# GA AND ADANGBE CANOE CULTURE:

# A COMPOSITE ART FORM FOR STUDIO PRACTICE EXPLORATION



By

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College of Art and Social Sciences

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## DECLARATION

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



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## DEDICATION



I dedicate this thesis to:

My mother, Madam Margaret Amenyade Amuzu

And my beloved, Miss Rachael Naa Ayele Tagoe,

You are the two most endearing gifts from God to me. Thank you for your motivation.

## ABSTRACT

Considering canoe as a work of art, this thesis project sought to use fundamental known theories of art to examine canoe as a composite art form involving painting and sculpture in order to find out the artistic nexus underlying canoe art among the Gas and Adangbes from Accra to Ada and subsequently exploring the data in studio practice. The data collection and analysis involved literature review, fieldwork review and studio practice experimentation. Survey findings by the Ghana Canoe Frame Survey (2004) were used as the research frame to determine sample size of each research site and to ascertain individual subjects possessing significant comparable and representative character in carving and painting. Non-participant observation technique was used to examine the pre-hull and initial hull making stages of the Ga and Adangbe canoe. Participant observation was also employed in the completion stages for one (1) Adangbe canoe by the researcher in order to have hands on experience for better understanding of the canoe making process. Structured and unstructured interview techniques were employed to elucidate information for the identification, description and analysis of the Ga and Adangbe canoes into their artistic categories. In all, findings show four (4) artistic categories of Ga and Adangbe canoes (Isotropic, Optimized, Orthotropic, and Hydrostatic) corresponding to four (4) distinctive compositional structures (Isocomp, Opticomp, Orthocomp and Hydrocomp). Additionally, five (5) distinctive visual elements were categorized with

varying subdivisions. Furthermore, the findings were explored in the studio by translating ideas from Ga and Adangbe canoe art into twenty (20) digital paintings by the researcher. These digital paintings with their titles ranging from “security” to “Samai” have been described and analyzed in the thesis report. Based on findings from this research thesis project, the researcher conclude that Ga and Adangbe canoes are versatile cultural art objects with several connections for art-theory practice and exploration vis-à-vis art teaching and learning through studio practice. It is recommended that further research into canoe art will be a good catalyst for promoting swimming and canoeing to attract local and international tourists. Also, efforts should be made by hotel operators with boats, to employ canoe artists to include some of the Ga and Adangbe pictograms on their boats. Furthermore, as a national policy, a university or teacher training college course should be structured around Ga and Adangbe canoe art to integrate this versatile cultural art into main stream curriculum as among coastal dwellers.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 **Overview**

This chapter provides a succinct background to the concerns leading to the identification of the problem about Ga and Adangbe Canoe. The researcher outlines the problem of this study, the objectives of the study, importance, delimitation and definition of terms used in this study. The final aspect states the organization of the rest of the text in this thesis report.



## 1.2 Background to the Study

This research on "Ga and Adangbe canoe culture: a composite art form for studio practice exploration" is an examination of canoes of Ga and Adangbe people based upon the researcher's concept of the canoe as a composite art object- an art work composed of varied ideas, media and techniques.

The topic evolved on a premise that canoe carving and painting is an old art tradition in Ghana especially among the coastal dwellers which include the Gas and Adangbes. The Gas call canoe *lele* and the Adangbes call it *le.* As an old traditional art practice, the *lele/le* is a good example of a cultural object suitable for studio exploration and as an art object. The two terms, cultural object and art object, are two dissimilar approaches to the study on canoe: firstly, canoe considered as a cultural object lends insight into the culture of the makers and users of the canoe and secondly, canoe considered as an art object lends insight

into the art of the makers and users of the canoe. Whereas the art object concept, a subset of cultural object concept, is purely concerned with visual art, the cultural object concept encompasses varied interests about the canoe. Ontologically, both the *lele/le* and canoes of most traditional groups in the world have often been considered as cultural objects rather than as art objects. This is evident in the large number of researches concerning canoe which are towards interest of culture rather than art. Lessa's (1975) "Drake's Island of Thieves: Ethnological Sleuthing" which sought to compare canoes of different parts of Carolina (Palau and Yap) to delineate their developmental stages by examining canoe parts, enlargements, twists and their implications in culture is one good example. Another research work in the cultural object direction is Mitchell's (2009), "Dugongs and Dugout's Sharptacks and Shellbacks: Makassar Contact and Aboriginal Marine Hunting on the Cobourg Peninsula, North Western Arnhem land". Thus the fields of study concerned with canoe as a cultural object range from archaeology, history, ethnography, anthropology to art education. As a result, the volume and quality of empirical work on canoe as cultural object makes it both possible and essential for the art object concept to be advanced. Yet, current synthesis and the questions most of the foreign and local studies are asking reflect weakness in the researchers' application of this theoretical basis of the fine arts (towards canoe) as well as the peculiar anxiety about the subject of canoe culture itself.

Also in the fine arts discipline of painting and sculpture, besides artists who work from direct observation of subjects to make their art compositions and a few

conceptual artists, many paintings and sculpture works are explorations of themes, media, or techniques in one form of art to another form of art. So considering the fact that the practice of exploring art forms such as traditional/ceremonial stools, masks and *Adinkra* cloth to create new art forms such as canvas paintings and decorative sculpture pieces is not a new phenomenon, *lele/le*, as another major Ghanaian traditional art form will need to be explored in that direction. This is because most countries with canoe traditions have art works reflecting that rich art form background and it is the interest of the researcher to do so. In Canada for instance, the Canadian Canoe Museum houses over 600 different canoe-inspired arts which are explorations of Canadian different canoes on diverse themes and media. From the history of Canadian canoe practice to uses of canoes, skills and innovations in canoes, various artists including Pierre Elliot Trudeau have explored Canadian canoes to create new art forms. Themes outlined by artists in these works include nostalgia (feelings of stories about canoe), spirituality (of canoe as a soul boat), love for canoe shape and structure and finally canoe as an archetype. But beyond the studio and in academic research work, as a subject or a point of departure, the exploration of canoe hinges on the artist's or researcher's concept of the canoe which initially defines and ultimately refines the theme for the creation of the new art forms. Hence in this study the researcher's concept of the Ga and Adangbe canoe as a composite art form is the fundamental basis for exploring the *lele/le*.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, researches by sociologists and anthropologists about *lele/le* have been mostly done in isolation from fine art theories, hence

venturing into other territories only to make points about their own. Thus, sociologists and anthropologists have found Ghanaian canoe culture to be a convenient benign foil against which the exploitation of anthropological views of canoe stands out. The few art educationists and artist researchers such as Dartey (1978) and Dadzie (2002) have been anxious to project the educative and artfulness of the Ghanaian canoe yet dissociated the Ghanaian canoe from its long standing history in Ghana. Furthermore, being eager to call attention to the achievement of the Ghanaian canoe carvers and canoe painters, these few art educationist and artist researchers have often referred to *canoe art* (thus canoe carving and painting) rather as *canoe decoration* (that is embellishment of canoe) which also advantage anthropological views whiles taking away from the fine arts.

Coronel's (1976) argument that dealing with canoe as a monumental sculpture is a "superficial level" of understanding the canoe has led many such as Verrips (2002) to extend their investigations into sociological dimensions. Hence, the classical approach (in the words of Coronel) which will merit the Ghanaian artistic conception in the light of sculpture and painting disciplines has only been cursorily examined.

To this end, this study on "Ga and Adangbe canoe culture: a composite art form for studio practice exploration" from the coast of Accra to the coast of Ada is considered by the researcher as a composite artistic research involving sculpture and painting disciplines respectively. This is necessary because acquisition of knowledge about canoe carving will enhance knowledge about canoe painting

since the carved wooden canoe provide the support or surface for the execution of the painting. Therefore to a large extent, the nature of the painting depends upon the nature of the carving of the canoe. This approach is an attempt to bridge the gap between the purely classical trends and the anthropological approaches. It is not an anthropological study and neither is it a sculpture only or painting only research. It is an artistic integrated study.

In addition to advancing the art object view of *lele/le*, as a new conceptual approach to Ga and Adangbe canoe, the researcher in this thesis project considered a cluster of canoes on the sea and the beach as a gallery of carved and painted works of art on water body and land respectively. This thinking links Ga and Adangbe canoe art culture to mainstream studio art practice theories which are a construct in a two way premise: a theory and practice framework. To one end, seeing a cluster of canoes on the sea and the beach as a gallery is a theoretical concept which helps to provide insight into varieties/types of *lele/le* on display on the coast and also offer clues to explain how the Ga and Adangbe canoe on the coast appear as ostentatious art objects. On the other end, finding out the way the *lele/le* are created by the canoe artists to take on such ostentatious outlook presents hints to the practical procedures of making them as art works. Considering these two thoughts begs the following questions:

1. What gives the *lele/le* that ostentatious quality which commands contemplation for enjoyment as art forms?

2. Are there any common features that link up Ga and Adangbe canoes which can be identified when held in contemplative ponderability?
3. If there are, how can those features be analyzed and classified as gallery exhibits in such a wide-stretching areas of this thesis project?

These questions formed the basis for the research questions which tie-in to the objectives of the study.

**1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Ga and Adangbe Canoe as a composite art genre involving painting and sculpture is apparent both in theory and practice yet the ontological studies on canoe in Ghana so far do little to underscore this thinking. In a bid to advance the art object concept of canoes to the body of studies on canoes, highlighting this thought will bring out the vital connections existing in the canoe art culture of the Ga and Adangbe people so as to analyze them artistically. With the culture of canoe carving and painting under threat of collapse or extinction due to the importation of foreign fibre glass made fishing boats (Winner News, 9th July 2006) coupled with the embargo on the felling of selected species of trees by the Ghana Forestry Authority (Tree Conservation Information Service, 2006), an enhanced study and documentation has become necessary.

In addition to this, previous researchers focused more attention on the symbolism of the canoe carving and painting culture of the various places of their study, making information about the artistic commonality existing between one canoe fishing village to the next relatively obscured. Researchers such as Dartey (1984), Verrips (2002) and Dadzie (2004) limited their investigations to isolated areas of

the Ga and Fanti speaking people along the coast of Ghana. This research therefore attempts to provide knowledge covering the areas stretching from Accra, Prampram and Ningo to Ada considering the historical and cultural ties between the Ga and Adangbe people.



### 1.4 Objectives

1. To examine the artistic nexus underlying the creation of Ga and Adangbe canoe as a composite art using the fundamental known theory of art.
2. To find out how the common cultural heritage connecting the Ga and the Adangbe is reflected in their canoe carving and painting practice.
3. To explore the use of data on Ga and Adangbe canoe art as inspiration for creating new art works in the studio.

### 1.5 Research Questions

1. What aspect of Ga and Adangbe canoe making or practices makes it a composite art form?

2. Are there any common features in the practice of canoe making among the Ga and Adangbes that create a link between one hamlet to the next hamlet that can give clues to their categorizations as types of canoes based on fine art theories and practices?

3. How can the exploration of ideas of Ga and Adangbe canoe art be undertaken to reflect the source of ideas developed (Ga and Adangbe canoe art) at the same time maintaining novelty of ideas in the new art works developed?

## 1.6 Delimitation

The research covered coastal sites in Accra, Prampram, Ningo and Ada in the Greater Accra region of Ghana as well as forest sites in Abesewa in the Mankronso District of the Ashanti Region where the logs are felled and roughly shaped into canoes. The coastal locations were delineated for the following three reasons:

(i) *Commonality of canoe culture*. The people of Ada, Ningo, Prampram and Accra share this culture as fisher folks.

(ii) *Closeness in proximity*. From Accra (westward) to Ada (eastward), one finds a series of fishing hamlets, one leading to the other, along the coast.

(iii) *Establishment or otherwise of historical fact.* The indigenous people of Ada, Ningo and Prampram are Dangbes while those of Accra are Gas (Manoukian, 1950). Interpretations of oral tradition and linguistic similarities between the Dangbes and Gas have suggested a common cultural heritage connecting them (Bedu-Addo, 2003, and Quaye, 1972) and it will be useful to find out how that common cultural heritage connecting them is reflected in their canoe carving and painting traditions. The people of Prampram in particular are noted for their long standing canoe carving and painting occupation and they speak both Ga and Adangbe – connecting Ga and Adangbe lands and people (Amate, 1999).

## 1.7 Limitations

This study did not include:

- canoe accessories; paddles, nets, flags
- canoe propulsion systems such as sails
- the art of mending spoilt canoes
- innovative approaches adopted by canoe artists



## 1.8 Definition of Terms

**Dangbe:** Sometimes spelt as Dangme, Dangbe is one of the main ethnic groups in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana from Prampram to Ada.

**Dangbes:** People and natives of Dangbe

**Ga:** One of the ethnic groups in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Historically, Gas refer to just a section of the Ga-Adangbe group, those who came to settle at Ga-Mashi but now it is loosely used to describe all the various tribes including Accra, Osu, La, Teshie, Nungua, and Kpone. This excludes the Adangbes such as Prampram people.

**Gas:** Natives of Ga and Ga speaking people.

**Hold:** Space in the canoe where goods are kept.

**Fisher folk**: native people associated with fishing industry in fishing areas.

**Ortho:** This prefix means a straight form which has right or correct sides as in *orthotropic canoe.*

**Iso:** A form, having equal parts. By implication, any form that has identical shapes as in *isotropic canoe* is an “iso” form.

**Isotropic**: One of the four descriptions designated to *lele/le.* This is the first type of Ga and Adangbe canoe which has the smallest size.

**Hydro**: A form that is connected or operated by the use of water.

**Gunwale/Gunnel**: The upper edge of the side of the canoe.

**Keel**: The long piece of wood along the bottom of a boat that forms part of its structure and helps to keep the boat balance in water.

**Draft:** The lowest base part of a dugout canoe. It refers to the parts that are directly hued from the log or beam.

**Coracle**: A small round boat which is made by stretching animal skin over a wooden frame.

**Cleats:** A projecting piece on both sides on gunwale close to the bow for fasting ropes onto the canoes.

**Paneling/Banding**: The process of grouping motifs on *lele/le* into narrow rectangular space which tapped at the end of either elevations of the canoe.

**Style:** The term "style" unless otherwise specified refers to the resemblance of motifs, colours and meanings canoe art work have to one another within a given area.

**Dug-out Canoe:** Technically refers to a canoe hued from a single log without any extensions in heights by way of planks. This is opposing to canoes made from wood pieces joined together by reverting or gluing. However, dugout in this thesis refers to canoe made basically from a single log, with or without any further extensions.

**Prampram**: An Adangbe fishing town; one of the sites for this project work.

**Ostentatious Outlook:** A quality of canoes, that makes people notice them even though the owner's intention is not to display art. The ability of canoes to catch the attention of people passing by for further studies irrespective of the intension of the person who situated it there.

**Contemplative Ponderability**: This term is partly borrowed from Sir Herbert Read cited in Willcox (1974), refers to a quality inherent in an object that causes an observer to keep on looking at the object beyond the immediate experience of seeing visual qualities. It involves being totally committed to the object in order to synchronize its internal dynamics for aesthetic pleasure and enjoyment. It is also a way of looking at an art work by an observer of art to such intense level of enjoyment.

**Limb**: Large branches of trees which are slashed before shaping and digging out canoes from the logs.

**Pictogram:** A group of images, figures, whole or part of animals, plants, and things that may or may not include written text. The images may be symbolic or not.

**"Pictogramy":** A coined word for the study of *lele/le* pictograms, its ordering and compositions.

**Fine Art**: An art form created primarily as an aesthetic expression to be enjoyed for its own sake. The viewer must be prepared to search for the intent of the artist as the all-important first step towards communication and active participation.

**Form:** 1. The physical appearance of a work of art - its materials, style and composition.

2. Any identifiable shape or mass, as a "geometric form."

**Iconography:** Loosely, the "story" depicted in a work of art; people, places, events and other images in a work, as well as the symbolisms and conventions attached to those images by a particular religion or culture.

**Montage:** A picture composed of other existing illustrations, pictures, photographs, newspaper clippings, etc. that are arranged so they combine to create a new or original image. In the context of this work, away of arranging previously created works into a new one digitally.

**Symbol:** An image or sign that represents something else, because of convention, association, or resemblance.

**Abstract**: The depiction of images on *lele/le* in a non-realistic way, though the intention is often based on an actual subject, place, or feeling. Also, images depicted in a formal pattern or structure of shapes, lines and colors.

**Carve:** The process of taking away material from a given volume as in carving wood for canoe and carving images on the canoe surfaces. In sculpture, this is the act of cutting or incising wood or other materials into the desired form using knives, chisels, gouges, points, saws, adzes and hammers. Usually an old cutlass made into chisel is held in one hand and driven into the wood by a mallet held in the other.

## 1.9 Importance of the Study

Through the documentation the canoe carving and painting tradition of the past and present day from Ada to Accra will be preserved for posterity since the practice is under the threat of collapse.

The transfer of knowledge about Ga and Adangbe canoe carving and painting techniques and "pictogramy" from the forest and coast into the classroom of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, will invigorate artistic idea development and diversification of techniques through teaching and practice.

## 1.10 Organization of the Rest of the Text

**Chapter two (2)** deals with review of related literature in two parts: 1. Global review on canoes and followed by 2. review on canoes in Ghana with a focus on Ga and Adangbe people.

**Chapter three (3)** deals with details of the methodology by providing the theoretical frame work - the ideas around which this thesis project hinges. The researcher points out why canoe as a utilitarian object is considered as art object and particularly a composite art. He advances the issue to explicate how as a composite art work, *lele/le* can be studied scientifically (methodologically) using known philosophies of research approaches. This is followed by a description of

the nature of the population, how the subjects of the population were sampled and finally how the research tools were administered and why.

**Chapter four (4)** is in three parts and it deals with the presentation and discussion of findings on the data collected.

**Chapter five (5)** provides a summary, conclusions and recommendations on the entire study.

# CHAPTER TWO

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1 Overview

This chapter on review of related literature is in three sections: one, the theoretical idea around which this thesis project hinges two, global description of canoes and three, description of canoes in Ghana with a focus on Ga and Adangbe people. The researcher points out why canoe as a utilitarian object is considered as art object and particularly a composite art form. He advances the issue to explicate how as a composite artwork, *lele/le* can be studied scientifically (methodologically) using known philosophies of research approaches. This is followed by a discussion of some written accounts on canoe. The researchers extrapolates that canoe is an ancestry to ship by way of evolution and that all canoes can be grouped into two: the first group is traditional canoe designs based on traditional materials and construction methods and the second group is modern canoe designs also based on processed materials and construction methods. The dugout and half-dugout canoe of which the Ga and Adangbe canoe belongs was identified as the earliest types of canoe hence one main example of traditional canoe group.

In this discussion therefore, the researcher outlines two (2) sequential issues, which relates to the *lele/le* as traditional canoe group. First, Marine Fisheries Research Division of the Ministry of Fisheries way of grouping canoes was discovered as akin to Ga and Adangbe way of grouping canoes in terms of common parameter usage. In view of the fact that the Marine Fisheries Research Division of the Ministry of

Fisheries frame survey served as the research frame for this research, the researcher established why using the same method of grouping canoe was inappropriate for the analysis on Ga and Adangbe canoes. This was because his interest is towards the artiness of the canoe form rather than its function in the utilitarian sense. This led the discussion to narrowing down the canoe culture into Ghana, particularly among the Gas and Adangbes.

Besides the aforementioned concerns, on key issue discussed is the attempt to clarify the historical facts about the first ethnic group, which made and used canoe in Ghana. This was done by reviewing other researchers view on the subject of canoe making and use in Ghana.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework:

### 2.2.1The Artiness of Ga and Adangbe Canoe vis-à-vis Fundamental Art Theory

The Artiness of Ga and Adangbe canoe in this context refers to the idea that the *lele/le* is a work of art worthy of consideration in the rank of visual art forms such as masks, stools and headdress. This is because canoe as an artwork by way of convention belongs to two subdivisions of the two (2) dimensional and three (3) dimensional arts simultaneously, namely, sculpture and painting. This probably goes without saying that the question of whether canoe is an artwork or not is of little relevance for discussion since the timeless rage of what constitutes a work of art has lent many frontiers to include even urine. However, the material components of visual art remain corporeal as a precondition for art than ever before. Hence, the existence of media,

form and content in *lele/le* makes its artiness not only true as "an example of form and function" (The Canoe and Kayak: North American Indigenous Games, retrieved 20th June 2008) but a type of composite art genre with many possibilities for study in terms of analytical and poetic experiences. Before further expatiating on this thought let me state that the real question rather lies in whether the Ga and Adangbe people themselves consider the *lele/le* as art. Obviously, this may not be the case because hypothetically (speaking), to the average Ga and Adangbe person the canoe has been a means of "livelihood, transportation and weapon" (Ardayfio, 1953, p52)

In the direction of further explaining the thought on the artiness of the *lele/le*, this is how: whatever is identified as a work of art should have the qualities that warrant such a classification. Therefore, in the visual arts, it is acceptable that works of art have to be made from media to create a significant form through a technique (Ocvirk et al, 1962 pp.6-7). Whiles *media* is the material substance such as wood, metal, paint etc. that is transformed into a significant form, the process by which this material is transformed with tools by an artist into a particular manner is the *technique*. The underlying principle for organizing the transformative process of media into significant shape or look is *form*. "Form is therefore the art itself", (Ocvirk eta l. 1962 p11).

To relate this thinking to the *lele/le*, wood and paint, are the media, carving, construction, assemblage and painting are the techniques and the painted carved canoe is the form. From the forgoing, by substituting form for art, Ga and Adangbe canoe is the art and conversely Ga and Adangbe canoe is form.

Apart from art being composed of media, technique, and form, art has a subject matter and content or meaning (Ocvirk et al. 1962 p10). Subject matter has traditionally been defined as the object, people or things presented in the works of art (form). This meaning of subject matter does not take away however, abstract images and forms from being described as subject matter. It includes all the experiences, topics, themes or concepts that lead to the manipulation and subsequent creation of the form. Additionally, any motif invented and used to give "character" to the form is subject matter (Barnet, 1985).

When we begin to analyse form to interpret why the subject matter is affecting us as viewers of art, we begin to find meaning of the artwork. These effects on us may be emotional (moody, happy feeling) expressive (movements, talks, shrieks) or intellectual stimuli (identification of special features etc.). Content may therefore be defined "as the final statement, mood or spectator experience with the work of art" (Ocvirk et al. 1962 p13).

With reference to the foregoing, the *lele/le* is epitomized both in subject matter and content. The carved canoe shape has resemblance to hemispherical fishes, arcs and crescent moon that makes it rest on both land and on water bodies. Pictograms on Ga and Adangbe carved canoes among others are invented motifs imbedded with layers of ideas, topics and concepts. The Ga and Adangbe carved and painted canoe shapes and pictograms subject matter range from the realms of representational, semi-representational to abstract.

My observations show there is an artistic mysticism about the Ga and Adangbe carved and painted canoe shapes and pictograms subject matter. This artistic mysticism evokes emotional, expressive and intellectual stimuli on the part of observers of these functional lands and floating painted void sculptures. Moreover, this immaculate feel about the *lele/le* enthrals researchers hence giving rich form-meaning or content to the Ga and Adangbe canoe.



But, the challenge with the artiness of canoe have been the fact that over the years, Eurocentric theories of art together with its epochs segregated functional art forms (*common-place experience* objects) from what is called unique *form experience* art (or art for art sake) which was treated with special artistic experience, aesthetic experience, meaning and significance. This is understandable since as it were, Greco-Roman painting and sculpture ideas of antiquity, carried from Medieval to Renaissance through to Baroque and finally Modern, placed emphasis on subject matter emanating from human and selected architectural forms. Within the confines of the history of mainstream western paintings and sculptures, canoe did not surface as an art genre with unique form experience. This is evident in the painting and sculpture genre of artists of Eurocentric training or background. Hence by the time of the post-modern era, when interest in what used to be only functional, commonplace objects such as canoe, researchers and artists are yet to realize the form meaning of canoe art. To this end, studies on canoe making and appreciation have remained in the domain of understanding the pictograms on canoes, which is the main concern of semiotics of art. Other paradigms, namely, history of art and art aesthetics are yet to

include canoe making and appreciation. Here again, this is why studies on canoe art are constantly referred as canoe decoration. The assumption is that the "artfulness" and "artiness" of canoe resides in its decorations, (or embellishments). There is nothing wrong with this thinking so long as the proponents do not assume that is all there is in canoe art culture.

