasoning (Fieldwork, 2024).



Fig. 9. Spread-out logs for speedy seasoning (Fieldwork, 2024).

faster when seasoning these woods for carving and also withstand any weather conditions. The forms of traditional wood carvings in the study area involve the skillful manipulation of wood to create decorative and functional objects [38].

Despite the type of wood used for the execution of works in the current dispensation, the ritual practices that go in line with the felling of trees are in their decline state. One of the reasons for the decline is that the community have developed to become a major city, thereby finding it difficult to get access to carvable wood of their preference within their settlement. In view of this, the wood carvers in Ahwiaa sometimes rely on wood dealers who bring wood from the typical villages in other parts of Ghana before they can get wood to carve. This observation is in line with the assertion by ISSER (2020), that within the circles of wood carving, is the scarcity of required wood for carving among Ghanaian craftsmen and the art industry. In corroboration, Adu-Agyem et al. (2019), asserted that the challenge facing the wood carving industry in Ghana has been the shortage of wood. The findings also suggest that the wood carving community has adopted modern equipment to facilitate their work but woefully inadequate to commensurate their need. The usage of modern electrical equipment such as power sanders, electric drilling machines, and cutters were not substantially seen in the workshops of Ahwiaa carvers. Again, the study provides evidence that from pre-historic times to the contemporary, human beings had been and are still testing with dissimilar apparatuses and materials, and through innovative skills and ideas deeply buried in history and tradition, expose their culture and tradition and religious inclination in the field of arts and crafts [39; 3; 4]. The slow pace of innovation and creativity can also be seen in the areas of tools and equipment used. For instance, per the modern tools and materials, they listed smoothing paper, painting brushes with different sizes, shoe polish, emulsion, potassium, mansion, white glue, and super glue. Whilst some of the ancient tools are a*sene sekan*, *soso*, *boneye* (used to drill holes), *peewa*

to drill straight holes, *poa* to drill holes, *panto* to hold *soso*, chisel (1/4 size, 3/4 size), gouges (V or U shape), mallet, and machete.

3.4 Techniques, Themes and Functions in Ahwiaa Wood Carving. Ahwiaa wood carving from 1960s to 1980s primarily featured ancestral figures, mythological creatures, and symbols, with royal and ceremonial objects still in display. A respondent narrated that:

"Those of us as Ahwiaa carvers, can identify works done at Ahwiaa from other carvings elsewhere which are not Ahwiaa trained carvers, since we have peculiar techniques always distinctive to Ahwiaa carvings. Works are carved and polished in a smooth black or brown manner with some Asante cultural symbols. (Wood carving dealer: Ahwiaa, Personal communication, 19th June, 2023)."

A master carver Opanin Amoako revealed that:

"What we do comes from within us (innate expression) and what is common that everyone can relate well with. Though sometimes we do get contracts based on foreign cultures that do not shift us from what we practice and know. Churches have been coming for customized works, which we do to their satisfaction." (Opanin Amoako: Ahwiaa, Personal communication, 20th June, 2023).

The study reveals a significant shift in carving techniques in the Ahwiaa community, with a focus on different cultures and designs. The most popular designs are Asante and Okuapim. Carvers at Ahwiaa prioritize detail and intricate designs, highlighting their indigenous craft and creativity. Awuni (2023) states that the craftsmanship in Ahwiaa and attention paid to detail in traditional wood carving are undoubtedly remarkable, making it an adored art form in Ghanaian society. In Ahwiaa, carvers learn more to enhance their skills and abilities in carving as presented in (See figures 10-13).

Carved products from this community mostly include; furniture, palanquins, flowerpots, jewel pots, and adinkra symbols, which symbolize tradition, culture, and individual uses beyond spiritual and sacred purposes.



Fig. 9a. A powdered dye stuff (Fieldwork, 2024).



Fig. 9b. Dyed set of Oware (Game of Wisdom) (Fieldwork, 2024).



Fig. 9c. Polish and brush for polishing a carved work (Fieldwork, 2024).