Another fact worth establishing as a connection to emphasize the significant form experience of canoe art is this: studies on canoe carving were among the very first publications ethnographers who were then the only people who took interest in art (then ethnographic objects) from tropical Africa (Olderogge and Forman, 1969). Of this, Fagg (1967b) wrote, "Their finest works, very few in number, are certain elaborated canoe-prow ornaments – for the Duala are great boatmen and their regattas are famous. They were made in the nineteenth century in a remarkably fluent open style which reminds … openwork carving and art of the Bush Negros…" p. 5. Again in another publication, although not directly related, Fagg (1967a) stated,

> These are of great artistic interest as early – an remarkably successful – examples of fusions of European and African artistic ideas, and indeed the manner in which exotic African ornament was grafted on to the Renaissance forms of these utensils for the table of those who were also the great patrons of European art…. p6.

As a way of summary, the *lele/le* is a rich source of idea development that will benefit art itself. Its correlates are parallel to any painting and sculpture genres. This can be seen in its, media, technique, form, subject matter and content. A combination of history of canoe art, aesthetics of canoe and canoe semiotics will benefit the artiness of Ga and Adangbe canoe art and broadening of application of artistic theory of the visual art to the body of knowledge about canoe art.

### 2.2.2 Ga and Adangbe Canoe as a Composite Art Form

From the above framework, Ga and Adangbe canoe can be considered as a composite art form in the sense that it is an art form (a hollow painted sculpture) which combines a variety of styles, media and techniques. The carved canoe forms with the carved and painted pictograms are not just abstract; it combines abstract with photo-realism. In other words *lele/le* art are visually about any concept; formal qualities like line, pattern, colour, texture or imitation of realistic details in either naturalistic terms or photographic details. For instance, plate 2.1 contains a photorealism rendition of cock combined with abstract shapes and objects on one picture plane and frame. This approach creates a compelling visual and intellectual dynamics in the space and form of the art. As different styles of art are created, Ga and Adangbe canoe art delves into two separate realms simultaneously: realms of reality and perception.

**Plate 2.1 Photographic Rendition of Cock**

Another feature of Ga and Adangbe canoe art, which makes it composite, is that it is a combination of variety of imagery, animals or objects that may be unrelated in their natural world are this time held together in one visual world thereby creating connection between them. Hence, disparate ideas or themes can be held together in the same canoe artwork with the use of unrelated imagery, yet with some connection. This gives Ga and Adangbe canoe art a varied innovative feature with the potential of fresh ideas as one considers one particular canoe art with another canoe artwork, which were created with similar imagery yet with different meanings/approaches.

What is the significant contribute factor in creating variety (compositeness) in Ga and Adangbe canoe art? It is the frequent juxtaposition of different visual elements and familiar objects in varied ways: intentional enlargements or distorted images composed in bizarre or unexpected ways, shrieking, swellings or oversize proportions of images, which puts *lele/le* into the category of composite art.

Meanings held in normal everyday life about certain objects when used on *lele/le* are assigned new insightful ones. For instance meanings assigned to the pictogram in plate 2.2 are fluid, changeable from place to place and sometimes meanings are elusive if not unknown. In other words, re-contextualization is the startling feature of the *lele/le*. Ga and Adangbe canoe arts are also a combination of philosophies of life, death, pursuit of fishing with images which most times give new meanings to the objects or images used.


**Plate 2.2 Two Snakes, One Turning to Look Back**

## 2.3 Empirical Review

### 2.3.1 Global Definition, History and Origins of Canoe

Canoe is a water craft considered as a narrow kind of boat typically made from logs with identically shaped bow (front end), stern (back end) and curved sides, which is usually propelled by one to several paddlers, depending on the type and size of log used as well as strength of the hull ("Canoe," n.d.). As a waterborne vessel, it is distinguished from ship by hull size and mode of propulsion system – the device that moves the canoe or ship through the water. While a canoe may be propelled by a paddler and or outboard motor, a ship is usually moved by closed engines or gas turbine engines. The hull refers to the main body of the canoe/ship.

Historically, the difference in describing a ship from a canoe is blurred when the two types of water vessels are considered from their origins of evolution. This is because prehistoric watercrafts cannot be easily described as either a ship or canoe (or even a

boat) because both trace their origins to the same source and era of evolution. However, judging from the historical accounts regarding the making and use of waterborne vessels and, its necessity to their users it favours the assumption that the ancestry of the modern ship is the dugout canoe. Although some encyclopaedic accounts affirm this as a fact, in other accounts, they seem to contradict.

What is the evidence? Runyan (2006) cited in Encarta 2006, stated that, "Historians surmise that the earliest ships appeared around 16,000 BC in Europe, perhaps earlier in Asia and Africa". These ships is believed were made of sealskin stretched over frames of wood or whalebone and animal skins sewn together around birch wood frames. Water borne vessels made from skin and reindeer antlers dating from 9000BC discovered in Europe by archaeologists according to Runyan shows the making of ship by pre-historic people. He further mentioned the "coracles"- round, skin-covered vessels with frames used by ancient people in Ireland and Wales in their rivers and lakes as origins of ship making. In addition, curacies, larger version of the coracles, which were used to sail the open waters of Northern Europe, indicate ship making, Runyan says.

All these accounts seem to support the evidence of earliest ship construction as other types of canoes other than dugout canoes. However, in contradiction to this, it is stated in Encarta 2006 under the heading "canoe" that birch bark canoe constructed by the native North Americans "canoe" (2006). In the same way, whale borne or wooden frame covered with animal skins of whales or seals canoes created by the Inuit of which was early on identified as the ancestry and origin of ship making are also

identified as canoe making origin. A further contradiction regarding which type of canoe was created first as ancestry to ship making is seen between the Encarta accounts and the Britannica concise version on the same issue.

The Encarta account chronicles that the dugout canoe was a predecessor to the skin boat emphatically stating, “The oldest known dugout canoe dates from 6000 BC and was discovered in what is now the Netherlands. On the same topic, Britannica concise disagrees stating that “the birch back canoe was the earliest canoe, which had light frames of wood covered by lightly stretched tree back, a type of skin”. These two accounts need clarification. Luckily, Encyclopaedia Britannia online accounts seem to clarify this issue. It suggests that, the type of material used by prehistoric people to construct either skin or wooden dugout canoe can hardly give a clue to which type of canoe invented was first since it was the availability of those materials, which dictated the kind of canoe made. Thus in places where large logs grew canoes “took the form of the hollowed out log or dug-out, “where smaller tree trunks were found, the birch canoe dominated, reaching it highest development in the birch canoe”. Skin canoes such as the bullboat of the Plains People made of buffalo hides stretched over a circular frame as well as sealskin stretched over a frame constructed of whalebone were found in places where trees were lacking.

Logical as this explanation may appear, recent discovery with respect to evidence regarding origins of the dugout canoe is at variance to this assertion. Findings about Africans’ oldest known canoe estimated to be about 8000 years old i.e. about 6000 BC, called the Dufuna boat is said by the report, “… does not represent the beginning

of the canoe tradition..", but had already undergone a long development (Harare, 1996). Brimming in Harare added, "…the bow and stern of Dufuna boat were both carefully carved to point, giving it more elegance outranking the style of European canoe of similar age". This has been shown in plate 2.3.

Consistent with the Britannica Online (accounts that appears more plausible) is the Wikipedia encyclopaedia, which declares, "The earliest canoes were wooden, often simply hollowed out tree trunks", ("canoe," 2002).

**Plate 2.3 The 8000-Year-Old Dugout Canoe from Dufuna (NE Nigeria)**

Source: Breunig (1996), photo uploaded by Why Did it Take a White Civilization to Dominate The World?

What can be extrapolated from all these accounts and counter accounts is this; since almost all evidences relating to earliest use of waterborne vessels points to at least a type canoe (and not ship), it is logical to conclude that the canoe, no matter its type, is the ancestor to the ship. Thus for the earliest times canoe was a tool not necessarily an artwork. With the passage of time, canoe tradition was developed in many cultures. Depending on the type of water body it was used on, the type of trees used as the log for the canoe; canoe making was conventionalized and propagated in various types and sizes.



In addition, this means the definition of canoe is not limited to dugout canoe – canoe made from a single log. It encompasses a variety of materials, designs and techniques of construction. This implies that all types of canoes can be described in two main ways: (1) Materials used and (2) Design and method of construction. However, whatever the way of classifying canoes, it is important to note that the material used determines the design and method of construction. Therefore, the descriptive approach followed here is based on traditional and modern materials used for canoe alongside design and method of construction.

The following identification and descriptions of canoes are based on the website for All About Canoe (n.d.).

### 2.3.2 Traditional Canoe Designs

The earliest canoes were made from natural materials available to the local people. The different canoes (or canoe- likes) in many parts of the world were:

**(i) Dugout canoe** – Dugout canoes are probably the oldest type of canoe. It is formed of hollowed logs. It may have outriggers in some cultures. On the west coast of North America, large dugout canoes were used in the Pacific Ocean, even for whaling. The dugout canoe is the commonest canoe type in coastal regions of Ghana specifically Ga and Adangbe areas. Plate 2.4 is a photograph of a typical dugout canoe.

**Plate 2.4 Dugout Canoe**

**(ii) Birch-bark canoe** - This type of canoe was used in the temperate regions of Eastern North America. They were traditionally made of a wooden frame

covered with bark of a birch tree, pitched to make it waterproof. Voyageur and canvas canoes are similar to this type of canoe. The only difference is that voyager is larger than the birch –bark canoes and the canvas canoe uses canvas instead of the bark of birch tree but the method of construction is the same in all three cases. (See plate 2.5).

**Plate 2.5 Birch-bark Canoe**

Source: — Wooden Canoe Heritage Association, 2010

**(iii)Voyageur canoe** – The traditional voyageur canoes were similar to birch-bark canoes but larger and purposely built for the fur trade business, capable of carrying 12 to 16 passengers and 3000 lbs. of cargo. (See plate 2.6).

**Plate 2.6 Voyageur Canoe**

Source: Susquehanna Chapter, Wooden Canoe Heritage Association, 2010

**(iv) Canvas canoe**– This is similar to the birch-bark canoe in frame construction and size but covered with canvas, and painted for smoothness and water tightness. (See plate 2.7).

**Plate 2.7 Canvas Canoe**

Source: **Clements, 1999**

### 2.3.3 Modern Canoe Designs

Modern technology has expanded the range of materials and methods available for canoe construction. They include:

**(i) Improved Wood-and-canvas canoes** – These are made by fastening an external canvas shell to a wooden hull formed with cedar planks and ribs. These canoes evolved from birch bark construction but the transition record is not clear. In areas where birch bark was scarce, other natural materials such as cedar had to be used and there were known success in patching birch bark canoes with canvas or cloth because these materials were readily available. Efforts were made in various locations to improve upon the bark design such as in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada where the Peterborough Canoe Company used rib and plank construction, and in Old Town, Maine in the U.S where the Old Town Canoe Company used similar construction.

**(ii) Aluminium canoes** - Aluminium canoes were first made by the Grumman Company in 1944, when demand for airplanes for World War II began to drop off. Aluminium allowed a lighter and much stronger construction than contemporary wood technology. However, a capsized aluminium canoe will sink unless the ends are filled with flotation blocks.

**(iii) Plywood canoes** - Plywood canoes are sealed with epoxy resin, or the inferior but cheaper polyester resin, and reinforced with glass fibre tape or cloth.

(iv) **Composites of fiberglass, Kevlar and carbon fibre Canoes** - These compounds are light and strong, and the manoeuvrable, easily portaged canoes allow experienced paddlers access to some of the most remote wilderness areas.

(v) **Royalex Canoe** - Royalex is another modern composite material that makes an extremely flexible and durable hull suitable, in particular, for white-water canoes. Royalex canoes have been known to pop back into their original shape with minimal creasing of the hull after having been wrapped around a rock in strong river currents.

(vi) **Polyethylene Canoes** - Polyethylene is a cheaper and heavier material used for modern canoe construction.

(vii) **Graphite canoes** - Graphite canoes are the lightest boats on the market and tend to be 3-6 pounds lighter than a Kevlar boat. Because graphite lacks the impact and abrasion resistance of other composite materials, almost exclusively flat-water canoeists use graphite boats.

Depending on the intended use of a canoe, the various kinds have different advantages. For example, a canvas canoe is more fragile than an aluminium canoe and thus less suitable for use in rough water; but it is quieter, and so better for observing wildlife. However, canoes made of natural materials require regular maintenance, and are lacking in durability.

### 2.3.4 Factors That Influence Grouping of Ga and Adangbe Canoes

Grouping canoes can be done using four (4) related parameters: one, based upon the type of wood used to make the canoe, two, type of gear operated by canoe (method of

fishing), three, overall size of canoe and four, mode of propulsion of canoe. Although there are many types of wood/timber used for canoes, (see appendix A for a list of other tree species used for Canoe Making),Wawa, *Triplochitons cleroxylon* and Onyina, *Ceibapetandra* are the main timber used for Ga and Adangbe canoes. The type of gear used for fishing in the canoe, just like the rest of Ghana, is traditionally the Gas - Adangbes' and marine fishery researchers' preferred method of grouping canoes (C.P. Bannerman *et al*. 2006 p4). Often, this method of grouping canoes corresponds to the size of the canoes that eventually influences the choice for mode of propulsion. For instance as shall be seen shortly, "One Man" canoes range between 4.0 – 11.0m long x 0.40 – 1.10m wide whilst "ali" and "poli" canoes range between 12.0 –19.5m long x 1.2 – 2.4m wide. Due to the relative small hull size of "one man" canoes, they operate small drift nets and are propelled by paddles, sails or outboard motors whereas "ali" and "poli" operate purse seine and large driftnet and are always thrust in water by 25 – 40 hp out board motors. The overall length from bow to stern and the upper limit beam or width determines the sizes. Overall, paddles, sails or outboard motors propel Ga and Adangbe canoe hulls.

### 2.3.5 Traditional Method of Grouping Ga and Adangbe Canoes

The following are based on a document of the FAO, Catalogue of small-scale fishing gear of Ghana (1975).

Fishing gears as a factor in the categorization of Ga and Adangbe canoes can be grouped into four (4) with main kinds with various subdivisions as follows:

**1. Castnets**

i. Castnet with pockets

Castnet with pockets, faan-yaa

Castnet without pocket, dzenge

ii. Gillnets and entangling nets

Set gillnet, toga

Set gillnet, ashoo

Set gillnet, tengirafo

Set gillnet, solu-yaa

Set gillnet, ngaa-yaa, lobster net

Set gillnet, tsile-yaa

**2. Driftnets**

i. Driftnets: Driftnet, ali net, Driftnet, obueali, Driftnet, man ali, flikilo-yaa and Anifa-anifa

ii. Encircling gillnets: Aborketea/kolole-yaa

**3. Seine nets**

Beach seines

Beach seine with bunt

Beach seine without bag

Purse seines

Purse seine, watsa

Purse seine, poli/sieve

Purse seine, achiki na oye

**4. Hooks and lines**

Hand lining, Handlin gear, Trolling lines, Set long line

Of the many different gears outlined above eight are currently in active use by Ga and Adangbes. These are Drifting Gill Net, Lobster Net, Set Net, Beach Seine, Watsa, Poli and Ali. Each type is used for a particular method of fishing and is identified and described by Ga-Adangbes and marine fishery researchers as follows:

1. One man"/ "Go Come" canoes
2. "lagas"
3. " Ali"
4. "Poli" /"Watsa"
5. "others"

### 2.3.6 Description of Traditional Groups of Ga and Adangbe Canoes

**1. "One man"/ "Go Come" canoes**

"One man"/"Go Come" canoes operate Set Net, Drifting Gill Net (small drift nets), longlines and bottom set hand lines in the inshore waters and cast nets on the lagoons. One man" or "Go Come" canoes dimensions range between 4.0 –11.0m long x 0.40 – 1.10m wide. Compared to the other types of canoes they are the very smallest canoes in size. They are symmetrically shaped, the stern being identical to the bow (Plate 3). They are mainly propelled by paddle but some use sails and out board motors.

**2. “Lagas” Canoes**

These canoes are used to operated hook and line. The name “lagas” is a derivative of “la glace”, French word for ice cubes/block. Fisher folks using this type of canoe (and method of fishing) stay out at sea between 2-4 days so use ice to preserve fish in insulated containers. The dimensions of this type of canoes range between 12.0–18.5m long x 0.40–1.10m wide. Paddle, sail and outboard motors propel the lagas canoes.

**3. “Ali”, Canoes**

These canoes operate driftnet, gears and are the largest canoes in terms of size. This type of canoe is also used to operate gillnet as well as “watsa” and “achikinaoye” purse seines. They are 12.0 –19.5m long and 1.30–2.4m wide in dimension. All “Ali” canoes are mainly motorized with outboard motors.

**4. “Poli”/ “Watsa” Canoes**

These canoes operate purse seine gears and are also very large compared to “one man” and “lagas” canoes. They are 12–18 m long and 1.30–1.80m wide. These canoes are mainly motorized with outboard engine.

**5. “Others”**

As a result of the strong tides, the canoes surf, after 36 months a very strong canoe becomes old and thus cannot be used the same way it used to be. “Ali” canoes in this condition are then converted into a kind of canoe known as “beach seine”. The bow is

raised to avoid taking water when crossing the surf. They are propelled by oars, paddles or outboard engine. Bannerman *et al.* (2006) identified another kind of canoes referred as "service canoes" which are used to service large beach seines as well as small inshore vessels such as industrial trawlers but do not operate any vessels. These two kinds of canoes are referred to as "Others" in this report.



### 2.3.7 Difficulties Associated with Traditional Grouping Methods of *Lele* and *Le*

From the aforementioned way of grouping canoes, on the surface, it is apparent that size of canoes influencing the choice of gears and mode of propulsion as in traditional method of grouping Ga and Adangbe canoes is a plausible basis for analysing Ga-Adangbe canoes. Since the size of each canoe determines the sculptural space and picture frame in which the artiness of Ga and Adangbe canoes exist one might erroneously follow that the gear influencing size and eventually propulsion choice of canoe might be an appropriate way for categorizing Ga and Adangbe artisanal canoes. The erroneousness of this thought comes to mind when one considers the fact that the same size of canoe may be using different gears depending upon factors such the age* of the canoe and the fishing hamlet the canoe owners are operating from. For instance as stated above, "Others" canoes such as beach seine canoes are of the same size as *ali* and *watsa* canoes, but are considered differently under different groups according local grouping even though they of the same size. To the local fisher folk, this is appropriate because his/her mind is on fishing vessel not on artwork: sculptural space, composition or visual elements are less important when s/he categorizes canoes.

Besides the foregoing, it should be clear that frame survey reports on types of canoes are a mixture of size of canoe and type of gear. As can be noticed on page 16 of the "Ghana Canoe Frame Survey, 2004 Report", (see table 1), pursing net, other set net, ali net and drifting net which are all gears are grouped together with "one man

Table 2.1 Dangbe West – Greater Accra Region

**Table 2.4 DANGBE WEST – GREATER ACCRA REGION**

| FISHING VILLAGE | LANDING BEACH | PURSING NETS | BEACH SEINE | LINE | LOBSTER NETS | OTHER SET NETS | ALI NETS | DRIFTING NET | ONE MAN CANOE | CANOES | TOTAL MOTORS | FISHERMEN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WEKUMAGBE | WEKUMAGBE | | | | | | | | | | | |
| LEKPOGUNOR | ZONGOANASI | | | | | | | | | | | |
| LEKPOGUNOR | LEKPOGUNOR | 18 | | | | | | 2 | | 20 | 12 | 462 |
| LEKPOGUNOR | NMETSOKOPE | 17 | | | | | | 9 | | 35 | 17 | 731 |
| LEWEM | LEWEM | | | | | | | | | | | |
| KPONGUNOUNOR | AFIYONYA | 1 | 4 | 10 | | 3 | 5 | | | 23 | 10 | 167 |
| KPONGUNOUNOR | KPONGUNOR | | | | | | | | | | | |
| AYETEPAH | AYEIEPRAH | | | | | | | | | | | |
| AYETEPAHKPORNA | AFIENYA | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MANGOTOSNYA | MANGOTOSNYA | 10 | | | | 6 | | | | 15 | 10 | 204 |
| AHWIAM | AHWIAM | 11 | | 58 | 7 | 21 | | | 14 | 111 | 49 | 987 |
| OLD NINGO | OLD NINGO | | | 20 | 11 | 21 | | | | 71 | 24 | 572 |
| NEW NINGO | TOZAH | 10 | | 60 | | 6 | | | | 76 | 58 | 882 |
| ABIA | ABIA | | | | | | | | | 7 | 14 | 216 |
| UPRAMPRAM | FUKUDORNYA | 3 | | | | | | | | 40 | 39 | 425 |
| UPRAMPRAM | LIGHTHOUSE | 43 | 4 | | | | | | | 133 | 46 | 1505 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | **TOTAL** | **132** | **4** | **193** | **112** | **59** | **7** | **11** | **14** | **279** | **279** | **5151** |

(Source :in Amador, Bannerman, Quartey and Ashong, 2006) Reprinted with permission

canoe". "One man canoe" operates more than one kind of gears: hook and line (group D) and set nets (group A).

Therefore, what can be observed is that, the survey frame did not group by following the categories of gears procedures only and neither did they group by following physical dimensions of the canoe alone. It is somewhat an attempt to follow an appropriate procedure that synchronizes the way the Ga and Adangbes employ both size of canoe and type of gear currently in fishing terminologies. Changes occur every now and then because the Ga and Adangbe artisanal fisher folks are in constant competition with industrial trawlers which has caused Ga and Adangbes artisanal fisher folks to always adjust to changing fishing technologies and techniques of fishing. This impinges on the type of gear used by the artisanal folks who use the carved dugout canoes.

It can be noticed that there are eight (8) types of canoes based mainly on gear type (Group B in table 3). This is one (1) of the ways of grouping canoes by the Ga and Adangbe people and marine experts.

Again there are six (6) types of canoes based mainly on canoe size (Group B and C in table 3). This is one (1) of the ways of grouping canoes by the Ga and Adangbe people and marine experts.

This is why on page 31 of the "Ghana Canoe Frame Survey 2004" report (See Table 2), dimensions of canoes in 1995 show 6 different sizes of canoe yet in page 16 it

shows 8 different types of canoes; thus a mixture of gear type and canoe size type. Therefore, the grouping approach applied in the presentation of findings was based on a different basis that is described as the artistic categories of canoe.

**Table 2.2 Dimensions of Canoes in 1995**

| Table 8 Dimensions of Canoes in 1995 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Canoes | Length (m) | Width (m) |
| Ali/Poli/Watsa | 15.2-16.2 | 2.0-2.2 |
| Line | 10.7 | 1.8 |
| Beach Seine (Large) | 11.2-13.4 | 1.7-2.1 |
| Beach Seine (Small) | 8.4 | 1.15 |
| Set Net | 10.7 | 1.8 |
| One Man Canoe | 8.5 | 1.5 |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

(Source: in Amador, Bannerman, Quartey and Ashong, 2006) Reprinted with permission

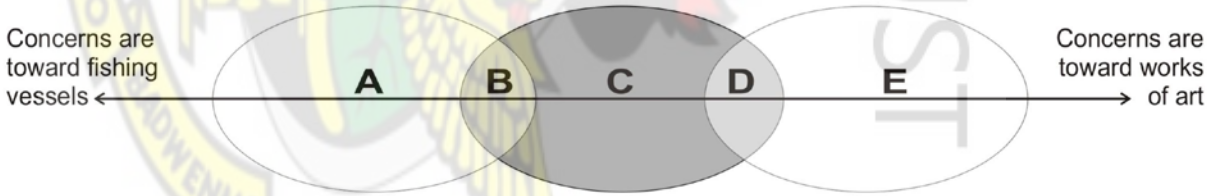
Table 3 shows comparison between the four (4) ways of grouping canoes discussed above.

Table 2.3 Comparison Between The Four (4) Ways of Grouping Canoes

| A. GEAR TYPE ONLY GROUPING | B. GEAR TYPE AND SIZE GROUPING | C. SIZE ONLY GROUPING | D. ARTISTIC GROUPING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Castnets : Castnet with pockets, Gillnets and entangling nets, Set gillnet (toga, tengirafo solu-yaa, ngaa-yaa, lobster net, tsile-yaa) | One man, Medium Beach Seine | 8.4 - 8.5 / 1.15 -1.5 | Type One **Canoes**: Isotropic (Leleko) |
| 2. Driftnets: Driftnet ali net (obue, man), flikilo-yaa, Anifa-anifa, Encircling gillnets (Aborketea/kolole-yaa) | Set net, Line | 8.5. - 10.7 / 1.5 -1.8 | Type Two Canoe: Optimized (Mijalee) |
| 3. Seine nets: Beach seines (bunt, without bag) Purse seines (watsa, poli/sieve and achiki na oye) | Large Beach Seine | 11.2 - 13.4 / 1.7 - 2.1 | Type Three Canoe: Orthotropic (Trormoor ) |
| 4. Hooks and lines: Handlining, Handline gear, Trolling lines and Set longline | Ali/Poli/Watsa | 15.2 - 16. 20/ 2.0 - 2.0 | Type Four Canoe: Hydrostatic Canoes (Kakadan) |



**Traditional Canoe Grouping and Artistic Canoe Grouping Continuum**




Zone A consist of totally fishing gear informed grouping of canoes, whereas Zone E consist grouping entirely Informed by dimensions of canoe. Zone B represents primarily fishing gear informed grouping of canoes with some dimensions of canoe considerations. Inversely, Zone D represent primarily dimensions of canoe with some fishing gear considerations. Zone C represent totally integrated mixed concerns of fishing gear and dimensions of canoe. The arrow represents the traditional and canoe grouping and artistic grouping continuum. Movement toward the middle of the continuum indicates a greater integration of factors all factors in grouping canoes. Movement away from the center and toward either end) indicate that factors influencing grouping are more distinct. Moving toward Zone A indicates the concerns are toward fishing vessels whereas movement toward Zone E indicates that concerns are toward art works

### 2.3.8 Canoe in the History of the Ga and Adangbes

Odotei (2002) describing the history of canoe and other fishing gear mentioned that, "the origins of Artisan Marine Fishing Industry in Ghana are shrouded in myths", p6. Putting together oral tradition and some written accounts by European writers on the making and use of canoe among the Fantes and Gas, she mentioned that some early fishermen fashioned out their own canoe from trees, which was believed to be near the coast. Her description of canoe carving and painting were all limited to the western region of Ghana, suggesting there were very little canoe carving done in the Accra plains. This is more evident in her comparison of Fante canoes with Ga and Adangbe canoes that she described as bigger in size than Fante canoes, adding that Fante canoes were narrower.

More so, Odotei stated, "Huge trees were found in the areas near the Pra River and these were carved into canoes and transported to the coast", (p8). Perhaps this could be a recent development (after the 18th century) because Amate's (1999) account indicate early canoes among the Ga and Adangbes were small especially those used on the rivers and lagoons.

Nonetheless, Odotei's accounts merit recommendation for its informative and educational nature but not for critical history of canoe development in Ghana. In this regard, information about the types of trees used for making canoe in the past was provided. They included Kapok or Silk cotton tree (*ceibatandra*), Wawa (*Triplochinton Sceloroxylon*) and occasionally False Rubber (*Funtumia Africana*).

She also gave information about evolution, development and modification about other fishing gears such as the nets, hook and line, harpoon and raft and horns.

Possibly, the biasness of Odotei towards Fante canoe carving and painting can be traced to Meyerowitz's (1942) accounts which stated that the Fantes (the Eftis) were the first makers and users of canoes in Ghana of which have been misinterpreted and transmitted by several writers such as Odotei, Henderson-Quartey and Manouskian. It appears the phrase "the first people to make and use canoe" is being mistaken to mean the same as "the first people to make and use canoe for sea fishing". It follows then that the Ga and Adangbe learnt sea fishing as well as canoe making from the Fantes as the accounts misleadingly suggest. The fact is Meyerwitz's report is true and /or false depending on where the historical facts are placed.

What does this mean? First, Fantes are believed to be settling in the coastal region of Ghana and were engaged in sea fishing before the advent of the Ga and Adangbe groups. This single historical fact can logically ascertain the validity of Meyerwitze's statement. However, it appears the true meaning of his statement which was not recognized by Manouskian, Amate and Henderson-Quartey when they wrote that the Ga and Adangbe learnt sea fishing from the Fantes is rather this: the accounts is limited to only the acquisition of knowledge about sea fishing techniques from the Fantes by the Ga and Adangbes.

Acquisition of knowledge about sea fishing techniques probably does not include learning about canoe carving and painting from the Fantes by the Ga and Adangbe. This is more so since the Ga and Adangbe groups have been using canoes before they

arrived on the coast of Ghana. To this end, Dadzie's (2004) analysis of Verrip's (1991) stance about Ga and Adangbe canoe decoration as against Coronel's (1970) contention about Fante canoe decoration; using the introduction of sea fishing by the Fantes to the Gas as a basis for his analysis is disjointed. Why? This is because he (Dadzie) making the same error as did Odotei equated introduction of sea fishing to the making and use of canoe.

Following Meyerwitz's ascertain of canoe making origin from the Fantes in Ghana, Asmah (1963) established this hypothesis. This flaw does not take away from him the diligent documentary work he did on the construction of canoe, which he did impeccably in details: from timber stage to the final decoration described as both carving and embellishment. He further gave the categorization of canoe based on sizes and types of wood/timber used. His research did little about symbolism – thus leaves the reader with little information about the nature of the paintings on the canoes he described.

Nunoo's (1974) work "canoe decoration in Ghana" though sketchy, provided the canoe decoration symbolism laps in Asmah's research. He covered a wide range of issues related to canoe carving and fishing in general rather than canoe decoration exclusively. From type and quality of timber used for canoe, how the canoe is carved - initial dugout, how the final designs are engraved and painted to initial rites or rituals perform for the canoe before the maiden use on the sea; Nunoo brings to the fore vital issues relating to the canoe. His anxiety to narrate the canoe culture in Ghana is obvious yet lacking such an outfit, for his research covered only Fante canoe

culture. Hence the caption “Canoe Decoration in Ghana” will best read “Fante (of Ghana) Canoe Decoration”.

Nunoo’s major contribution as can be seen is his assortment of documentation on the various groups of painting on the gunwale, which is useful for critical descriptive analysis by way of comparing those painting (he documented) with what is practiced today.



Taking the subject of canoe further scholarly Coronel (1978) declared “to deal with the canoe as a monumental sculpture, a monoxylons carving with polychromatic side panels in low relief would be the classical method of approaching it as object of art”, Coronel (1979) studied the designs as they occurred on the canoes in Fanti areas. As Verrips (2002) noted, “Coronel’s study is much better than Nunoo’s, for it is much more detailed” (pp. 24). It appears Nunoo, did not do much fieldwork and limits himself to a very succinct illustration of the following statement that the designs on the gunwales have taken different forms in the last fifty years or so. In the 1930s they were more stylistic, embodying several animal motifs which mostly represented Akan sayings. About twenty years later, the designs became more conventionalized. These often-included objects such as tools, clocks, and guns, and some were purely abstract decorative fantasies (Nunoo, 1974 cited in Verrips). Coronel, on the contrary, is very precise in his descriptions of the kind of decorations ([non]representational motifs, proverbs, labels and names), where on the canoe one can find them (gunwales, bow and prow), whether they are carved or painted, whether the decorations are symmetrical, a-symmetrical or a combination of both, what colours are used, whether

a canoe has one, two or even three decorated bands and, last but not least, whether the source of inspiration was traditional or modern iconography (that is iconography drawn from topical, contemporary sources).

The following summarises what Verrips stated about Coronel.

> Moreover, Coronel sketches how important rivalry between fishermen (for instance, belonging to different asafo or military companies) is in choosing a particular type of decoration, and how '[The] mobility of Fanti fishermen accounts for an interchange of motifs between fishing communities' (Coronel 1979:59). Finally he points out those canoe decorations are poly-interpretable, for they convey all sorts of (serious and less serious) messages, for example, about the philosophy, status, and religion of its owner. However, I think that Coronel is somewhat biased with regard to the ability of the Fanti fishermen to better decorate their canoes than other fishermen, for example, the Ga. What he remarks about La near Accra illustrates this bias quite well: 'Labadi, while a major fishing community is a Ga-speaking area and lacks the Fanti traditional heritage; as one might expect, canoe decoration here is not of the quality seen on Fanti canoes (p26 )

Following the discussion above, the history of Canoe carving and painting as an artistic enterprise by the Ga and Adangbe has been found to antedate written records. It can be deduced that this vocation existed among the Gas and Adangbes in their previous civilization. Thus, canoe was vital to the socio-economic life among the Hamitic and Semitic people of which the Gas and the Adangbes have been associated with. The oldest canoe to be excavated in Africa (in the Nigerian town of Dufuna), is dated 8000 years ago. This record described the Dufuna canoe as far advanced in its design compared to others found in other places of the world, made around the same era. A link between this canoe culture as was practiced among the Nigerians and Gas and Adangbes will be very debatable but cannot be overruled. Why?

First, Gas and Adangbes have depended on nature to chart the cause of life. When land was good enough for farming and hunting they did so. With time, as vegetation became scarce rendering the soil not very good for farming, fishing and trading followed. Now, on this wise, the Ga and Adangbe may have abounded the exact way of canoe culture as practiced in their previous civilizations and developed new cultures based upon their new environment.

The second reason why a link between the Gas and Adangbes and Nigerian Dufuna canoe cannot be overruled is that considerable similarities exist in nature, design and construction between the description of Ga and Adangbe (among others such as the Fantis). Canoe making as described in written accounts by one of the earliest eyewitness writers, de Marees, (1602) cited in Odotei (2002) described canoe making in Ghana (possibly among the Fantis) as follows:

> The canoes were first hewn in an oblong form with machetes……. The upper part of the sides are made a little narrower and flat at the bottom, then the upper part is made open; both ends, front and back taper narrowly like a hand-bow so that the front and rear ends are made in virtually the same fashion and there is a little difference in them except that the front is lower. At both ends they make a bow like the cut water and bow spit of a ship, one foot long and as thick as the palm of a hand which they use to carry the canoes to and fro. They hallow it (the canoe) and with an iron chisel of the kind used by makers of bailers, they make the sides only one finger thick and the bottom two: when they have finished hallowing (the canoe) out, they fire it with straw to prevent it from being eaten by worms and by the sun. They support the boards or sides with props so that they will not shrink but become even and smooth…. Thus they make their canoe and little barges quite pretty and artistic, (p.119).

Thirdly, the canoes used by the Ga and Adangbes were carved out in a single log; the same as Dufuna canoe hence the name dugout canoe.

Beside the fact that the *lele/le* culture expands beyond the borders of the present day Ga and Adangbe settlements, the presence of rivers, lagoon and the seas are

geological evidence of a gradual development of a kind of canoe making in the history of Ga and Adangbes. Since canoes are designed based on the water bodies the craft will be used on, the canoes used on the Volta River and lagoon were different in shape and sizes from those used on the seas. Lagoon and rivers canoes are generally smaller and flat at the bottom whilst those used on the rough sea are bigger and have curved bottom (Amate p84). Plate 2.8 and Plate 2.9 show lagoon/river canoes and sea respectively. Odotei (p5) also described the canoes used in Accra as "generally bigger, about thirty-five feet long, five feet broad and three feet high" Those canoes were in the past used not only for fishing, food and cattle transportation; they were used for warfare as well (Henderson–Quartey 2001,pp 69, 110, 115).

The use of canoe for war in the history of Ga and Adangbe is another evidence of the use of canoe reminiscent of Mesopotamia and Vikings tradition. The Vikings especially developed a canoe warfare tradition. Stretching this further, Brue-Meyers(1946) writing about the *lele/le* association with earlier civilization described a series of migration of some Ga groups from central part of Africa whose ancestors is linked with the Mesopotamia and Vikings.

Some traditional leaders of the Ga and Adangbe groups can also trace the use of canoe on the sea and lagoon in Ga and Adangbe history from accounts. Nai Wulomo, Nii Anyitei Kwakara II, Mantse of Labadi and the Lee of Kpone claim about their ancestors' origination from the sea, which means by sea and Dzangi, the principle deity of Ningo-Dzama, attest to this fact. Thus in all cases, the water bodies are central to the history, social and economic life of the Ga and Adangbe.

At this point, it will be logical to hypothesize that the water bodies suggested to the Ga and Adangbes the canoe craft as a vehicle that could serve a means of traveling (transportation) and latter for fishing.

**Plate 2.8 Lagoon and River Canoes at Bortianor Beach**


**Plate 2.9 Sea Canoe - Dugout Canoe**

Since the water was the reason for the creation, the people needed permission from the water bodies before using it for such endeavours. This to some extent explains

why all water bodies in the region of the Ga and Adangbe are associated with some kind of belief systems.

Secondly, the watercraft used was obviously the dugout canoe, which required a log. Here again, the Ga and Adangbe needed to obtain acquiescence from forest gods before the trees were hewed for such activities. Once again this also explains the reason why tree felling (in the past) and still has been associated with many rituals among the Ga, the Adangbe and all coastal dwellers.



**2.3.9 Summary**

Concerning the evolution of the canoe itself among the Ga and Adangbe, one cannot say the current form of the canoe art has been so ever since its inception. The accounts so far as I have analysed show that the Fantis introduction of fishing techniques to the Ga and Adangbes does not mean that was the beginning of canoe making among the Ga and Adangbes; not at all. As have been identified the Ga and Adangbes have used canoes long before settling in the now Ghana. Early canoes were so small compared to canoes of today for several reasons.

One, the coastal plains region as a result of its ecological make-up had little of big trees capable of being fashioned into canoes. Two, even when trees on the coastal belt went into extinction in the early sixteen century, most fishermen did not go far for deep sea fishing which might require bigger canoes hence canoe carvers and users did not request bigger canoes. Thirdly, most Ga and Adangbe canoes are bigger today because proliferation of maritime rules and trespassing of some countries on the seas

of Ghana by fishermen with advanced (but sometimes reckless) fishing trawlers coupled with growth in the population caused an increase in the demand on fish. Thus, the size of the canoes needed to be increased to ensure increased fish curling from deep offshore sea fishing. Fourthly, the automation of propulsion system of Ga and Adangbe canoe by the use of outboard motor and improved gears in the 1950s was an impetus for bigger canoes. In the next chapter, a critical look is made about the artiness of the Ga and Adangbe *lele/le.*

# CHAPTER THREE

# METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Overview

Ga and Adangbe canoe as it may be applied in various research methodologies is briefly discussed in the following sections. This is followed by the description of the research design, the sampling technique adapted, data collection procedures as well as the data analysis plan.



The researcher outlined two major research types and explained how these two research types though essentially different was used congruently by pointing out equivalence between them. The submission here is that differences which exist between methodologies sometimes can be held simultaneously. This can be done simply by drawing out the slightest similarities and enforcing them analogously to create continuums which depending on the goals of the research, the researcher can make use of suitable approaches reliably. So in the following discussion, the researcher makes connections between descriptive research and normative research as the main research types for this study. These two research types fall under the qualitative research paradigm.

## 3.2 Research Design

Figure 3.1 is a graphical description of the body of fields of studies on canoes. It shows that researches on canoe the world over can be motivated by two categories of fields. The first category of fields of studies includes the fields of sociology, anthropology and general education studies. Research on canoes motivated by these

fields mainly seek to provide information about the existence of canoe art in a particular society and may further provide explanation on how and why the canoe art exists in that particular society. Researches on canoes with these features are normally seen in art history (of canoe), aesthetics (of canoe) and semiotics (of canoe). Thus by way of research methodology type, they are descriptive methodology (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). In figure 3.1 these fields are indicated with ice blue rectangle.

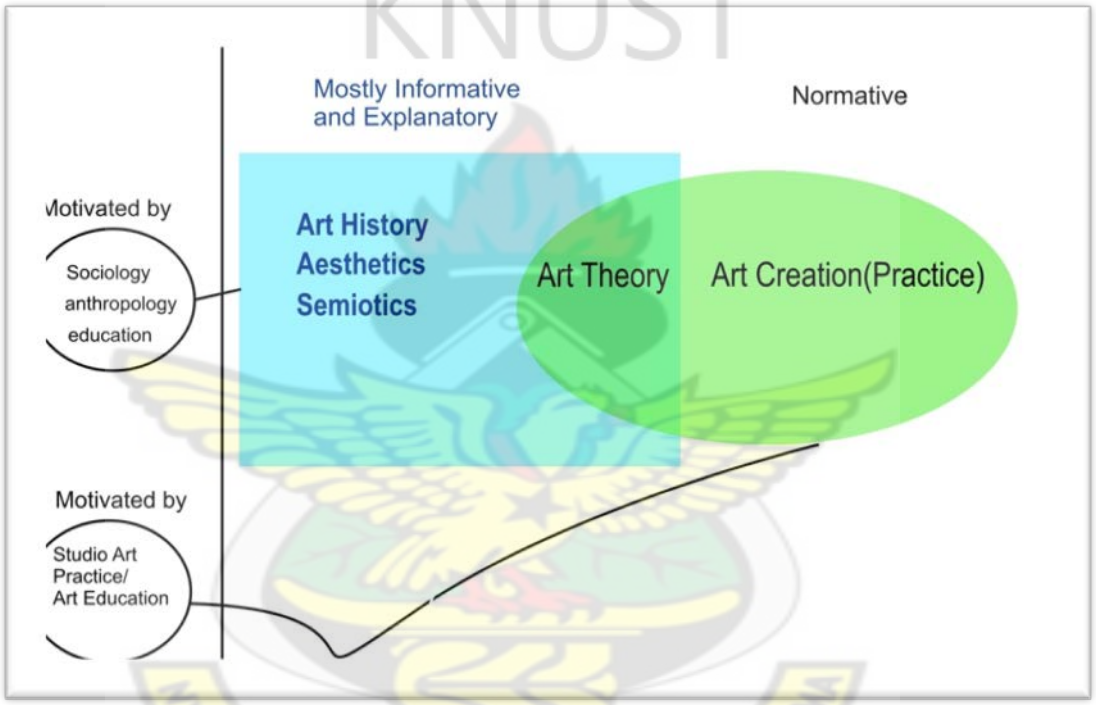



**Figure 3.1 Body of Fields of Studies on Canoes**

On the other hand the second category of fields of studies that motivate research on canoe includes the fields of studio art (such painting and sculpture) and art education. Researches on canoes motivated by these fields mainly seek to offer art theory (of canoe) and art creation (of canoe). Thus by way of research methodology type, they

are normative methodology, (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). In figure 3.1 these fields are indicated with lemon green oval.

From the foregoing it is evident that based upon the first two objectives of this research on Ga and Adangbe canoe which are: 1. to examine the artistic nexus between the creation of Ga and Adangbe canoe as a composite art using fundamental known theory of art, and 2. to find out how the common cultural heritage connecting the Gas and the Adangbes are reflected in their canoe carving and painting practice; this study falls mainly under the general research category known as descriptive research. Additionally, the third objective of the study which is to explore the use of data on Ga and Adangbe canoe art as inspiration for creating new art works in the studio, - makes this study a normative research work. This is illustrated graphically in figure 3.2

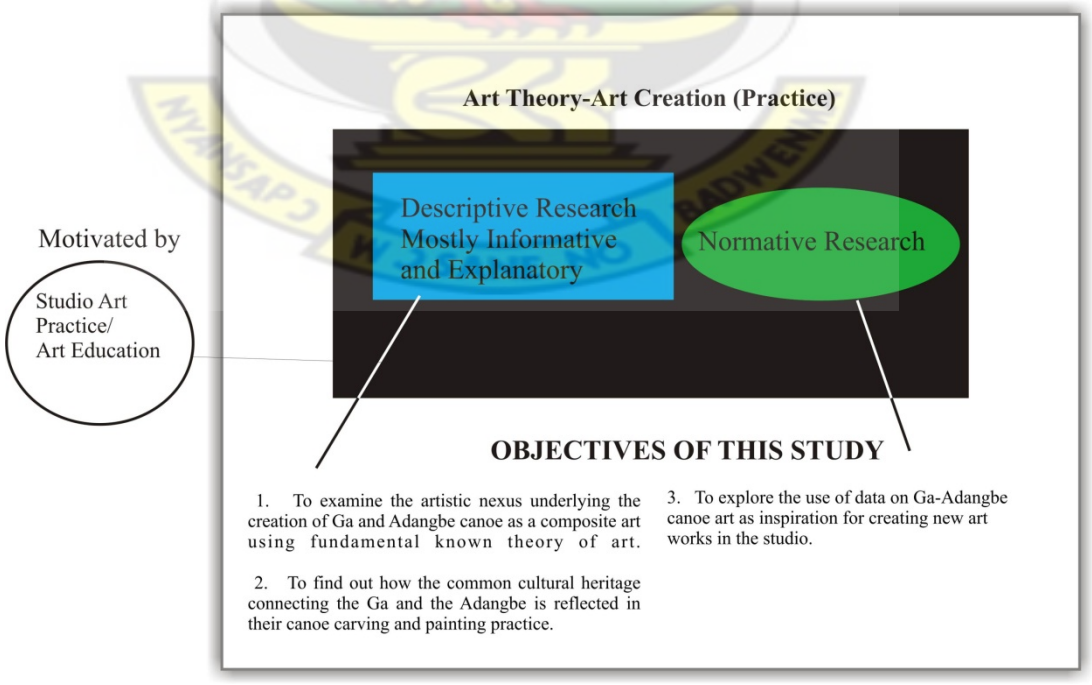


**Figure 3.2 Research types in relation to research objectives**

### 3.2.1 Descriptive Research and Normative Research

The researcher decided to work within a mixed methodology approach which sought to create a concession or marriage between two research types namely, descriptive research and normative research. These two research types are of the same research paradigm known as qualitative research. This decision was based on the following factors:

1. My beliefs and values ( subjectivism)
2. Research goal (objectivism)
3. Research questions (problem statement)
4. My skills (as a student researcher)
5. Time and Funds available.

Figure 3.3 is a graphical description of the research design for this study. It is a flow chart in three levels showing the relationship between the research types, research methods and research tools/instruments for this research.