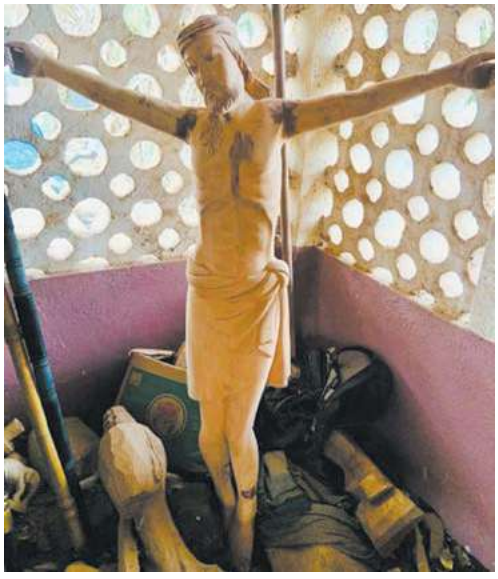


Fig. 10. Cruc ifixion of Christ. (Fieldwork, 2024).



Fig. 11. A carved lion (Fieldwork, 2024).



Fig. 12. A carved furniture (Fieldwork, 2024).

Awuni (2023) states that the forms created by woodcarvers are in the area of statues, masks, and stools depicting human figures, animals, mythical creatures, and Adinkra symbols. Adu-Agyem et al., (2019) assert that items mostly carved included Stools, Masks, '*Akuaba'* dolls, Human figures, Animal forms, Drums, Walking sticks and Souvenirs. African sculpture in general is made purposely for various functions in the area of social, economic, health, religious and therapeutic. Most of the works made by Ahwiaa carvers have diverse utilitarian purposes. The drums made still maintain their significant role in the cultural activities within the societies in Ghana. During funeral celebrations, festivals and durbars drums are played to show the cultural significance of the people. The preservation of indigenous knowledge has been an important aspect of indigenous carving of Ahwiaa. Awuni (2023) posits that traditional wood carving act as a medium through which stories are preserved and shared, keeping cultural identities alive in Ahwiaa. Aesthetically, works made by the carvers of this community continue to add and enhances spaces at hotels, hospitals, airport, private and public offices.

3.5 Finishing, Marketing and Promotion of wood carving at Ahwiaa. Finishing is an important aspect of the entire execution of woodcarving done among the carvers in Ahwiaa community. It is a crucial step in wood carving, as it enhances the appearance and durability of the final product. At Ahwiaa, wood carvers use various finishing techniques, including waxing, polishing, and staining [40]. The detailing, as well as fishing techniques applied on the works such as painting, polishing, and lacquering, are all done by the carver himself as shown in (figures 9A, 9B, and 9C).

There is a division of labour where the carver does the blocking up to the detailing stage. The work is handed to the young ones whose duty is to do the sanding as a menial job for money. Sometimes, the carvers sell the works at that stage for the dealers to continue the finishing to the taste of their customers. A Shop attendant narrates that:

"…sometimes, the carvers have many works in their hands to carve. When they add the sandpapering and polishing or colouring aspect it can delay their clients. Sometimes too the shop owners and attendants decorate the works to suit the colour preference of their customers or buyers." (Shop attendant: Ahwiaa, Personal communication, 19th June, 2023).

Effective marketing is essential for the success of every business sector, such as the wood carving industry at Ahwiaa. Online marketing platforms, such as social media and e-commerce websites, have become increasingly important for promoting businesses and wood carvings is not an exception [41].

A carver commented at Ahwiaa and said that:

"There is a seasonal market which is making our work unsustainable. Mostly, the White or the Tourist comes in the summer from December and February and from June to August which indicates the intermittent flow of sales. There is also no common price quote for the products. Prices of the products depend on the negotiating skills of the seller and the urgent need of money for survival." (Wood carving dealer: Ahwiaa, personal communication, 19th June, 2023).

Another area within the wood carving set up at Ahwiaa, which is a critical aspect of marketing, is promotion. Wood carvers use various promotional strategies, including exhibitions, workshops, and demonstrations [14]. Per the promotion according to Amoah (2018), participation in craft fairs and exhibitions can provide valuable opportunities for woodcarvers to showcase their products and connect with potential customers.