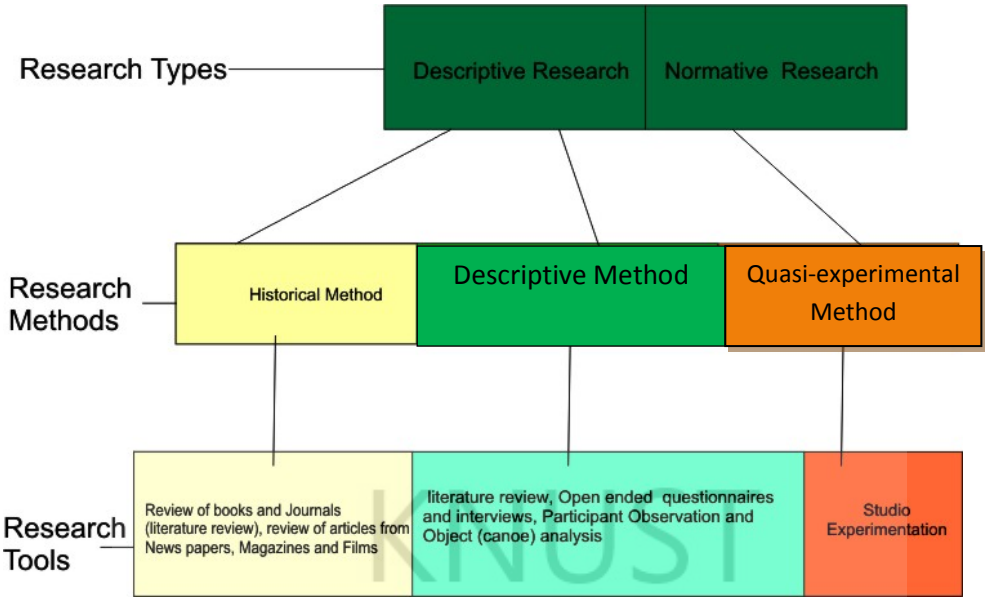



**Figure 3.3 Research Design for Study: Research Types, Methods and Tools**

As mentioned in the section 3.2, on the first level, descriptive research and normative research are the two research types used for this research because of the nature of the research objectives. On the second level**,** the methods used to analyse (describe) the *lele/le* sampled were the descriptive research method and the historical research method for objective one and two respectively. The quasi experimental method was also used for objective three. Although in many instances these methods are considered as "research types" like in (Fraenkel and Wallen 1996), for the purpose of this research project and as indicated in Clarke (2005) they were considered as methods of qualitative research type. On the third level of the chart, the historical method was used to examine books and other documents that relate to the history of the Ga and Adangbe people which aided in the construction of the history of canoe practice among the Gas and the Adangbes as discussed in section 3.3.

## 3. 3 Library Research

Various institutional and research libraries were visited for information regarding canoe art culture in Ghana. These included George Padmore Research Library on African Affairs, Accra, Institute of African Studies Library, Balme Library (Africana), African History Society Secretariat and Archaeological Department Library - all in University of Ghana, Legon. Others include Ghana Museums and Monuments Board's Library, Accra and National Archives, Accra. The rest are Ashanti Library, KNUST Main Library (Ghana collection), College of Art Library, KNUST, Kumasi and Art Education Library KNUST, Kumasi.

In addition to the libraries, the internet has been searched for cooperative (institutional), individual (private), commercial and academic as well as online library sites for relevant materials needed for the research project. This was done by making notes and printing out necessary reports, journals, periodicals and electronic books.

### 3.4 Population for the Study

The population for this research project is made up of fishermen, Chief fishermen, Canoe Artists, Canoe owners and Canoes. The researcher considered subjects (people related to the culture of canoe) on one side and the objects (the canoes themselves) on the other side as population for this project.

The population is therefore divided into three (3) distinctive categories.

(A) Fishermen, Chief fishermen, Canoe owners, Canoe Association Officers.

(B) Canoe Artists (canoe dugout carvers and canoe symbol carvers and canoe painters)

(C) Canoes

The Ghana Fishery 2004 Canoe Survey was used as the research frame for the population. The researcher used purposive sampling techniques to sample canoes which he assumed answers the research questions for this project.

### 3.4.1 Sampling

Considering the diverse nature of the population, the researcher sampled special cases in order to make a careful observation of variables within each of the various population groups. The chief aim for the sampling of cases was to achieve comparability rather than representativeness. This was because findings were not meant to be generalized. The sampling therefore falls in the broader category of purposive or non-probability type of sampling technique. However a certain degree of representativeness surfaced in the researcher's decision on using the Ghana Fisheries 2004 Canoe Survey as the sampling frame for the selection of fishing hamlets and landing beaches. By comparing the population results of the 1995, 1997, 2001 and 2004 canoe frame surveys, the researcher was able to arrive at a percentage increase or decrease in the population of canoes which guided the estimated ratio number of canoes sampled for each hamlet. The population of each fishing hamlet was thus arrived by the following guidelines:

a. Total number of canoes surveyed in a particular fishing hamlet.
b. The different types of canoes surveyed
c. The number of canoes with canoe pictograms

**Table 3.1 Results of the 1995, 1997, 2001 and 2004 Canoe Frame Surveys**

| Year of Survey | 1995 | 1997 | 2001 | 2004 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Total No. of canoes | 2526 | 2630 | 2957 | 2781 |
| b. Ali/poli/watsa | 481 | 469 | 351 | 364 |
| c. Line | 522 | 657 | 790 | 586 |
| d. Beach seine | 155 | 168 | 184 | 158 |
| e. Other DriftingNets | 32 | 16 | 40 | 81 |
| f. Lobster Set Net | 87 | 80 | 121 | 168 |
| g. Other Set Net | 230 | 157 | 149 | 263 |
| h. One man canoe | 23 | 16 | 31 | 21 |
| i. Nifanifa | 52 | 46 | 13 | - |
| j. Pursing nets | 1017 | 1029 | 1164 | 1164 |

Coastal sites for this research thus covered the whole of the fishing hamlets in the Greater Accra Region consisting of Dangbe East District, Dangbe West District, Tema District, Accra Metropolitan Assembly District and the Ga District. The following are the specific villages with their respective landing sites. In all, 31 landing beaches were examined out of the 68, representing 45.6% of the total landing beaches.

**Table 3.2 District, Fishing Hamlet (Landing Site) Estimated Number of Canoes**

| DISTRICT | FISHING HAMLET | LANDING BEACH | EST. NO. OF CANOES |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dangbe East | 19 | 22 | 12463 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| district | | | |
| Dangbe West District | 12 | 16 | 6151 |
| Tema District | 3 | 7 | 2419 |
| AMA District | 10 | 18 | 12460 |
| Ga District | 4 | 5 | 1675 |
| **Total** | **48** | **68** | **35168** |



**Table 3.3 Names of Fishing Hamlets (Landing Sites) Canoe Were Sampled From**

(I) DANGBE EAST DISTRICT

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Aziz Anya | Mataheko |
| 2. Lolonyakope | Lolonyakope |
| 3. Pute | Pute |
| 4. Lolonya | Lolonya |
| 5. Goi | Goi |
| 6. Akplabanya | Akplabanya |

(II) DANGBE WEST DISTRICT

| | |
|---|---|
| 7. Lekpogunor | Nmetsokope |
| 8. Old Ningo | Old Ningo |
| 9. New Ningo | Tozah |

| | |
|---|---|
| 10. U/Prampram | Fukudonya |
| 11. L/Prampram | Lighthouse |

(III) TEMA DISTRICT

| | |
|---|---|
| 12. Kpone | Laa Loi Naa |
| 13. Kpone | Odunyaonma |
| 14. Kpone | Sega |
| 15. Tema | Ashamang |
| 16. Tema | Awudun |

(IV) ACCRA METROPOLOTAN ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

| | |
|---|---|
| 17. Nungua | Tsienaa |
| 18. Teshie | Sangonaa |
| 19. La | Abese |
| 20. Osu | Alata |
| 21. Accra | Ga Mashie |
| 22. Chorkor | WoleiAmli |
| 23. Chorkor | Mantsuru |

| | |
|---|---|
| 24. Chorkor | Lanteman |
| 25. Chorkor | ChemuNaa |
| 26. Gbegbeyisee | Gbegbeyisee |
| 27. Faanaaa | Faadzimohe |

(V) GA DISTRICT



| | |
|---|---|
| 28. Bortianor | Tsokome |
| 29. Bortianor | Bortianor |
| 30. Oshie | Oshie |
| 31. Korkrobite | Korkrobite |

**The following are the accessible population**

- Fishermen (15), Chief fishermen (4), Canoe owners (20), Canoe Association Officers (2).
- Canoe Artists (canoe dugout carvers and canoe symbol carvers and canoe painters) (5)
- Canoes (50), Fishermen (15), Chief fishermen (4), Canoe owners (20), Canoe Association Officers (2).
- Canoe Artists (canoe dugout carvers and canoe symbol carvers and canoe painters) (5)
- Canoes (50)

### 3.4.2 The Criteria for Sampling

The criteria used for sampling each of the categories for the population are as follows:

**Category A**

1. Only Fishermen, Chief fishermen, Canoe owners, Canoe Association Officers who are natives of the respective Ga and Adangbe fishing hamlets were selected.
2. Non-natives who have lived in the Ga and Adangbe fishing hamlets for more than thirty (30) years were considered.
3. In the case of canoe owners, they might have been involved in some kind canoe or fishing activity at one time or the other.
4. Chief fishermen who were not themselves fishermen before were excluded.
5. Since information required from respondents of this category are mainly about Ga and Adangbe canoe history, natives of Ga and Adangbe will be the most qualified people to provide this information. Non- natives living in the Ga and Adangbe areas over the past 30 years might have acquired enough knowledge about Ga and Adangbe history. Additionally, non-natives are considered to avoid any halo-effect in the information regarding canoe history of Gas and Adangbes.
6. Not all chief fishermen were once fishermen. Those of this sort may not have any practical experience to provide accurate views with respect to canoe traditions.
7. Apprentices who are not more than one year may not know enough to give accounts of issues related to canoe art.

**Category B**

1. Canoe Artists (canoe dugout carvers and canoe symbol carvers and canoe painters) must have been in the canoe industry at least one (1) year.

**Category C**

1. Only canoes found on the beaches either on the shore or on sea (at view) were sampled.
2. Canoes sampled at each landing site must belong to that particular landing site or village.
3. Where canoes have special features and they must be sampled even though they are not from that particular site, those canoes were analysed with respect to their original landing sites.

### 3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The instruments used to elicit data for the study are questionnaires, interview and participant observation.

#### 3.5.1 Questionnaire

Since the population under study was categorized into two (2) parts, the questionnaire was designed to reflect the two (2) categories namely: **part one (1)** and **part two (2)**

**Part one (I)**

This part of the questionnaire was designed for those in **category A**.

**Part two (2)**

The part two (2) questions were designed to tap information from those in category B, which were made up of Fishermen, Chief fishermen, Canoe owners, Canoe Association Officers. Questions for this category sought for answers on the history and general information about canoe and canoe fishing culture among the Gas and Adangbes. Part two (2) which was for category B was made up of two sections namely: Section I and Section II. Section I was meant for canoe dugout carvers; those who carve canoe in forest. The questions on this section cover the history and procedure of log acquisition, tree felling and initial dugout carving techniques. Information about rituals associated with these practices was also sought for.

Section II was designed for canoe pictogram carvers and painters. Answers aimed at by this questionnaire include the name, sources and significance of symbolic and non-symbolic representations on the canoes.

Both sections I and II of part two (2) touches on personal information for the artists, their hope and expectation for the canoe art industry in the future. On the whole, the inquiry on (part one **(**1**)** and part two (2) was made up of both open and close ended questions to allow respondents to agree or disagree with the researchers assumptions as well as allow for independent opinion expressions.

### 3.5.2 Interviews

Initial interviews conducted in some of the research locations were instrumental in the designing of the questionnaires. These interviews were mainly with canoe dugout carvers, fishermen and chief fishermen in Prampram, Goi, Akplabanya and Tema.

Others included the national secretary of the canoe carvers association and a researcher on fishing industry in Ga- Adangbe land, Prof. Irene Odotei. The medium of expression was Ga, Ewe and English. Final detail unstructured interviews were conducted in all the research locations by researcher with chief fishermen, fishermen and canoe artists.

### 3.5.3 Participant Observation

From the forest to the coast, the researcher was involved in the initial dugout stage, hulling and conveyance to the coast to the assemblage, whittling, incising and painting of symbolic and non-symbolic images on the canoe in Accra (Chorkor, Ga and La beach), Prampram, and Tema, Goi and Akplabanya (in Ada). This helped the researcher to identify the trees (wood), tools and materials used for canoe carving. Some of the canoe accessories, symbols, inscriptions and the general procedure for canoe making as presented in Chapter four.

At the coast/beach of the research sites, physical scrutiny of Ga and Adangbe canoes and photographs and sketches were made for intimate appreciation and analysis of the *lele/le* into their artistic groups as discussed in chapter four.

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires were designed, tested and administered by the researcher. Research assistants were sort for to help those in category B and category C respondents; who could not read in order to facilitate translations, particularly

Adangbe respondents since the researcher cannot communicate in Dangbe (dialect) proficiently

Four (4) trips were made on different days by the researcher in the company of other researchers on the canoe culture to the Tinto forest reserve near Abesewa in the Ashanti Region (see plate3.1).

**Plate 3.1 The Researcher (first from right), Resource Person (second from right) and Other Researchers in Abesewa Forest**

During these visits, questions regarding the tree acquisition procedure for canoe carving were asked and subsequently answered by the team of canoe carvers and resource person we worked with. Additionally, the researcher observed the processes involved in the initial carving of the dugout part of the *lele/le* in the forest. This was

followed by observations on the coast- construction of planks**,** gunwales, thwarts, brackets, bow knot and stern knot on the dugout to the carving, construction and painting of pictograms and has been presented in chapter four under the following sub-headings:

(a) Procedure for Tree Acquisition in Tinto Forest Reserve near Abesewa in Ashanti Region.

(b) Non-Participatory Observation of Initial Dugout in Abesewa in the Ashanti Region.

(c) Observation of conveyance of dugout (half-carved canoe) from the forest to the coast.

(d) Participant Observation of canoe construction at Prampram - Carving to Painting.

(e) Interview and Observation of types of canoes at the beach of Chorkor, Tema, Prampram, Akplapanya and Goi.

The last part of data collected was done by writing out the processes followed in the creation of the researcher's own art work. This was preceded by identifying media, techniques and visual elements and styles of the digital paintings as described in chapter four.

### 3.7 Data Analysis Plan

Data collected through observations and interviews were analysed in two ways. The first part, mainly, informative, is a narrative of the various procedures involved in the

making of *lele/le*. The second part, textual analysis, involved the relating of data collected on canoe types from one hamlet to the next and finding out by comparing patterns that the canoes portrayed and grouping them into what the researcher described as artistic categories. Four artistic categories were identified namely; Isotropic, Optimized, Orthotropic, and Hydrostatic.

Based upon the *lele/le* artistic categories and subsequent rule underlying the artistic categories – panelling, the researcher explored some of the sampled canoes in the studio and produced 20 digital paintings. The researcher analysed his 20 digitals paintings as visual interpretations of the Isotropic, Optimized, Orthotropic, and Hydrostatic of the *lele/le* artistic categories. To do this within the confines of this thesis, the researcher related the analysis of the digital paintings to the concept of studio work which conceptualizes art creation in terms of theory and practice. Theory deals with the ideas and the other, practice, is concern with the concretization of the ideas into visual tactile forms. Therefore the analysis on the studio works by the researcher became a framework within which the link between *lele/le* ideas (theory) and the making of the art works by the researcher (practice) was discussed as part of the outcome of this thesis. The textual analysis of the paintings were channelled in two stages; 1. visual description and 2, stylistic analysis of the works. Although the narration of the experimentation process of executing the practical aspect of a thesis work is a major descriptive requirement in studio work research, the actual process for the creation of each of the art works was only generally described because each of them followed similar processes.

In the analysis of the *lele/le*, four artistic categories were identified as structural configuration of the canoes based on physical dimension. These four artistic groups have unique spatial qualities that correspond to four visual compositional structures of the motifs on the *lele/le*. The single denominator for the grouping of the *lele/le* motifs into compositional structures is "panelling" or "banding". Thus the basis for classifying *lele/le* into artistic canoe groups and compositional groups is about how the motifs have been arranged into panel or bands within the given space on the canoe. So in the analysis of the digital paintings, besides any other theme for each particular work, banding or panelling was the common denominator in their creation.

The most important decision (plan) in the works analysed was to construct a link within the entire number of paintings created through banding and common motifs usage.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

## 4.1 Overview

This section is in three parts and it deals with the presentation and discussion of findings on the data collected. It is discussed under the following sub-headings:

1. Objective One

(f) Procedure for Tree Acquisition in Tinto Forest Reserve near Abesewa in Ashanti Region.

(g) Non-Participatory Observation of Initial Dugout in Abesewa in the Ashanti Region.

(h) Observation of conveyance of dug-out (half-carved canoe) from the forest to the coast.

(i) Participant Observation of canoe construction at Prampram - Carving to Painting.

(j) Interview and Observation of types of canoes at the beach of Chorkor, Tema, Prampram, Akplapanya and Goi.

2. Objective two

(k) Identification, description and analysis of the *le/lele* into their artistic categories.

3. Objective three

(l) Analysis of studio work

This style of data treatment was appropriate because of the nature of the problem and objectives of this study.

The first part of the findings (mainly informative) is a narrative of the various procedures involved in the making of *lele/le*.

From one hamlet to the next, it became clear to me that as art works, the *lele/le* I sampled followed certain patterns and trends based on certain artistic consideration on the part of the canoe artists. Therefore I became conscious through my observations how the overall size of canoes dictated to the artists where and how to carve and paint the canoes. Hence the artist followed the panelling rule as the artistic nexus connecting the creation of *lele/le* and as a composite art. This formed the basis for the analysis the *lele/le* into what I termed artistic groups. Subsequently, graphical representation of each artistic group is made then followed by textual description.

In the third part, based upon the *lele/le* artistic categories and the subsequent rule underlying the artistic categories – panelling, the researcher analysed his 20 digitals paintings (studio findings) as visual interpretations of the *lele/le* artistic categories (field work findings).

## 4.2 Objective One Findings

### 4.2.1 Procedure for Tree Acquisition in Tinto Forest Reserve

Once an order is placed by a client to buy a dugout canoe, the canoe carvers under the supervision of the Canoe Carvers Association Secretariat start the procedure for the purchase of the log needed for the canoe. There are currently five (5) major forest

zones were the Wawa trees needed for the canoe are obtained. They include Ashanti, Eastern, Brong Ahafo, Central and Western regions of Ghana. Of these, the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo are the most populated with trees.

In order to fall the appropriate tree, Tree Hunters who are knowledgeable about the suitability of tree for canoe informs the canoe carvers where trees are available. The tree must be thick enough to give plenty of solid work or "meat" to work out the canoe. This is followed by tree acquisition application to District Officers in charge of the particular Forestry Service Division (where the tree is located). In this case, it was the Tinto Forest Reserve.

Land and Forestry Divisions in Ghana have been contracted to timber companies. Therefore before the acquisition of any permit from the Forestry Department Division, Range Supervisors accompany the carvers to ascertain whether or not the felling of the said tree will cause any severe/hazardous environmental consequence. When the Range Supervisors are convinced about the safeness of the tree felling then they determine the cost and taxes of the tree. The price and taxes on the tree is determined by size and closeness of the forest to the coast.

The permit is given out shortly after the payment of the amount is done. The cost of trees for canoe ranges from 500 Ghana Cedis to 2,000 Ghana Cedis.

### 4.2.2 Tree Felling

Chainsaw operators of the timber companies are contracted to do the falling of the tree. Trees within 10 to 50 meters radius of the Wawa tree to be cut (depending on the

size of the said tree) are first slash down. This is to prevent any casualty when the hewed Wawa tree is falling down. The roundest and less branched side (limb) of the Wawa tree becomes the base of the canoe hence the cutting is done in such a way to allow that side to fall on the ground. By so doing, the opposite side becomes the top side of the canoe (see plate 4.1).

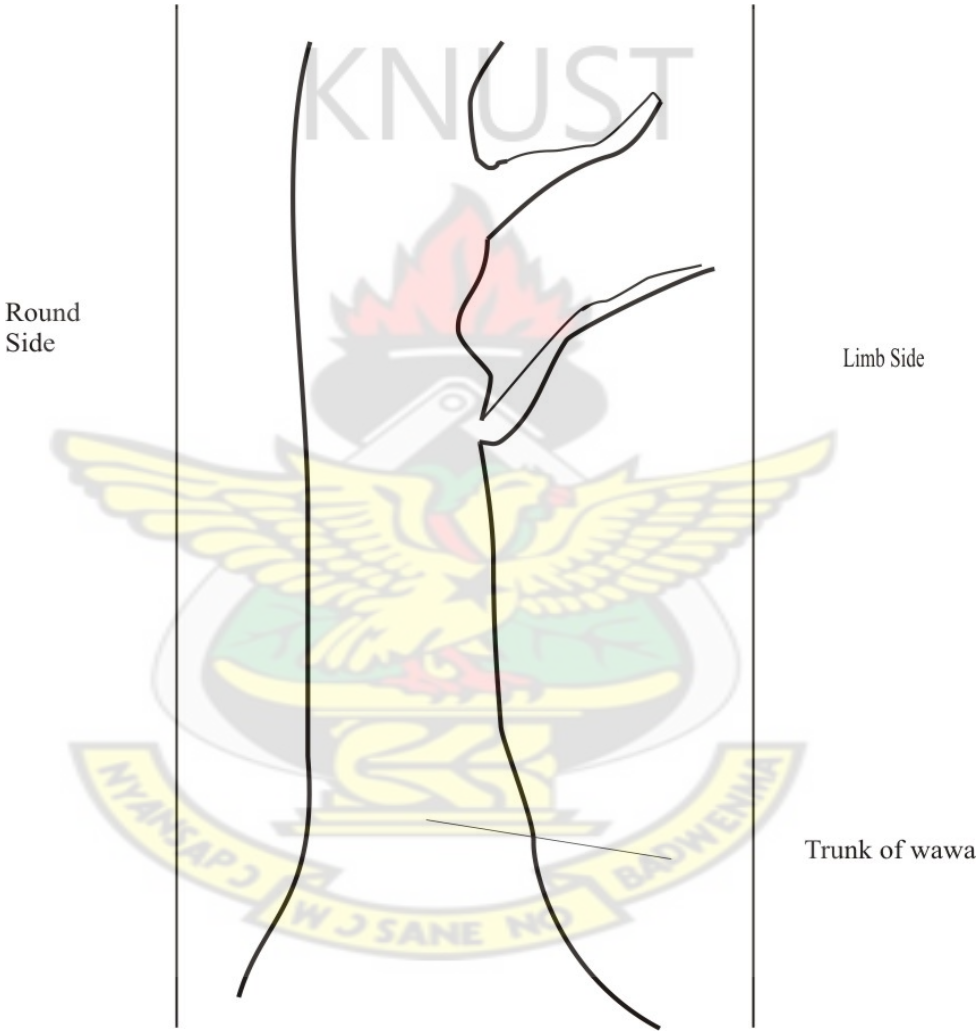



**Figure 4.1 Wawa Tree Showing Limb and Un-Limb Sides**

Branches and all unwanted protrusion on the trunk are cut with the chain saw. Checks are made to see whether there are any defects in the truck as result of landing on the

ground. Minor cracks in the log are acceptable. However, big cracks such as the one seen plate 4.1, rot and big knots may pose difficulties therefore are not used. When viewed horizontally, at least a quarter of the log from either ends – top or bottom - the truck should not contain any of such flaws.

**Plate 4.1 Wawa Log Showing Cracks in the Beam**

### 4.2.3 Initial Dug-out Carving

The dugout carving begins with the use of chain saw. It is a deductive sculpturing process. The carvers demarcate the shape and dimensions (the depth and the height) of the sculpting out on the log. Digging out starts from the approximate centre to

either ends as shown in figure 4.2 with a simple iron made tool known locally as "Asekuma" .

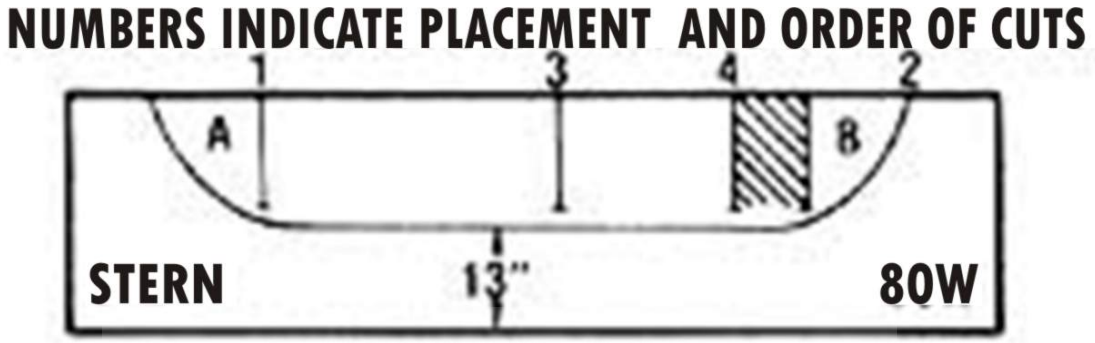





**Figure 4.2 Canoe Mark-Out for Placement and Order of Cuts**

Once this is done a tractor is employed to have the dugout dragged to a convenient carving site in the forest. This is done with the Monkey Jack. Both ends of the dugout canoes are cut in a pie-shaped to avoid chopping out excessively on the bow and stern.

The next thing done is to chainsaw the curved triangular sections (the shaded areas) on the canoe (see figure 4.3).


**Figure 4.3 The triangular Section "Chain Sawed"**

### 4.2.4 Rough Shaping

The “Tetrewa” and “Tinii” tools are used to give the vessel its basic contours. The dug-out section is further hollowed to smoothen the hulls interior and to reduce excessive thickness of the side (gunwale). The entire externals are also worked to get the shape as seen in plate 4.2.

**Plate 4.2 Finished Forest Carved Dug -Out Canoe**

Wooden props are then fixed across the hollow sections along the length of the dugout to prevent warping as the wood begins to dry.

### 4.2.5 Conveyance of the Dugout (Half-Carved Canoe)

Transportation of the half- carved canoes from the forest to the coast is not a simple procedure due to regulations regarding the felling and movement of logs (timber) in the forest zones of Ghana. Apart from this the actual loading of half-carved canoe on to a truck is a tedious manly work. The canoe carvers needed a loading and conveyance permit in order to transport the half carved canoe to the coast. Arrangements were made with a tractor and truck owners for the exercise. The carvers' day started with getting equipment, tools and food ready for work in the forest. The researcher was with them this morning just when lunch had been packed. The tractor driver had arrived but the truck driver was yet to come. The carvers waited for him by taking in some early morning palm wine. Immediately the truck driver arrived, the workers got ready to get on board. The researcher sat at the front with the driver (see plate 4.3).

**Plate 4.3 The Researcher with the Truck Driver in Front of Truck**

From Abesewa village to the Tinto forest will take about an hour and half drive using the usual direct route. Bad un-tarred road will not be conducive for this big truck, let alone when loaded with the canoes. Therefore the truck will have to go through Tepa in the Brong Ahafo Region and around some remote villages before finally reaching the Tinto Forest Reserve. Apart from the main Tepa township which is less vegetated, the whole region is thickly vegetated with tall forest trees, shrubs and foliage.

Perhaps fortune was not on our side that day as the truck got sunk in the muddy un-tarred road (see plate 4.4). Apparently the battery on the truck was weak. This did not stop these determined carvers as they quickly organized a mechanic and battery from the nearby village. It took something like almost three hours before we got to the Tinto Forest. By the time of reaching the Tinto Forest everybody including the researcher was very tired and hungry. The carvers took their lunch as well thought-out from morning time.

**Plate 4.4 Truck Sunk in the Muddy Un-tarred Road in Tepa**

There were 10 unfinished canoes in the forest with varying sizes and defects at our rival in the forest. (See plate 4.5)

**Plate 4.5 Some Unfinished Canoes in the Forest with Varying Sizes and Defects**

Soon work was about to begin. The first thing done was the tying of iron rope from the tractor to the bow or middle of the hull (see plate 4.6).

**Plate 4.6 Tying of Iron Rope from the Tractor to the Bow or Middle of the Hull**

Since two canoes were to be loaded, mounting of one canoe on another became very necessary in order to save time and cost. The smaller one was mounted on the bigger one. Short round beams of timber measuring about 150 cm diameters and between 1 – 3 m long were used as wheels for the smaller unfinished canoe to be mounted (hereafter canoe X) on the bigger unfinished canoe (hereafter known as canoe Y). The cavers rolled the beam wheels near the canoe X close to the bow or stern depending on which end was advantageous. (See plate. 4.7)

**Plate 4.7 Beam Made Wheels for Canoes**

The canoe Y was also made ready by supporting the hull; both sides, bow and stern with rectangular beams to make it steady and unwavering. In next to no time, the mounting process began. It was a gradual process. As the tractor moved to rolls the iron rope, the canoe X budged slowly on the beam wheels (see plate. 4.8)

**Plate 4.8 Canoe "X" Budges Slowly on the Beams**

Shifts in direction of canoe X were inevitable so when it occurred, the iron rope was removed and retied. Also, the iron rope became short as the tractor rolled it. Every now and then it was removed and retied as seen in plate 4.9.

**Plate 4.9 Continuous Tying and Untying of Canoe to Tractor**

This process continued little by little through the guidance of the carvers until canoe X was mounted onto canoe Y as seen in plate 4.10.

**Plate 4.10 Mounting of Canoe X unto Canoe Y almost Completed**

Once the mounting was over, the next was to load canoes X and Y unto the truck. Here again, big timbers were used as wheels for the canoes as shown in plate 4.14.

**Plate 4.11 Beam-Made Wheels for Canoe "X" and Canoe "Y"**

The tying of iron rope was done to canoe Y, the one beneath, then the rolling by the tractor started. At this point the truck was driven backward, close to the canoes X and Y. The canoes X and Y were then somewhat jerked with small logs to avoid falling off. See plate 4.12.

**Plate 4.12 Tying and Jerking of Canoe "X and" Canoe "Y"**

Another wheel was needed at the edge of the truck's back opening (door) in order to facilitate rolling of the canoe X and Y unto the truck. The carvers created it with a slender timber and tied it with thick nylon rope (see plate 4.13).

**Plate 4.13 Creation of Beam Wheel for the Truck**

When this was done, the tractor moved to the right side of the truck while the carvers once again tied the iron rope onto the tractor by the canoe Y.

A final set of rolling by the tractor then began. This gradually moved the canoes, with 2 supporting timbers, one on the ground and the other at the edge of the truck's back door opening, serving as swings (see plate 4.14).

**Plate 4.14 Final Stages of Loading Process**

Here again, the guidance of the carvers in this process was very vital. By policing the direction of the rolling and movement of the loading process, the canoes were finally positioned unto the truck. See plate 4.15.

**Plate 4.15 Dugout Canoe Loading Completed**

Once the canoes were loaded and with the transportation permit, the canoes were transported to the beach site where the buyer wanted to have them based.

### 4.2.6 Participant Observation of Canoe Construction at Prampram–

### From Plank Construction, Carving of Pictograms to Painting

As an art process involving sculpture and painting, the creation of a Ga and Adangbe canoe can be broken down into the following;

1. Making a dugout from a single log/timber in the forest (Forest Studio Carving)
2. Construction of planks and other extension, carving and painting of pictogram (Beach Studio Carving)

The previous sections outlined the first process. The following is a discussion about the second process.

There is what I discovered and termed “forest studio carving “and “beach studio carving”. The two are different. If it were possible, carvers will have finished carving every aspect of the canoe making process in the forest. Since this is not possible because of transportation constrains, the carving process begins in the forest but ends at the beach. Two parallel reasons account for this. As the canoes are transported from the forest to the shore in the trucks; the canoes receive knocks from bumping on the roads making them susceptible to cracks and splits. A certain level of thickness of the base/keel and sides of the canoes is therefore required to withstand this condition. For that reason carvers intentionally leave the canoe carving process unfinished (at dugout stage) with extra mass of wood to be carved at the shore. This simply indicates the carvers work did not finish in the forest.

Secondly, if canoes are susceptible to damage via transportation, perhaps the best option for carvers will then be to transport the whole log to the beach before carving. The carvers see this also as an increase in the weight hence increased cost of transportation. Also, once a fee has been charged for the felling of tree for canoe it must be carved to indicate such ends before leaving the forest not with a log. Consequently logs for canoes must be distinguished from logs for timber.

The work at the beach can therefore be grouped into four (4) stages.

1. **Fashioning out final size and shape of dugout.**

2. **Construction of sides (right and left elevations), thwart, gunwale, brackets, bow and stern.**
3. **Carving of pictograms on canoe sides, gunwales and other parts.**
4. **Painting of canoes and incised image and text pictograms.**

Only the second stage of the beach work requires carpentry tools. Tools used by `beach carvers are primarily carpentry tools but not for carpentry ends. Appropriately this should be referred to as "wood making tools". It is also true that majority of the carvers who do the construction aspect of the canoe are trained carpenters but they are now into canoe construction work which is enough to classify them as wood designers/artists.



#### 4.2.6.1 Fashioning Out Final Size and Shape of Dug-out

Once the dugout canoe reaches the shore, work begins on it as soon as the owner(s) engage(s) the work of a canoe carver/constructor who is popularly called canoe carpenters. As mentioned in the last section, dugouts reach the coast with excess thickness in gunwales and sides which has to be chopped out. The main tool used to do this is the "Tetrawa". See plate 4.16.

**Plate 4.16 Tetrewa -Tool for Smoothing Canoe**

While chopping off, care was taken not to over thin the walls and the base which serves as the platform for the construction of other parts. Smoothing and rounding up of the surfaces both inside and outside of the canoe ensures that the surface is ready to receive paints. In most cases the dugout parts reach the coast with some defects, like holes, cracks and rotes (see plate 4.17). These must be corrected at this point through various joining, patching and sealing techniques with wood and adhesives.

**Plate 4.17 Fashioning Out Final Size and Shape of Dugout with Tetrewa at Old Ningo**

#### 4.2.6.2 Construction of Sides, Gunwale, Thwart, Brackets, Bow and Stern

Like the main dug-out part, the sides, gunwale, thwart, brackets, bow and stern of the Ga-Adangbe canoe are constructed with Wawa beam size board. The bow and stern are firstly created by mounting beams at both ends of the dugout. The dugout sides receive the planking in layers of 1, 2 to 3 depending upon the type/size of the canoe being constructed. Before the planking starts, the wood workers measures the sizes

(length and thickness) of the canoes at both left and right sides, levels the pre-gunnels part to ensure that the Wawa boards and dugout parts are evenly matched. For instance, in the construction of a two planked canoe, the first board is mounted from the bow of both sides simultaneously until it reaches the stern. This involves mounting of boards, clamping it to the base dugout to ensure good fitting, bending and nailing the board to flow in the contours and curvature feature of the canoe shape at both ends.



Once the first board is mounted, the wood worker inserts a cutting saw horizontally in between the joint and saws through to create an even space then applies bitumen as adhesive in between the mounted board and dug-out. The second planking follows similar process to complete the planking. Since the thwarts serve as seats and they are lashed through the gunwale; it is the next to be constructed by cutting wawa board to lengths across the sides of the canoe. Once again depending upon the type of canoe there could be between 5 to 16 thwarts. The gunnels are then constructed by bracing the topmost sides and topmost edges of the canoe with a harder or tougher wood-normally “Odum” or “Danta”. This same wood type is used to construct the bracket - which holds the weight of outboard motor - and appended to right side of the canoe.

#### 4.2.6.3 Carving of Pictograms on Canoe Sides, Gunwales and Other Parts

Almost all the canoes observed across the entire coastal sites had pictograms and texts carved/incised in low relief on the gunwale before they were painted. The image pictograms and text carving processes are identical.

Low relief carvings are done with a pair of short cutlasses shaped to suit that purpose. The carver first draws and makes demarcations for the incising on the gunwale (both sizes) of the canoe. With the short cutlass and a wooden mallet the carver goes along the markings; incising approximately 90 degree straight cuts to lay the foundation of the carving process. The next step involves undercutting at an angle just about 45 degree which exposes the intended design or inscription, see plate 4.18.

**Plate 4.18 Drawing and carving of canoe pictogram**

Plate 4.19 shows the researcher participating in the carving of a design on a canoe.

**Plate 4. 19 Researcher at Work**

### 4.2.7 Painting of Canoes

Over and over again, Ga and Adangbe canoes have been painted to protect the plain wood from overly absorbing water and also to make the canoes into colourful art pieces. The draft which is largely the dugout part is painted first with bitumen. This serves as primer. In most fishing villages, this colour is maintained as the base colour for the canoe. In some cases however a different colour such as red paint is used to cover the bitumen. The main type of paint used is the enamel paint of different colours. The paint is usually applied flatly and in sections to follow the number of planking or colour band division choice of the artist. But generally, the lighter and brighter colours come at the top and supported at the base by darker colours. Since the

incised pictograms are always painted, different brush types- sable and bristle and sizes are used to effectively execute the painting process. The choice of paint colour depends upon the community the canoe is coming from or whether the canoe owner is following a tradition or desires to invent something new.

### 4.3 Objective Two Findings



#### 4.3.1 The Artistic Groups of Ga and Adangbe Canoes

What do I mean by artistic categories of canoe? This simply means a way of looking at canoe in terms of painting and sculpture genre congruently. It means observing canoe as a sculpture, a three dimensional mass occupying tangible space which can be apprehended through the physical senses because of its volume and ponderability as well as its visual appearance as a two dimensional surface with painterly characteristics. It is a fusion between tangible space created by physical mass and visually perceptible space and sometimes illusionary space. To do this implies thinking visually, artistically and theoretically about Ga and Adangbe canoes.

"Visually" requires seeing every part of the canoe structure that can be perceived through the sense of sight and touch and delineating possibly all inherent and peripheral visual elements such as pictograms of abstract and identifiable images, icons, symbols, carved and/or painted written texts. Though a functional sculpture-painting (composite) art object, the canoe has shapes, textures, smells, sounds and tastes which with acute visual senses can be deciphered. This is a bid to find out the ideas each part depicts visually, as particulars apart and then collectively to the configuration of the canoe as art. How images on the canoes relate to the written

words and what effect they have on the canoe. Suppose the physical mass of canoe was without those visual elements how would the canoe be viewed, visually? Undoubtedly, these concerns do not directly relate to hauling of fish because there are canoes which do not have well thought-out pictograms. Canoes of such sort have pictograms on their surfaces because it is the custom to have some form of identification and association.

The aforementioned concerns therefore bring Ga and Adangbe canoe into artistic ponderability, ready to be marked with and as particular type (of canoe) based on visually identified features. Artistically as part of cognitive, means considering the art properties of Ga and Adangbe canoes which make them expands knowledge acquisition and understanding of the Ga and Adangbe world. The question posed here is, what things present in the Ga and Adangbe canoe that defines our understanding of canoe as art? Is it only the artist and users? In others words, thinking artistically about Ga and Adangbe canoes implies taking into consideration the existence of canoe artists as makers of the canoe and audience like researchers who have expectations of art in canoe making since canoe artists consider themselves as artists but may have not been highlighted in relation to their works.

Finally, thinking theoretically about Ga and Adangbe canoes speaks of making sense of every experience, and explanation constructed about canoes. As a foregrounding to the descriptions of the artistic groups, figure 4.4 is a graphic description of the parts of the *lele/le*.

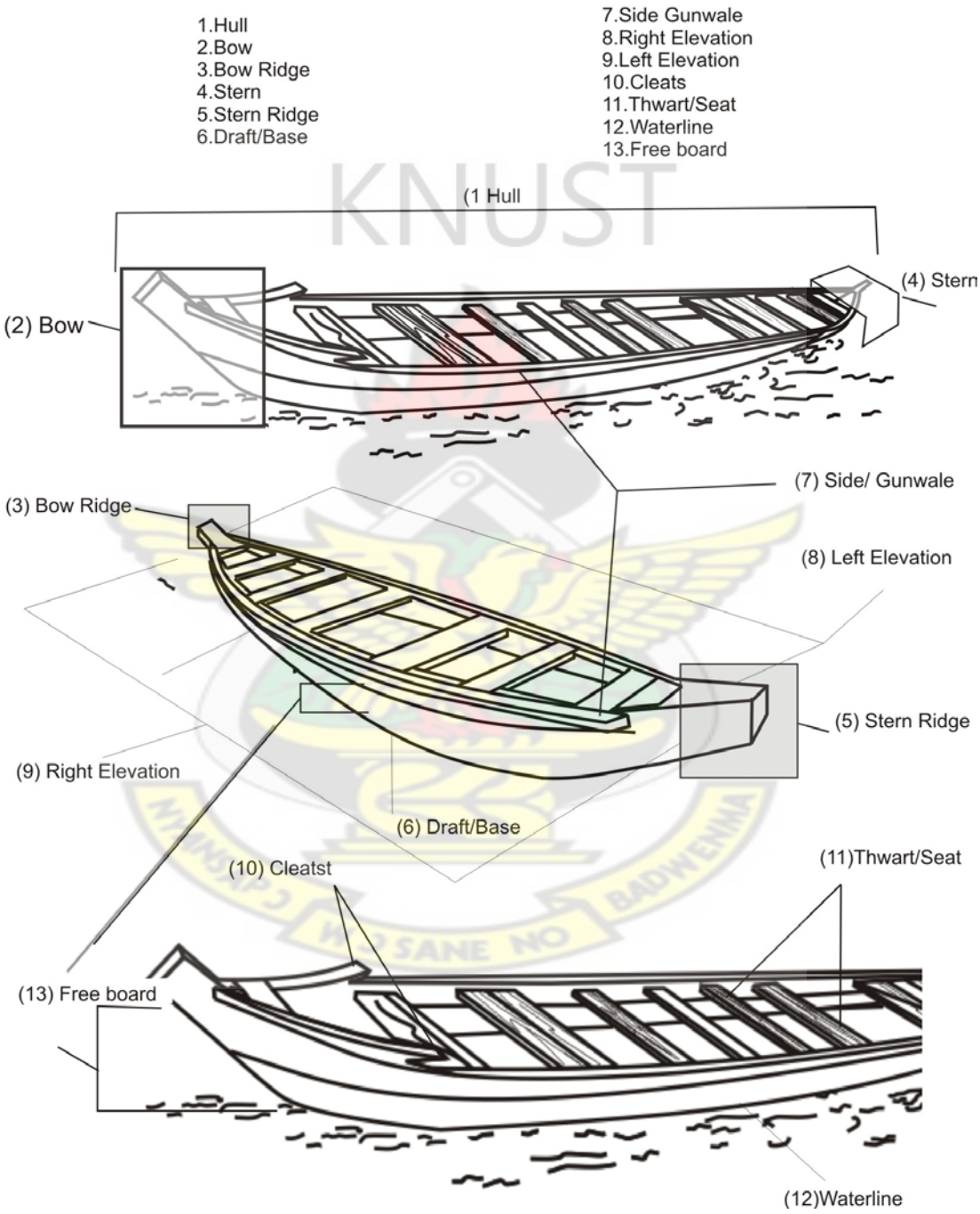



**Figure 4.4 Names of the Parts of a Dugout Canoe**

#### 4.3.1.1 Type One Canoe: Canoes Isotropic (Abasan Eten)

The first artistic group or category of canoes identified among the Ga and Adangbes have been named type one: Isotropic canoes or *abasaneten* (Ga). Apart from being the smallest canoes in terms of physical dimension they are the group with the most unsophisticated naming system and simplest pictogram variation.

Isotropic canoes are the "one man" canoes locally known as *leleko* (Ga) which is operated with set-line, and hook and line gears. They are between 8.4 - 8.5meters long and 1.15 -1.5 meters wide.

Plate 4.20 (a) is a graphical model of Type One Canoes: Isotropic Canoes. It is 8.4meters in length between outer edges. The stern ridge (1) and the bow ridge (2) are very much identical usually 0.2meters long and about 0.1 meter wide respectively. The width of 0.5meters at either ends, stern (1a) and the bow (2a), gradually increases to 1.5 meters in the middle part. The upper edge on either side with an interior and exterior thicker flange (3) made to strengthen the gunwale for the support of thwarts/seats (4) lashed through holes below the flange is a constant feature.

Plate 4.20(b), is a right elevation view, showing the relative distance ratio between gunwale (5), freeboard section (6) and the draft/base (7). The freeboard section of

isotropic canoe is narrow (0.3 meter) hence allowing only a single band into which carving and painting of pictograms is divided.

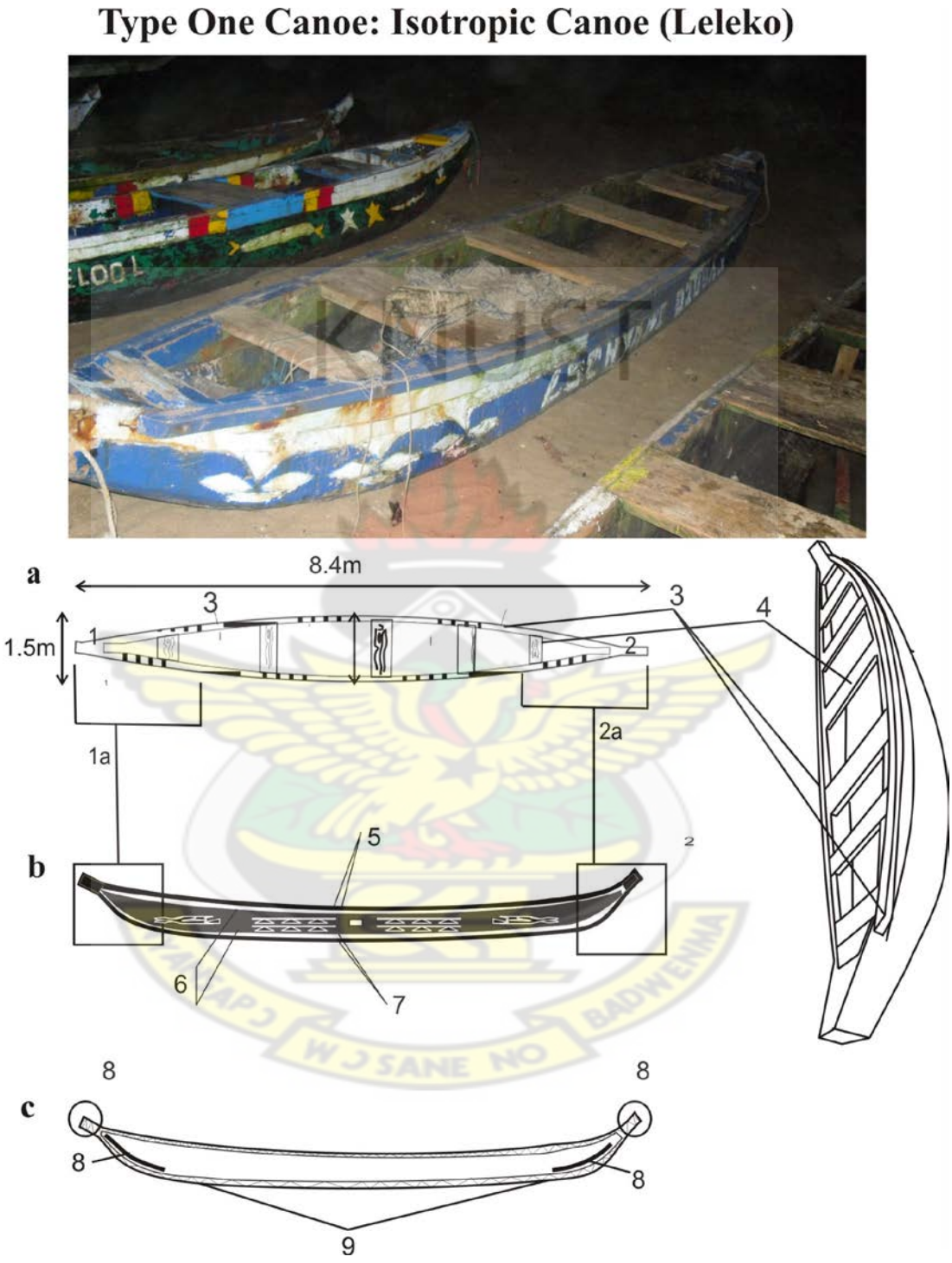



**Plate 4.20 A Graphical Model of Type One Canoe: Isotropic Canoe**

Plate 4.20 (c) depicts a longitudinal section through middle line, showing wall thickness for the various sections of the hull of the canoe.

The shallow forward bow and stern projections running back to a diagonal descent (8) to the draft part (9) characteristic of all Ga and Adangbe canoe give a narrowed crescent shape to isotropic canoes. The extended upward sloping bow and stern ends in elongated bulge with a constricted neck fashioned from the mounted log and retained as a characteristic feature (10 and 11). No wooden bracket for holding an outboard motor is on isotropic canoe.