3.6 Associations, Partnerships and Collaboration. The study revealed that the carvers within the Ahwiaa community have formed a welfare association. For someone to engage in carving the person must be initiated. The process of initiation was presented by Nana Frimpong as;

"The art of carving was exclusively the preserve of a member within the Asona family and

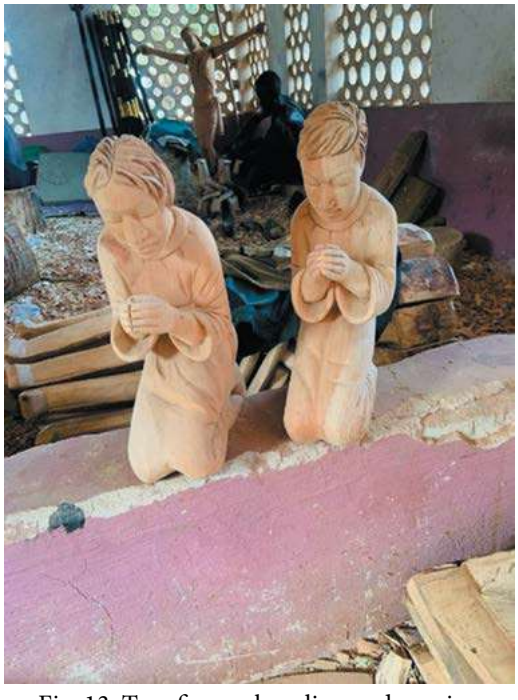


Fig. 13. Two figures kneeling and praying (Fieldwork, 2024).

even with that …before one can become a carver there must be an initiation or rituals supported by the father or the uncle who trained him before the family admits that young person into the carving family." (Nana Frimpong: Ahwiaa, Personal communication, 2023).

The woodcarvers at Ahwiaa have a body of association that is known as the Ahwiaa Wood Carvers Association, but its membership is optional. The chairman of the association, one Opanin Asante, has this to say:

"Sometimes we collaborate with the Tourist Board and they organise workshops and seminars for the improvement of our works but mostly they select few people and most of the carvers do not get the opportunity to be part of such training. Mostly, these workshops and seminars are not effective because those who are trained to be trainers fail to train other carvers after the workshops hence the effectiveness and import of these workshops are not obtained." (Opanin Asante: Ahwiaa, Personal communication, 19th June, 2023). The association, led by leaders, prioritizes member care during social events and activities, including funeral celebrations and weddings, rather than the

carving as an enterprise. In terms of partnership, they all have partnerships with individual dealers in the carving industry both in Accra and in Kumasi and other parts of the country. The Ghana Tourism Authority has partnered with Ahwiaa in the development of their product. Over the years, the government of Ghana has collaborated positively in the development of the woodcarving industry. Adzovie (2021) reveals that during the era of the PNDC, the government, through Cubans, helped to organize an art bazaar for artists and artisans in the 1980s. The government then sent some artists and artisans to Cuba to be trained. The government, through the Export Promotion Council, has been sponsoring some of the young apprentices to be attracted to the industry. Adzovie (2009), asserts that the government was able to give some funds to some carvers to entice them, which encouraged other young men loitering to be attracted to the center.

Conclusion. The indigenous woodcarving practices in Ahwiaa present a rich cultural heritage, creating a special cultural identity in Ghana since the 1960s. The indigenous wood carving practices at Ahwiaa are inspired by rich ancestral history and Ashanti traditions. It has been clear from the study that Ahwiaa carvers primarily rely on wood for carving. Common wood for carving was *Sese, Tweneboah, Teak, Nyame Dua*, Jenejene, Mahogany, etc. There is the use of handmade tools; however, there have been innovations and the adoption of foreign equipment and techniques in the indigenous woodcarving, encouraging the youth to develop interest in new equipment for carving, such as routers, planers, miters, chainsaws, CNC, etc. However, some carvers have been static, not yielding to the current trend of innovations, thereby stifling the development of woodcarving, especially at Ahwiaa. This act is a demotivating factor not attracting the youth into the industry.

The study recommends that the youth in the Ahwiaa community should be encouraged and motivated to take up the job of wood carving. Also, the master wood carvers are encouraged for greater adaptation of modernized tools and equipment to enable them produce quality woodcarving product and attract young apprentices. The Ghana Export Promotion Authority, Ghana Tourism Authority and financial institutions should provide greater access to finance through loans and grants for the purchase of equipment and materials in the development of the woodcarving industry.

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