The mass and shapes of wood on bow and stern ends of Isotropic canoes have equal (*Iso)* parts on either side and this is a distinguishing feature for Isotropic canoes. This makes Isotropic canoes consistently symmetrically balanced. The balanced is mostly remained intact by the corresponding *Isocomp* composition style of the band carving and painting the freeboards and gunnels of isotropic canoes receive. It possible to see isotropic canoes without any planking: the entire mass including the bow ridge and stern ridge is sculptured from a single log as seen in plate 4.21. The only constructed part is the thicken flange made to support the thwarts and as gunwale. In such cases, the free board is essentially part of the draft, the dugout of the wawa log. Hence the band art size is narrowed. On the other hand slender planking is the commonest trend now (see plate 4.22). This is done to raise the otherwise constricted height of both left

and right elevations of the hull. Also, the bow ridge and stern ridge become drafted-in appendage to the hull. They appear at both ends as constructed parts not as carved parts.

**Plate 4.21 "Un-planked" Isotropic Canoe**


**Plate 4.22 Planked Isotropic Canoe**

On the whole, tools employed in the carving and construction of Isotropic canoes includes the chain saw and hand saws for mass cutting of parts and shapes. Rough duty adzes and gouges are used in conjunction with the chain saw for the dugout stages and the "dressing stages" of the hull. Hammer, mallets, craw bars, "G" or "C"

Clamp, tape measure, and nails are the main tools for the construction stages of the Isotropic canoes. The next set of tools, chisels or old cutlasses which are shaped into knives of different sizes are used for incised carving of pictogram on the band sections of Isotropic canoes. Painting tools consisting of builders and artist brushes are then used to finish up Isotropic canoes.

Pictograms on isotropic canoes appear principally on the freeboards (which are actually part of the draft). They appear in conjunction with text. Of these, the pictograms are carved and painted whilst the text are written with paint alone. As mentioned earlier, the size and space for the pictograms are small, ranging between 0.23 – 0.33 meters in length and 0.002 – 0.001 meters in width depending on the overall length and breadth of the canoe. The pictograms appear mainly in one band especially for the un-planked Isotropic canoes but sometimes two bands are created for the planked Isotropic canoes as can be seen on plate 4.21 and plate 4.22.

Beside the freeboard pictograms, special painted bands of colures can be made on the gunwale, on the bow ridge or stern ridge (from the top and around it). This of cause is a rear occurrence. Plate 4.23 is a special band painting on the bow of an Isotropic canoe. Gunwales are also painted. Like other types of canoes, Isotropic canoes are finished up by painting them.


**Plate 4.23 Special Band Painting on the bow of an Isotropic Canoe**

**4.3.1.2 Type Two Canoe: Optimized Canoe (Mijalee)**

The second artistic group or category of canoes identified among the Ga and Adangbes has been named type two: Optimized canoes or *Mijalee* (Ga). This group is comparatively not wide-ranging in terms of physical dimension. Sizes of artistic group two canoes are between 10.7m and 10.9m long and 1.5m-1.8m wide. The space and placement of optimized canoes on the beaches and on the sea is a pleasure to ponder. They are second to isotropic canoes as the group with the most unsophisticated naming system and simplest pictogram variation.

Ga and Adangbe canoes which fall into this group are “Lagas” and “Go come” which operated set-line and hook and line gears. Lagas” and “Go come” canoes are between 10.7 - 10.9 m long and 1.5 - 1.8 m wide at the middle section of the hull. In terms or closeness of style and size, type three groups are similar to this group.

Plate 4.24 (a.) is a graphical model of Type Two Canoes: Optimized canoes. It is 10.7meters in length, between outer edges. The stern ridge (1) is 0.20m long and the similar part of the bow (2) is much longer, 0.30meters. The width of 0.5meters at either ends the bow (1a) and the stern (2a) gradually increase to 1.8 meters in the middle section of the hull. The upper edge (gunwale) of both the left and right elevations have thick bracing wood on either side (3) made to strengthen the gunwale for the support of thwarts/seats (4) lashed through holes below the flange.

## Type Two Canoe: Optimized (Mijalee)


**Plate 4.24 A Graphical Model of Type Two Canoe: Optimized Canoe**

Plate 4.24(b), is a right elevation view, showing the relative distance ratio between gunwale (5), freeboard section (6) and the draft/base (7). Between one to two bands of pictograms and text are possible on optimized canoes because the freeboard section (0.4 meter) of optimized canoe is broader than Isotropic canoes.

Plate 4.24(c) depicts a longitudinal section through middle line, showing wall thickness for the various sections of the hull of the canoe. As noticed in isotropic canoes, the shallow forward bow and stern projections running back to a diagonal descent (8) to the draft part (9) is characteristic of all *lele/le*. So, the same crescent shape is observed on optimized canoes. The same extended upward sloping bow and stern ends in elongated bulge with a long neck fashioned from the mounted log is retained as a characteristic feature (10 and 11). Wooden bracket for holding an outboard motor is always constructed on the right elevation side of optimized canoes (12).

The mass and shapes of wood on bow and stern ends of optimized canoes do not have equal sizes on either sides and this is a distinguishing feature for optimized canoes. Symmetrical balance is somehow achieved through an equal distribution of parts along the horizontal centre of the canoe. Corresponding carved and painted pictogram and text composition style of *opticomp* depicted on optimized canoes further enhance the balance in optimized canoes.

In considering the left and right elevations as supports, carved and painted pictogram and text appear on the free board section only when the planking on the optimized canoe is wider than the draft section. Refer to plate 4.25 optimized canoe (a) and plate 4.26, optimized canoe (b). On the other hand carved and painted pictogram and text appear on both the free board section and the draft section of optimized canoe when the planking is narrow. When this happens they appear in two bands. The


**Plate 4.25 Optimized Canoe a: free board section only pictogram**




**Plate 4.26 Optimized canoe b: free board section only pictogram**

pictograms and texts on the first band (beneath the gunwale) are mostly painted than carved and painted at the same time. It is uncommon to find pictograms and texts on other parts of optimized canoes such the gunwale and the front and back sections of the bow and stern respectively.

It not possible to find optimized canoes without any planking: they are always *optimized* by planking the entire mass including the bow ridge and stern ridge.

Planking for optimized canoe produces two conditions. When the overall length of the log is say 11 meters but the distance across it is just 1.5 meters, a planking of 0.30 meter breadth will make the whole free board section narrower than the draft with respect to the overall length of the canoe as seen in Plate 4.30, Optimized Canoe (b). But suppose a similar log with 11 meters overall length size had a width of I.9 meter, a required planking of 0.30 meter will produce an equal width size between the draft and the free board. See Plate 4.25, Optimized Canoe (a).



In most cases the tools employed in the carving and construction of optimized canoes include the chain saw and saws for mass cutting of parts and shapes. Rough duty adzes and gouges are used in conjunction with the chain saw for the dugout stages and the "dressing stages" of the hull. Hammer, mallets, craw bars, "G" or "C" Clamp, tape measure, and nails are the main tools for the construction stages of the Isotropic canoes. The next set of tools include, chisels or old cutlasses which are shaped into knives of different sizes are used for incised carving of pictogram on the band sections of optimized canoes. Painting tools consisting of builder's brushes and artist brushes are then used to finish up optimized canoes.

Pictograms on optimized canoes appear principally on the freeboard area when the planking is wider than the draft section. Conversely, pictograms appear on the draft section when the planking is narrower than the draft section. The pictograms always appear in juxtaposition with text. The pictograms and text on draft section are carved and painted (see plate 4.27 Optimized Canoe (c) and plate 4.28 Optimized Canoe (d)) whilst the pictogram and text on freeboard section are drawn with chalk and painted

alone (refer to plate 4.25 and plate 4.26). Like isotropic canoes, pictogram and text on optimized canoes appear mainly in one continuous band composition structure. The only difference is, because optimized canoes are not very identical at both ends

**Plate 4. 27 Optimized canoe (c) free board section and draft section pictogram**


**Plate 4.28 Optimized Canoe (d) draft section only pictogram**

symmetric balance in the band is only achieved by off-setting it from the gravitational centre.

A startling feature to note is that it is very unlikely to see optimized canoes which are bigger in size than isotropic canoes having double band pictogram/text compositional structure even though the constant planking creates a double panel structure.

#### 4.3.1.3 Type Three Canoe: Orthotropic Canoes (Tronmoor)

The third artistic group or category of canoes identified among the Gas and Adangbes has been named type three: Orthotropic Canoes or *Tronmoor* (Ga). Judging from their sizes which are between 13.4 m and 11.2m long and 1.7m - 2.1m wide, this group is comparatively wide-ranging. The large size of optimized canoes on the beaches and on the sea makes them prominent to ponder their presence as painted sculptural art works. They are second to Hydrostatic canoes as the group with the most sophisticated naming system and composite pictogram variation.

In local name terms, Ga and Adangbe canoes which fall into this group are Ali, Poli, Nifanifa and the gears operated in them are Beach Seine, Drift and Gillnet. These canoes are between 13.4 m to 11.2m long and 1.7 - 2.1m wide at the middle section of the hull. In terms or closeness of style and size, type four groups are similar to this group.

Plate 4.29(a) is a graphical model of Type Three Canoe: Orthotropic Canoe or *Tronmoor* (Ga). It is 11.7meters in length, between outer edges of the hull. The stern ridge (1) is 0.40m long and the similar part of the bow (2) is slightly longer, 0.45meters. The width of 0.7 meters at ends, the bow (1a) and the stern (2a) gradually increase to 2.1 meters in the middle section of the hull. The upper edge (gunwale) of both the left and right elevations have thick bracing wood on either side (3) made to

strengthen the gunwale for the support of thwarts/seats (4) lashed through holes below the flange.

# Type Three Canoe: Orthotropic (Trormoor)

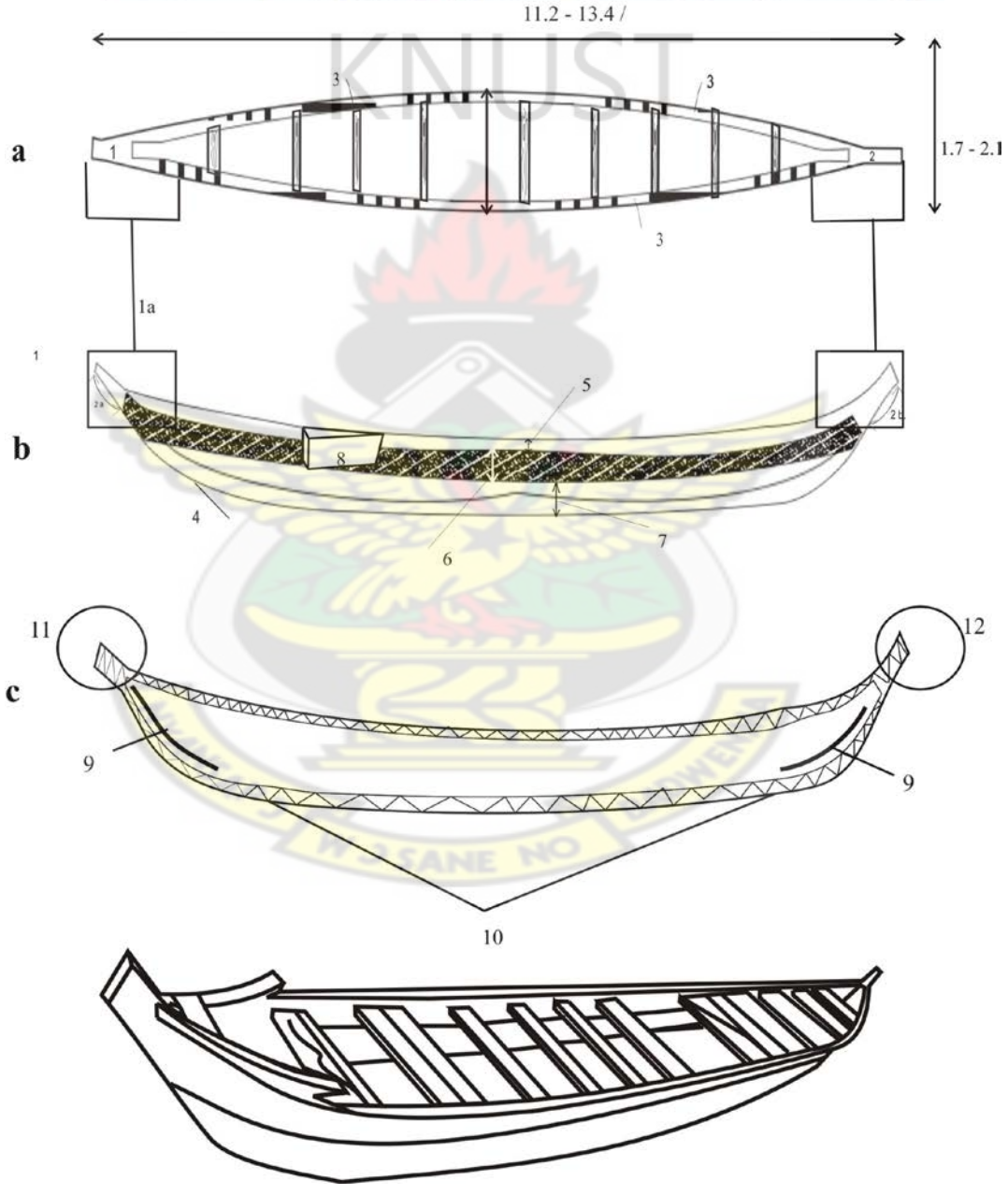



**Plate 4.29 A Graphical Model of Type Three Canoe: Orthotropic Canoe or Tronmoor (Ga)**

Plate 4.29(b), is a right elevation view, showing the relative distance ratio between gunwale (5), freeboard section (6) and the draft/base (7). One, two and three bands of pictograms and text are possible on orthotropic canoes because the freeboard section (0.8 meter) of orthotropic canoe is broader than Isotropic and optimized canoes. Wooden bracket for holding an outboard motor is always constructed on right elevation side of optimized canoes (8).

Plate 4.29(c) depicts a longitudinal section through middle line, showing wall thickness for the various sections of the hull of the canoe. Like in isotropic and optimized canoes, the shallow forward bow and stern projections running back to a diagonal descent (9) to the draft part (10) is characteristic orthotropic canoes. The diagonal descent of the stern and bow forms a crescent shape on orthotropic canoes. The extended upward sloping bow and stern ends as elongated board from the mounted logs and retained as a characteristic feature (11 and 12). The mass and shapes of wood on bow and stern ends of orthotropic canoes do not have equal sizes on either side and this is a distinguishing feature for orthotropic canoes. Symmetrical balance is somehow achieved through an equal distribution of parts along the horizontal axis of the canoe as in optimized canoes. Corresponding carved and painted pictogram and text composition style of *orthocomp* depicted on orthotropic canoes further enhance the balance in orthotropic canoes.

Orthotropic canoes are always planked. Planking of orthotropic canoe produces the same situation always: The planking plus the gunwale on one side and the draft on the other side divides both the left end right elevation of the hull into two equal halves horizontally. See plate 4.30.


**Plate 4.30 Orthotropic Canoe Showing Hull Divisions into Two Equal Halves Horizontally**

Pictograms of various kinds appear on the left and right elevations of orthotropic canoes. More than ninety per cent (90 %) of all pictograms on orthotropic canoes are both carved and painted. This is as a result of the relative thick nature of the wall of orthotropic canoes. Unlike isotropic and optimized canoes, pictograms on orthotropic canoes mainly appear on the free board section because there is wide space created by the large boards used for the planking. Thus most often than not free board sections of orthotropic canoes are wide as the draft section or slightly wider than the draft section. As a result of the wider freeboard section of orthotropic canoes, hand carved and painted pictograms and texts which appear on the left and right elevations are divided into two or more bands. Mostly the first band (from the gunwale) are text and

the subsequent ones beneath are a combination of both text and image pictograms. When pictograms and texts are depicted relatively smaller in size, they are often written than carved. It is not uncommon to find pictograms and texts on other parts of orthotropic canoes such the gunwale and the front and back sections of the bow and stern respectively.

Tools employed in the carving and constructions of orthotropic canoes include the chain saw and saws for mass cutting of parts and shapes. Rough duty adzes and gouges are used in conjunction with the chain saw for the dugout stages and the "dressing stages" of the hull. Hammer, mallets, craw bars, "G" or "C" Clamp, tape measure, and nails are the main tools for the construction stages of the orthotropic canoes. Chisels or old cutlasses which are shaped into knives of different sizes are used for incised carving of pictogram on the band sections of optimized canoes are the next set of tools. Painting tools consisting of builder's brushes and artist brushes are then used to finish up orthotropic canoes.

Pictograms on orthotropic canoes appear principally on the freeboard area because they have a wide space enough to contain the pictograms. Pictogram and text on orthotropic canoes appear mainly in two continuous band composition structures. From beneath the gunwale, the first band is usually loosely packed with pictogram, especially text, whiles the second band is usually packed with a combination of text and image pictograms. See plate 4.31.


**Plate 4.31Orthotropic Canoe Showing Pictogram Loosely Arranged on Hull**

**4.3.1.4 Type Four Canoe: Hydrostatic Canoes (Kakadaan)**

The fourth artistic group or category of canoes identified among the Ga- Adangbes has been named type four: hydrostatic canoes or *Kakadaan* (Ga). This group is comparatively wide-ranging in terms of physical dimension. Sizes of artistic group four are between 15.7m and 16.20 m long and 2.00m - 2.20m wide. The space and placement of hydrostatic canoes on the beaches and on the sea is a delight to contemplate. They are the group with the most sophisticated naming system and pictogram variation. Ga and Adangbe canoes which fall into this group are Poli and watsa which operated watsa, poli/sieve and achikinaoye. Poli and watsa canoes are between 10.7 - 10.9 m long and 1.5 - 1.8 m wide at the middle section of the hull. In terms or closeness of style and size, type three groups are similar to this group.

Plate 4.32 (a) is a graphical model of Type Four Canoes: hydrostatic canoes. It is 16.20 meters in length, between outer edges. The stern ridge (1) is 0.42m long and the similar part of the bow (2) is a little longer, 0.46 meters. The width of 0.9meters at either ends the bow (1a) and the stern (2a) gradually increase to 2.20 meters in the

middle section of the hull. The upper edge (gunwale) of both the left and right elevations have thick bracing wood on either side (3) made to strengthen the gunwale for the support of thwarts/seats (4) lashed through holes below the flange.

Plate 4.32 (b) is a right elevation view, showing the relative distance ratio between gunwale (5), freeboard section (6) and the draft/base (7). The freeboard section (0.8 meter, maximum) of hydrostatic canoe makes it possible for up to two or three bands of pictograms and text.



## Type Four Canoe: Hydrostatic Canoe (Kakadaan)

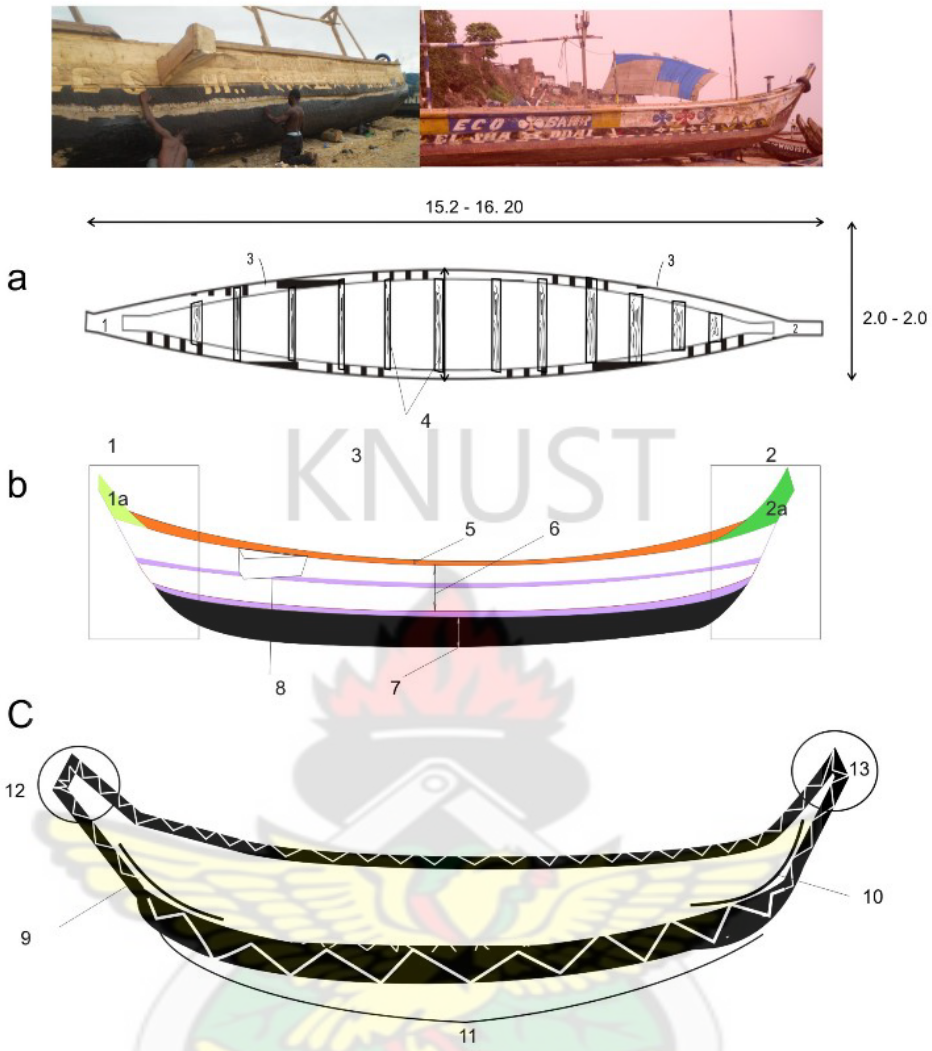



**Plate 4.32 A Graphical Model of Type Four Canoe: Hydrostatic Canoe**

In terms of broadness of freeboard space, hydrostatic canoes are the broadest. This is enhanced by narrow stripes of boards, normally harder wood other than wawa, which serves as joints between the planking. This is indicated by the violet strips in plate 4.32 (b). Wooden bracket for holding an outboard motor is always constructed on right elevation side of optimized canoes (8).

Plate 4.32 (c) depicts a longitudinal section through middle line, showing wall thickness for the various sections of the hull of the canoe. The hemispherical shape characteristic of all Ga and Adangbe canoes affected by the forward bow and stern projections running back to diagonal descent (9) and to the draft part (10) is much deeper in hydrostatic canoes than in isotropic, optimized and orthotropic canoes. This is of cause as a result of the relative big dimensions of hydrostatic canoes. The mass of wood forming the draft section is much thicker (11). As usual the extended upward sloping bow and stern ends in elongated bulge with a long neck fashioned from drafted logs. This neck is retained as a distinctive feature (12 and 13).

The mass and shape of wood on bow and stern ends of hydrostatic canoes have equal sizes on either side yet they are not identical in positioning in the open space. The stern appear higher in space than the bow. The even distribution of parts along the horizontal axis of the canoe's left and right elevations achieves balance asymmetrically. Corresponding carved and painted pictograms and texts composition style of *Hydrocomp* depicted on hydrostatic canoes further enhance the balance in hydrostatic canoes.

Hydrostatic canoes are always planked. Their relative large dimension requires thicker and wider boards for the planking. Besides, narrow strips of harder wood are positioned in between the planking to serve as firm joints for the planking. The planks therefore could range between two to three plank divisions. The middle section of the either elevations normally have the least number of planking boards because the draft width is bigger at the middle section and narrow bow and stern. The left and right

elevations as supports for carved and painted pictogram and text of hydrostatic canoes are very different from all the other groups of canoes in one distinctive feature: the free board space is always wider than the draft section. See hydrostatic canoes in Plate 4.33(a) and Plate 4.34 (b).


**Plate 4.33 Type Four Canoe: Hydrostatic Canoe (a)**


**Plate 4.34 Type Four Canoes: Hydrostatic Canoe (b)**

As a result of the wider freeboard section, pictograms appear on mainly the free board in two or three bands. Again the wider space area allow for more elaborate pictograms of both carved and painted images on one side and only painted pictogram. Like the other three groups of Ga and Adangbe Canoe groups, pictograms of images and texts

can be seen on other parts of hydrostatic canoes such as the gunwale and the front and back sections of the bow and stern.

Carving and construction tools used for hydrostatic canoes include the chain saw and saws for mass cutting of parts and shapes. Mostly, rough duty adzes and gouges are used in conjunction with the chain saw for the dugout stages and the “dressing stages” of the hull. Hammer, mallets, craw bars, “G” or “C” Clamps, tape measure, and nails are the main tools for the construction stages of the hydrostatic canoes. The next set of tools include, chisels or old cutlasses which are shaped into knives of different sizes are used for incised carving of pictogram on the band sections of hydrostatic canoes which are shaped into knives of different sizes are used for incised carving of pictogram on the band sections of hydrostatic canoes. Painting tools consisting of builder’s brushes and artist brushes are then used to finish up hydrostatic canoes.

More than ninety five per cent (95%) of the pictograms on hydrostatic canoes are seen on the freeboard area- left and right elevations. Like orthotropic canoes, pictogram and text on hydrostatic canoes appear mainly in two to three continuous band composition structures. The only difference between orthotropic composition structure and that of hydrostatic canoes is as started earlier, the freeboard; space of hydrostatic canoes are always larger than the draft space. Hence the visual elements composed on hydrostatic canoes are triangular whereas that of orthotropic are rectangular. Just as identified in optimized and orthotropic canoes, hydrostatic canoes are not identical at both ends so balance in the bands of pictograms are achieved asymmetrically by off-setting it from the gravitational centre. Like other type of canoes, hydrostatic canoes are finished by painting on them.

### 4.3.2 Ga and Adangbe Canoe Pictogram Composition Classification

This section outlines the various groups of compositional structures into which pictograms on Ga and Adangbe canoes are organized. Considering only the left and right elevations of the canoes as pictorial planes, four compositional structures groups are identified which corresponds to the four groups of canoes identified earlier on in this chapter. They are *Isocomp, Opticomp, Orthocomp and Hydrocomp*. There are many overlaps within these four compositional structures but there are enough distinctive features which separate them from each other.

#### 4.3.2.1 Isocomp

Isocomp is an abridged of Isotropic composition. It refers to the general style of composition of visual elements (pictograms) found on isotropic canoes. Isotropic canoes are the smallest. Their small dimensions insure that the visual elements are depicted diminutively, compared to other canoe composition styles. The size and space for the pictograms are small, ranging between 0.23 – 0.33 meters in length and 0.002 – 0.001 meters in width depending on the overall length and breadth of the canoe. Isocomp is structurally a one band interlacing of pictograms which run along the entire surface of both draft and freeboard space of the left and right elevations of isotropic canoes. Even though the pictograms appear mainly in one band especially for the un-planked isotropic canoes sometimes two bands are created for the planked Isotropic canoes as can be seen on plate 4.35, Isotropic Composition (a) and plate 4.36. Isotropic Composition (b).

**Plate 4.35 Canoe with Isotropic Composition (a)**

**Plate 4.36 Canoe with Isotropic Composition (b)**

Distinctive feature for *isocomp* lies in the identical nature of the flow of pictograms on the left and right elevations of the hull. Thus whatever visual elements found on the left elevation can be traced on the right elevation almost the same way as in the left elevation. In plate 4.35, the text “Yes Cocoa No.1”; on the first band, at the far right, and the pictogram of scorpion, abstracted leaves and the text “She Adesan Gbeye…… God Dey” evenly spread along the second band of the left elevation is repeated “isometrically” on the right elevation as seen in plate 4.36.

Plate 4.37 and plate 4.38 have two bands of pictorial space. The first band on the left elevation is made of only broad stripes of yellow, blue and yellow paints. They are painted in the optical centre of the hull's free board. Next and beneath is the second band with the carved and painted text "Ye Muwu Blu" positioned in the first half of the band and then followed by pictograms of abstracted leaves positioned to the second half of the band. The same sequence of composition is followed in the right elevation of the hull.



**Plate 4.37 Isotropic Composition with Two Band Pictorial Space (a)**




**Plate 4.38 Isotropic Composition with Two Band Pictorial Space (b)**

### 4.3.2.2 Opticomp

Opticom is an abridged of optimized composition. The term is used here to stand for the general style of composition of visual elements (pictograms) found on optimized canoes. As the third largest group of canoes in terms of physical dimension, optimized canoes' visual elements are depicted relatively small, compared to orthocomp and hydrocomp composition styles. Opticom is structurally a two band interlacing of pictograms which run along the entire surface of both draft and freeboard space of the left and right elevations of Ga and Adangbe optimized canoes. Since all optimized canoes are planked, two significant situations results. The free board section can either be wider than the draft section or vice versa. When the planking on the optimized canoe is wider than the draft section carved and painted pictograms including text appear on the free board section only. See plate 4.39 optimized canoe (a) and plate 4.40 optimized canoe (b).


**Plate 4.39 Optimized Canoe (a): Free Board Section Only**


**Plate 4.40 Optimized Canoe (b): Free Board Section Only Pictogram**

On the other hand carved and painted pictograms and texts appear on both the free board section and the draft section of optimized canoe when the planking is narrow. When this happens, the first band (beneath the gunwale) is mostly painted than carved and painted at the same time. However the second band is always both carved and painted. See plate 4.41 optimized canoe (c) and plate 4.42optimized canoe (d).

**Plate 4.41 Optimized Canoe (C): Free Board Section and Draft Section Pictogram**


**Plate 4.42 Optimized Canoe (D): Draft Section Only Pictogram**

The distinctive feature of opticom lies in the regularity of one band flow of juxtaposed pictograms of images and text; where the free board is wider than the draft section on one hand and on the other hand the constancy of the two band pictograms where the planking is narrow, in which case the first band is only painted and the second band is both carved and painted. This artistic decision is so consistent with most canoe pictogram artists. They reason that the wall thickness of planks on optimized canoes which range between 0.23m – 0.25 m unlike the draft section which is much thicker

(0.4m – 0.5 m) will be defected when incised with pictograms hence only painting of pictogram on the planks is the best way-out.

Besides this feature, visual element forming opticom are mostly loosely composed on either elevations of the Ga and Adangbe optimized canoe hull. In plate 4.45, there are considerable space between the first pictogram, stylized big eye in red and white and that of the next text pictogram "Wala Wofoo". These come before the central pictogram of abstracted forms is balanced with arrow and snake pictogram at the far right corner in the second band on the draft. The same sense of looseness is observed in plate 4.42. It seems this is both an intentional calculated artistic choice aimed at creating freedom around the relatively small size canoe.

**4.3.2.3 Orthocomp**

The third compositional structure is *orthocomp*. It is a truncated form for orthotropic composition. The term is used here to stand for the general style of composition of visual elements (pictograms) found on orthotropic canoes. As the second largest group of canoes in terms of physical dimension, orthotropic canoes' visual elements are depicted relatively big, compared to isocomp and opticomp composition styles. Orthocomp is also a two band structure but its' interlacing of pictograms run along only the second band's entire surface of the freeboard space of either elevations of Ga and Adangbe orthotropic canoes. One major distinct feature of orthocomp is this: the planking plus the gunwale on one side and the draft on the other side divides both the left and right elevations of the hull into two equal halves horizontally. In plate 4.43, the distance of the space just beneath the gunwale across the first planking to the edge

of the second planking is exactly the same as the distance from the tip of the draft to the bottom where the keel/base of the canoe touches the ground.


**Plate 4.43 Canoe with Opticomp Composition style**

Two features result from this observation. The planks of wood on orthotropic canoes unlike isocomp and opticomp canoes are thicker (0.6m – 0 .7m). Secondly, they are wider enough to receive relatively large size pictogram than isotropic and optimized canoes. Thus most often than not free board sections of orthotropic canoes are as wide as the draft section or slightly wider than the draft section. As a result of the relative thick nature of the wall (planks) of orthotropic canoes and the wide freeboard space, pictograms on orthotropic canoes appear mainly on the free board section.

The orthocomp hand carved and painted pictogram and text which appear on the left and right elevations are divided into two or more bands. Mostly the first band (from the gunwale) are text and the subsequent ones beneath are a combination of both text

and image pictograms. When pictograms and texts are depicted relatively smaller in size, they are often written than carved.

From the stern to the bow, the structure of orthocomp can be described as a metrical play of text on flat painted space at one end, image pictogram centred in the optical centre of the first band and balanced again with text on flat painted space reminiscent of the first one at the other end. Then the second band repeats the rhythmic drama but this time more densely packed with variety of visual elements. This arrangement can be illustrated graphically as seen in plate 4.44.

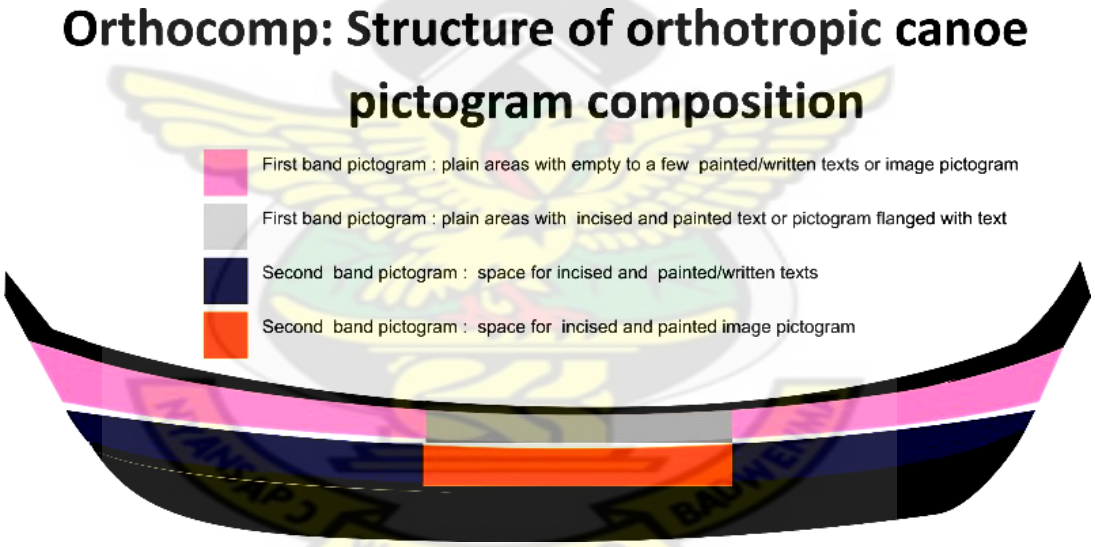



**Plate 4.44 Graphical Illustration of Orthocomp**

The pictograms in the second band of orthocomp always start with an image pictogram, mostly the image “snake and arrow” followed by a text and ends the same way as it started. In the same way mostly when the first band starts with a text, it most likely ends with a text. Plate 4.45 orthotropic canoe (a) and 4.46 orthotropic canoe (b)

show this trade off. The cardinal orientation in this composition is the centrality of its structure which is achieved by consistently repeating identical incised and painted texts and images at either ends of the hull around a centralized text or image.


**Plate 4.45 Orthotropic canoe (a): Orthotropic Composition Style Starting and Ending with "Snake and Arrow"**


**Plate 4.46 Orthotropic canoe (b): Orthotropic Composition Style Starting and Ending with "Text"**

### 4.3.2.4 Hydrocomp

The fourth compositional structure group identified among the Ga and Adangbe canoes is *hydrocomp.* It is a shortened form for hydrotropic composition. The term is used here to stand for the general composition style of visual elements (pictograms)

found on hydrotropic canoes. In terms of physical dimension, hydrotropic canoes' visual elements are depicted relatively biggest. This is because this group has the biggest dimension for canoes. Hydrocomp is basically a two band structure but in few cases three bands are noticed.

Like orthocomp, visual elements forming the first band in hydrocomp are mostly widely spaced. On some hydrotropic canoes, there are no pictograms at all: only painted bands of say three to four colours are seen. In plate 4.47, the first band has nothing either than the centralized yellow, blue and yellow band of colours. The text that follows is at the furthest end of the band. However the second band is slightly closely packed with image and text pictograms than the first band. Plate 4.48 is a better demonstration of the compact nature of the second band in hydrocomp. Here, the crowding nature of snake fish pictogram, the text "ABUIKAA", stylized "M" as part of the text "MOBINT", a stool tag along with "IYIEM" and all together bracketed in a "less than" and "greater than" pictograms, then followed by a more elaborated abstract pictograms till it ends in the snake fish pictogram again, leaves little room for the eye to rest when observing this composition.


**Plate 4.47 Hydrocomp with Centralized Yellow, Blue and Yellow Band of Colours**


**Plate 4.48 Hydrocomp with Compact Pictogram**

Again, plate 4.49, which is rather a three band pictogram composition, presents a complex variety of imagery. Each band is unique in that different aspect of Ga-Adangbe visual element (pictograms) is laid analogously. Band one (1) shows adopted exotic sign: spade painted in red, blue and yellow alongside the text "NYONMO FEE" and a bird. The spade pictogram in white paint is centralized in the first panel by the text "NANMO ALEE". By Ga and Adangbe visual elemental grouping, the animal kingdom, animate things, as in fish is combined with inanimate

spade flanged in a text, “NANMO ALEE” question. Thus, three visual elemental groups appear in one band even though it is the most widely spaced band.


**Plate 4.49 Hydrocomp with Complex Variety of Imagery**

The second band also has three elemental groups; one, abstracted shapes of plant parts, two, animal and three, stylized text. Here too tradition is repeated. From stern to bow almost every cubic space is occupied with these pictograms interlacing each other along the entire surface of the freeboard space of either elevations of this Ga and Adangbe hydrotropic canoe. The point of interest and significance in this second band compared with the first band is the relationship created at the one third segments away from the centre at either side by the breaking into of the flat rigidly painted white colour in the first band and the second band.

The space of the draft section of hydrostatic canoes on one side compared to the planking and the gunwale on the other is always narrower. And since the paint colour of the draft divides the left and right elevation of the hull into two equal halves horizontally, the wider freeboard space of the hydrostatic canoes is emphasized. This

condition provides the major characteristic feature of hydrocomp. That is, the pictorial outlook of the free board section has a domineering character over the draft part which holds it in the open space, hence its impact over the whole artistic appeal of this Ga and Adangbe canoe group. The structure of hydrocomp from stern across the whole surface of the free board to the bow can be described as a freeboard domineering elemental visual pictogram over a supporting draft in open space. The freeboard's pictogram dominance is centralized like other compositions. The most important pictogram is always placed in the optical centre of the first or second band. This arrangement can be illustrated graphically as seen in plate 4.50.

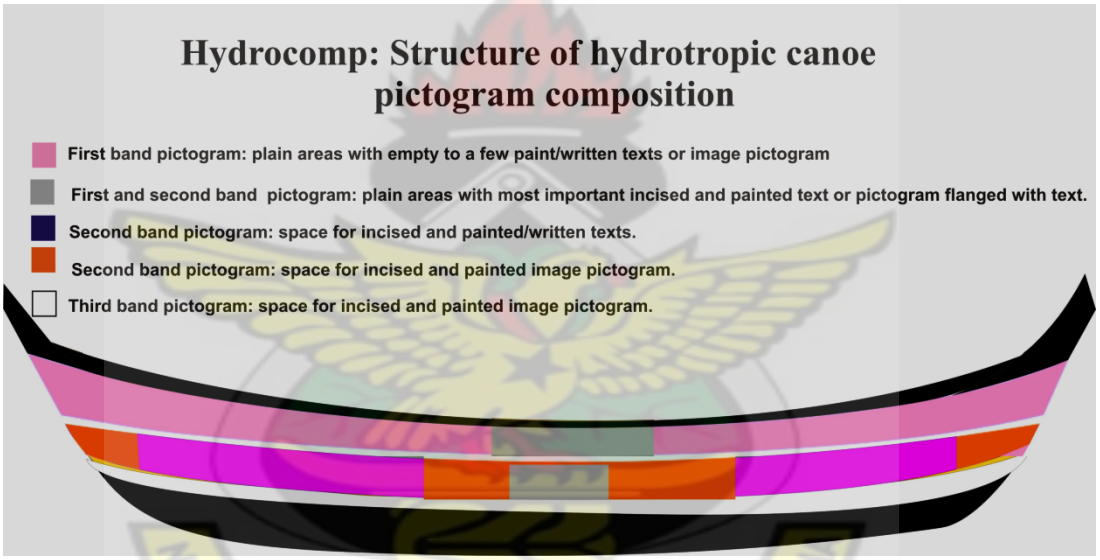



**Plate 4.50 Graphical Illustration of Hydrocomp**

As in orthocomp the pictograms in the second band of hydrocomp always start with an image pictogram, mostly the image "snake and arrow" followed by a text and end the same way as it started. Plate 4.47 and plate 4.48 illustrate this attribute.

### 4.3.3 Ga and Adangbe Canoe Visual Elements: Pictograms; Introduction

This section deals with the identification and grouping of all the motifs including text, which were observed on the surfaces of Ga and Adangbe canoes. Two major issues are discussed. Firstly, the discussion dealt with the preference of the terminology "pictogram" over "symbol". In a succinct way, the researcher explains that the term pictogram is safer to handle in this context since his interest lies basically in the artistic grouping of the marks not in the understanding of the meanings assigned to the marks made on the canoes by the natives. Having cleared that issue the discussion moves further in to the identification and categorization of the visual elements.



#### 4.3.3.1 Ga and Adangbe Canoe marks as Symbols or Pictograms

The painted or carved and painted images: schematized non-representational (abstract) designs of human, animal and plant motifs that appear on the surfaces of Ga and Adangbe canoes are the visual elements or pictograms in this context. These marks are mostly referred to as symbols. The use of the terms "symbol" and "symbolism" begs for interpretation. In this dissertation therefore pictogram is preferred because the researcher's interest is more in the identification and categorization of the images than in their interpretation. As pointed out by Verrips (2002), interpretation of motifs on Ga and Adangbe canoes is more polarized that, hardly will any particular pictogram be interpreted the same way depending on which town or person you talk with among other several factors. The researcher's interaction with the various individuals and groups in Ga and Adangbe affirms this fact.

Another reason is that attempt to interpret canoe art forms exclusively based on symbols tends to be too semiotic rather than aesthetic (artistic). As in music, one

needs not to understand Spanish to enjoy a good Spanish music. If the language as symbol is not deciphered the rhythm and texture of the voice and instrumentation has a way of communicating the art in the music to the listener once it is a good music. Thus good art is a communicator of artistic meaning irrespective of symbolic codes.

Besides the aforementioned facts, the primary aim and the most important of all the reasons behind any canoe motif is to make the identity of the canoe as owned by a particular person or family explicit. That a canoe belongs to this person or family so marks should show that the ownership of that canoe is different from the next canoe by it is the primary reason for incising and painting motifs on canoes. Historical evidence shows the earliest motifs on canoes where mainly "symbols" borrowed from clan totems, and shrine gods as found on flags, family house gates and walls. For instance in plate 4.55, Ataa Quaye (informant), a fisher folk, explained to me that, Y2K, a canoe owned by Nii Ayi Quaye is a slogan for their canoe. The real name of the canoe is "NOKO YE DZEN" which is the name of the central motif that appears in the second band of either elevation on the freeboard. This motif was used by their forefathers without the text "NOKO YE DZEN". However, it was identified by the people contemporary to it as belonging to families of the *Klan We*, the Asene Clan, one of the 7 clans of the Ga Mashie Ethnic people. With the passage of time, text pictograms where introduced as influence from European ships that came to the shores of Ghana earlier on in the 19$^{th}$ Century, interpretations of accounts by Verrips (2002) and my findings suggest. And subsequently, as the canoe owners' families grew and more people in their families owned their personal canoes, the need to gain personal recognition as well as maintain the sense of family belonging increased. This

brought about a tradition where family motifs, text describing the name of the pictogram and text of personal identity in the form of name referred to by most of the fisher folks as slogans as well as bible quotations among others were incised and painted together on the same surface of the canoes.

In the case of the "NOKO YE DZEN" motif, Nii Ayi Kuma, owner of the canoe "Ambulance" also from the *Klan We* family, explains that the Israel, Zangla, and SS Apapa canoes where all using the same motif at one time in history. But the need for individuality by way of ownership and at the same time the need for identity by way of belonging to a common root is the reason for different names by text yet they all possess the same motif. (Nii Ayi Kuma, Personal Communication, 27 June 2009). This explains why plate 4.51 (Noko ye dzen) and plate 4.52, (Israel) have the same pictogram.


**Plate 4.51 "NOKO YE DZEN"**




Plate 4.52 “ISRAEL”

Quit recently, the SS Apapa canoe family moved away to use a new motif because of an issue that ensued (I shall discuss that in the next section) hence their motif look entirely different now. See plate 4.53, “SS Apapa”.


**Plate 4.53 “SS APAPA”**

All these twist and turn in the configuration and use of motif on the *lele/le* make the interpretative meanings of Ga and Adangbe canoe motif erratic. Considering them by way of identification as a pictogram will begin to make a meaningful artistic

contemplation rather than searching for a transient meaningful interpretation as a symbol which is not lasting.

Additionally, the visual elements of the Ga and Adangbe canoes' motifs are composed of conglomeration of lines, biomorphic shapes or decorative planes and geometric and rectilinear shapes. Hence their nature is not fixed. They are composite in nature. Their symbolism is not fixed to straightforwardly decipher their signifiers. To do that will be a daunting task if not a journey of speculation. For the trained eye, sentimentality about symbols is secondary to real artistic enjoyment. At least, in the context of Ga and Adangbe canoe art this is not only true, it is plausible.

The way to make real artistic sense out of Ga and Adangbe canoe art is not to only find out what they mean to the maker but how it makes sense to you as an individual observer. In other words not only what they represent but how they present. So a better way to look at canoe art is exploring the nature of the composition of the motifs and their relationship to the canoe form: its volume, both internal and external space, texture and colour. That will begin to bring out the dynamics of its artiness. Doing this painterly, without the sculpture element is easy. Perhaps that is why the most fascinating aspect of Ga and Adangbe canoe which attracts the observer to its artistic importance is the painterly quality that appears on the various parts of its hull. This obvious feature, the painted sculpture notion, over shadows its sculptural quality, a carved canoe.

Therefore, the starting point to exploring the composite artiness of Ga and Adangbe canoe art is to identify their elemental visual groups. Elemental visual group here

speaks of relating to the motifs on the canoes in their resemblance to fundamental natural things. It is a scrutiny that brings the enquirer to the sculptural reality of the canoe as well as the painterly quality. It is not to find out what they stand for but how they stand in the natural visual world. The next section begins with that.

In summary, this discussion looked at pictogram and symbol; which of the two terms will best apply to *lele/le* motifs. I have submitted that, dealing with meanings of canoe motifs by only assigning interpretative meaning to them will be an erroneous venture in this context, if not impossible. Individuality is a characteristic feature of Ga and Adangbe canoe motifs. The benefits of searching for interpretative meanings of Ga and Adangbe canoe motifs lies in the uncovering of the many varied views held by their users; not in their artistic contemplation. Hence the use of pictogram is a better term to use than symbol in this context.

#### 4.3.3.2 Groups of Ga and Adangbe Visual Elements: Pictograms

The pictograms of painted or incised and painted forms that appear on the Ga and Adangbe dug-out canoes range from highly schematized non-representational designs to human, animal and plant motifs. These pictograms can be divided two main categories with four and two subdivision each respectively, based upon their elemental visual configuration:

**A. Pictogram of Living things**

(i) Pictograms of Animals: insects, birds, fishes and land animals;

(ii) Pictograms of Vegetation (Plants): Whole or parts of plants on land and in water, trees (parts or whole trees) such, leaves, seeds, fruits, flowers.

(iii) Pictograms of human beings or body parts such as eyes, hearts, hands, arms, penises and legs.

**B. Pictograms of Non-Living Things**

(i) Pictograms of office tools and appendage: such as stools, swords, hats, keys, flags, anchors, arrows and crosses.

(ii) Pictograms of celestial bodies and beings: such as stars and the moon- full moon or half-moon, angels and mermaid.

(iii) Pictograms of non-representational forms; such as biomorphic shapes; spades, diamonds, clubs, geometric shapes (squares, circles, triangles).

**4.3.3.3 Pictogram of Living Things**

**(i) Pictograms Animals:**

The Ga and Adangbe canoe motifs which can be identified as animals range from naturalistic and realistic rendition to abstracted rendering of insects birds, fishes and land animals. The general symbolic meanings of these visual elements are related to totemic and proverbial sayings. Insects which appear are such as butterflies, wasps and spiders. See Plate 4.54 and Plate 4.55.

**(ii) Pictograms Vegetation (Plants):** Apart from a few pictograms which could be recognized as leaves or fruits, the Ga and Adangbe canoe motifs which can be identified as vegetation are mostly rendered in non-representational style. It took a long time for the researcher to gather clues in categorizing this visual element group

as such. The relationship between fishing and plant life is not apparent so it was remarkable how trees and plants that grow on land and in water bodies are depicted in whole or in parts very often on Ga and Adangbe canoes. But upon a second enquiry, it is observed that the canoe is primarily made of wood, a plant. As the artist fall and work with the logs to make the canoe, the most immediate objects that spark his imagination for creating motifs on canoe are the parts of the tree such as the sterns, branches, leaves, fruits and seeds. Therefore individual parts of plants which are depicted include leaves, seeds, fruits, flowers. But this is not just a matter of artistic inspiration; it is layered with spiritual and medicinal consideration. Nene Nartey Adimai V, Chief fisherman of Great Ningo Traditional Area, explained that most of the curvilinear planes and shapes which appear on the Ga and Adangbe canoes are cocoa leaves and fruits or leaves for "sese" a herbal concoction which when carried after some libations and offerings by a Ga and Adangbe traditional priest the carrier will become possessed with the spirit of twins during the twin yam festival.

**Plate 4.54 Pictograms Animals (a)**

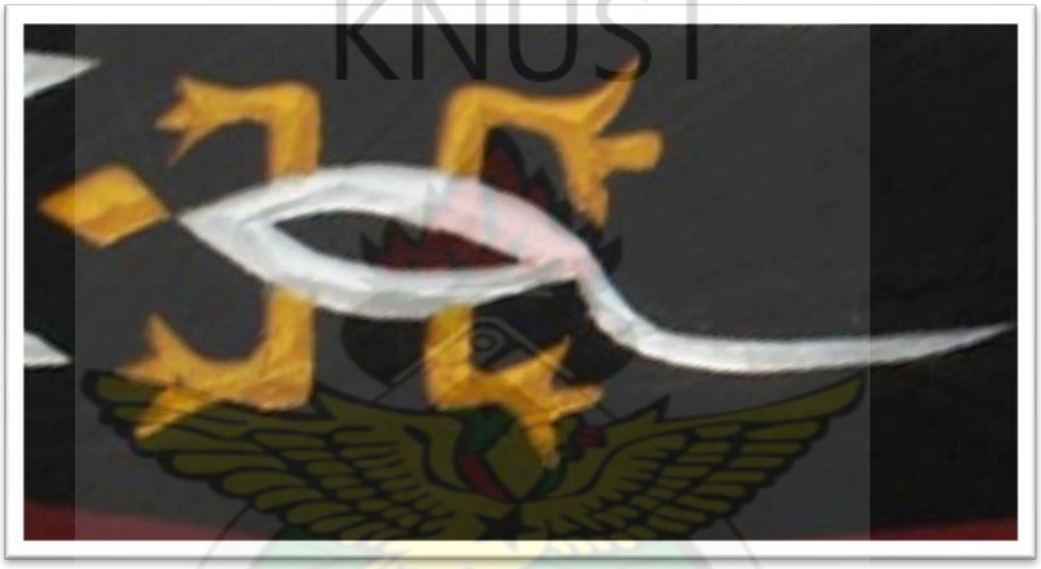


**Plate 4.55 Pictograms Animals (b)**

He continued that the herbs or plants parts are laden with potent power for healing, attracting good luck or subverting bad premonition. In the olden days prior to the use of text pictogram, he said, the parts of plant incised on the canoes were directed by informed priests who guided the choice of leaves or fruits to depict. He however added that, recently the most common reason for the use of these plants or its parts is not known to the current generation. To them, it is a way of beautifying their canoes.

It is no wonder if this view is factual because approximately 95% of all the Ga and Adangbe people especially in the Ga Mashie District who the researcher interacted with were ambivalent whiles others were totally at sea at the identification of the seemingly abstract motifs on their canoes. Most of the respondents repeatedly using the same phrase said, “It is just a design”. Others were more assertive “we the younger generation don’t really know the meanings of these designs but we use it because we came to meet our fathers using them.” The most striking of it all is that most of the pictograms which could be recognized as parts of tree were described as “designs” without any association to natural forms or things. Whenever I suggested the idea of these visual elements being fruits or tress parts, to the respondents, the responses were also varied. It became necessary to just believe the idea of trees because; the relationship between parts of tree to the log is inversely related. Secondly the diverse reactions of the respondents besides the strong traditional belief system presence and the history of the origins of motifs in Ga and Adangbe society are the grounds for the admission of the incised and brightly painted abstract curvilinear shapes and planes on as can be noticed in Plate 4.56 in to this group.


**Plate 4.56 Pictograms Vegetation (Plants)**

**(iii) Pictograms of human beings or body parts:** In the fine arts discipline of painting and sculpture, the human plate is central to it as a favourite subject matter. It is in the light of this that Ga and Adangbe canoe pictogram without the human plate could have placed it into a class aside mainstream art despite the numerous portals of connection that exists in its practice. That only the male plate and parts of the body such as eyes, hearts, hands, arms, and penises, which can be assumed to be male parts indicates that the iconography or appropriately the pictograms of Ga and Adangbe canoe are carefully selected before their overusing and misuse renders them adulterated. Despite the overwhelming cooperation between male and female in the artisanal fishing industry, the female plate has no place in Ga and Adangbe canoe pictograms. This group is the least non-representational to its natural resemblance.

When used, it is related to the work, manliness and responsibility of the fishermen or capabilities of the canoe.

In plate 4.57, “Killers” looks like a representation of historical practice but my findings shows otherwise. In an action movie or thrillers, “Killers” are vicious and merciless characters who will kill anything on sight. The owners see themselves as a gang ready to face anything at sea on their expedition to fishing. The men carrying guns display their manliness as they boldly move with their guns.


**Plate 4.57 Pictograms of human beings or body parts: “Killers”**

**Plate 4.58 Pictograms of human beings or body parts**

#### 4.3.3.4 Pictograms of Non-Living Things

Pictogram of non-living things is larger in variety. They range from things associated to daily utilitarian use, to chieftaincy and history of the canoe users. Some of the items include stools, swords, hats, keys, flags, anchors, arrows, and crosses. The general symbolic associations of this pictogram group are royalty and history of their users.

**(i) Pictograms tools and appendage:** Things such as stools, swords, hats, keys, flags, anchors, arrows, and crosses are the commonest pictograms to find on Ga and Adangbe canoes. At almost every landing side I found stools on left and right elevations of the canoes. And they almost always appear in conjunction with royal swords. Repeatedly, my observations show, stools are used by people who come from or are related directly to a royal family. The users could be related to a paramount chiefs or family chief, land chief, fishermen chief or fishmongers chief. Stools are conventional symbols for seat of leadership in the Ga and Adangbe community with its

associated powers and responsibilities. Most of the stools incised range from flat top with rectangular middle to curved top with angular middle and curved top with circular middle (see plate 4.59). The stool, whenever depicted is positioned in the middle to emphasis its importance. Meanings are not the same everywhere in Ga and Adangbe.

**Plate 4.59 Pictograms tools and appendage: stools, swords, hats, keys, flags, anchors and arrows**

**(ii)** Pictograms of celestial bodies, such as stars and the moon. See plate 4.60.

**Plate 4.60 Pictograms of celestial bodies, such as stars and the moon**



**(iii)**Pictograms of non-representational form such as biomorphic shapes; spades, diamonds, clubs, geometric shapes (squares, circles, triangles). See plate 4.61.


**Plate 4.61 Pictograms of non-representational forms**

## 4.4 Objective Three Findings

### 4.4.1 Introduction to Studio Work Findings

The concept of studio work conceptualizes art creation in terms of theory and practice. Theory deals with the ideas and the other, practice, is concern with the concretization of the ideas into visual tactile forms. Therefore the analysis on the studio work is a framework within which the link between *lele/le* ideas (theory) and the making of the following the art works by the researcher (practice) is discussed as part of the outcome of this thesis project. As the third aim of this thesis project was to translate the ideas on *lele/le* into new art forms, the researcher makes analysis of the paintings created through two stages; 1. visual description and 2, stylistic analysis of the works. Although the narration of the experimentation process of executing the practical aspect of a thesis project work is a major descriptive requirement in studio work research, the actual process for the creation of each of the following art works have only been generally described because each of them followed similar processes.

The creation processes for each work began with experimentation of the motifs of *lele/le* into bands without any prior consideration of the symbolic meanings of the motif in virtual environment using digital tools. The digital camera was used to take snap shots of the pictograms. Once transferred into a digital form, the images were loaded in a Corel Suite 12 virtual (software) environment. I continued by drawing the pictograms and then manipulated their sizes and shapes in Corel Draw version 12. As a vector based software, instant changes in colours and their properties (hue, intensity, contrast etc.) became a matter of experimentation of cause and effect. Whiles playing within this setting, patterns of arrangements began to evolve. Next, was to cram on

space/colour relationship between each motif within the context of each band or box to further develop identified patterns. Most times they worked out good but other times they turned unexciting hence a new approach was devised. Sometimes a switch was made between Corel Paint (image editing software) and Corel Draw to convert the vectors into images that can receive instant digital artistic strokes such as pastel, cubist, impressionist etc. effects. Within a space of time say 30 minutes, innovative ideas will surface and a digital painting was created with Ga and Adangbe canoe art attributes yet new in concept. New concept here is the artist researcher's own idiom of reinforcing the composite nature of Ga and Adangbe canoe art in his work.

In the analysis of the *lele/le,* four artistic categories were identified as structural configuration of the canoes based on physical dimension. These four artistic groups have unique spatial qualities that correspond to four visual compositional structures of the motifs on the *lele/le*. The single denominator for grouping of *lele/le* motif into compositional structures is "panelling" or "banding". Thus the basis for classifying *lele/le* into artistic canoe groups and compositional groups is about how the motifs have been arranged into panel or bands within the given space on the canoe. So in the following digital paintings, besides any other theme for each particular work, banding or panelling is the common denominator in their creation.

The most important consideration in these works was to create a link within the entire number of paintings created, through banding and common motifs usage. The artist researcher envisaged the exhibition space for this painting to be hanged on wall

within one meter squared space for this reason has worked within a picture frame size of AO.

### 4.4.2 Parameters for Analysis of the Digital Paintings

**Visual description:** This refers to discussion on the recognition of the motifs and other visible elements that has been used in the work and how they relate to each other visually.

**Stylistic analysis:** This also refers to the resemblance the digital paintings have to one another and to the identified compositional structure on Ga and Adangbe canoes.

### 4.4.3 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.62, Security

Security relies on two motifs (conceptual money box and keys), two vertical colour bands (in 1:2 space ratio) created by 2 related colours (olive and shaded olive drab) and finally contrasted by 3 horizontal bands induced by thin brown lines which put each motif into a kind of rectangular shape unit to achieve a simplicity and straightforwardness in composition.

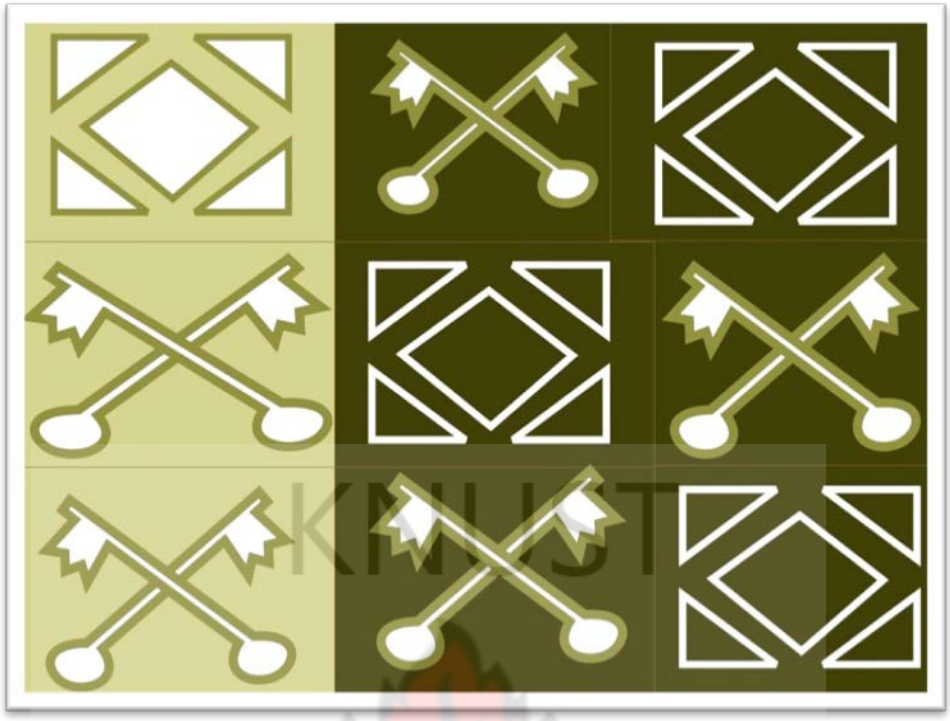


**Plate 4.62 K. D. Agbenu, Security, 11”x 8”, Digital Painting, 2011**

Each unit therefore appears in a 1, 2 and 2, 1 alternative repeat on each of the vertical and horizontal bands. Whereas the “keys” motif appears the same way in each unit irrespective of the background colour, the “box” composed of four equidistant triangles eclipsing a central parallelogram shape, has two colour forms. In the first unit at the topmost left, the box motif appears white and defined by olive drab lines but the remaining ones emerge as dark shaded olive drab colours trimmed out by white lines on the background colour. Uniformity and harmony is enforced by the equal thickness in the motif definition lines and the boarder lines of the entire picture plane.

What seems simple at a first glance may also be complex when held in intense contemplation. Therefore though simple, *security* has two distinctive complex features parallel to a feature always present in Ga and Adangbe canoe art. The first is

that of a mixture in pictogram groups. That is, the box and the keys motifs utilized in this painting are pictograms of non-living things at the same time the box motif belongs to the visual group identified as geometric shapes. Secondarily, the centrality of key and box motifs in the first and second horizontal band caused by the flanking effect of the pictogram on either side gives this art piece a truly decorative outwit in line with Ga and Adangbe compositional ideas.

In what may be seen and interpreted as an acute technical limitation by the artist's ordinary use of conventionalized motif of money box and key, this art work sets apart an honest expressiveness from accidental ordinary primitiveness: for the artist offers each repeat of motif in this art piece with an unquestionable acceptance of their present conventionalized structure without any manipulation in their shapes although the digital environment empowers instantaneous changes to that effect. Yet in their ordinariness the overall consequence says what needs to be said in a much clearer way. That is, "secure your money in box with key locks" and "each box should have more than one key".

### 4.4.4 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.63, Bonso

Bonso is composed of side view shape of "Bonso Canoe" and its central pictogram. The Bonso pictogram from left to right are "end design motifs of two bold vertical strokes followed by an opened palm on either side, then a centralized crescent top stool flanged on either side by "man possessing an oversized penis" with one hand pointing to his head and the other pointing to the buttocks and finally two (2) flags one on either side of the optical centre respectively.

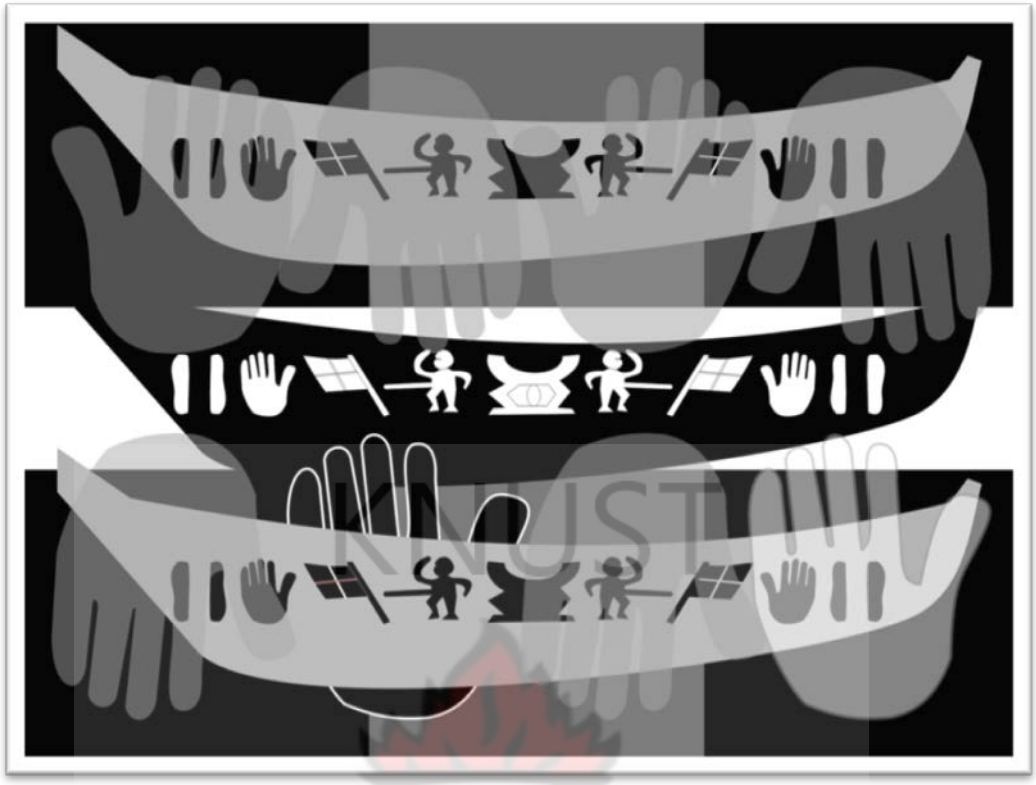


**Plate 4.63 K. D. Agbenu, Bonso, 11”x 8” Digital Painting, 2011**

Worked in a black, white and gray monochromatic scheme, this painting has a 3 vertical and 3 horizontal band structure which emphasizes the overall cross shape motif that can also be noticed on the flag motifs on the painting. Subsequently the cross impression provides a rhythmic dark, light, dark pattern in the background. The repeated gray canoe shape in the first (top) and third (down) horizontal bands appear suspended while pushing the black canoe shape in the central band further into the background because of the varying transparent open palm motif beneath them. A rigid rhythmic feel shows in the way the central canoe shape motif wields the dark square shape at the four (4) corners of the picture frame. This rhythmic sense is also enforced by the trimmed hand motifs which appear on the dark squares.

Taking the canoe form as a real sculptured canoe, Bonso pictogram is organized in a one panel compositional unit in this digital painting. Considering the fact that this unit is repeated 3 times to form a 3 band structure on the picture frame, Bonso appears as a drama between the real life situation and fantasy. The sizes of the Bonso pictograms in relation to the canoe shape do not occur in the real life situation of Ga and Adangbe canoe practice. And though the open palm motif is swallowed into the background colour it still assumes the dominant motif role because it is contrasted from the surface background by the use of dark and light shades of gray. Of the eight times that the open palm motif is repeated, each one is different: it is black and defined by white outline. This big contrast is in revolt to Ga and Adangbe canoe technique of rending motifs. However the 3 band structure creates some affinity between Isocomp and hydrocomp as found in Ga and Adangbe canoe art.

Hence technique-wise, this painting is a demonstration of how to make simple transparent dexterity give a lucid characteristic to the feel and look of art in the context of Ga and Adangbe canoe. Plate 4.64 is a follow- up development of “Bonso”

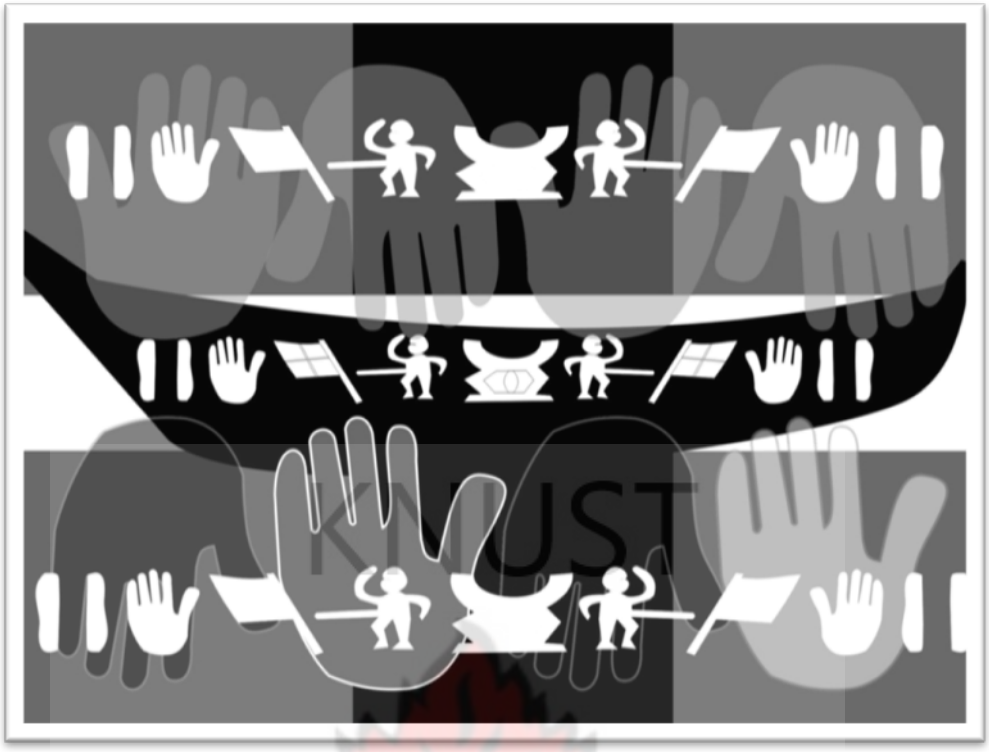


**Plate 4.64 K. D. Agbenu, Seat belt, "11"x 8" Digital Painting, 2011, Follow up Development of "Bonso"**

### 4.4.5 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.65, Creation

A patterned tile-like digital rendition, creation is composed in two base colours: walnut and sky blue. Developed on the 3x3 compositional structure of a photograph of "Bonso" canoe and pictogram, the evocative background and textured shapes in creation are more placid, their colour combinations and relationships are more serene than those of "Bonso". The dark dappled shapes at the four corners of the picture frame, tints from bright ruby red, pink and faded pink giving a much gentle feel to the fragmented conglomeration between patterned background at one side and canoe shapes and motifs in the foreground on the other side. Behind this gentle feeling, there is a sense of harmonic blending between the blues and the brown so beautifully that "two hands" motifs at the top left side and down right side seem to be holding the

canoe motifs together. The tonal difference between the dark browns and light (tints) indicate a cross shape in light tone transversely the entire picture frame – in the background. This feature accentuates the horizontal and vertical zone division in the work.

A doglike image appears at the right lower part of the picture frame. This image obviously an accidental effect created by digital colour manipulations of pink and sky blue tones and hues is interesting because of the way the dog image emerge in a

**Plate 4.65 K. D. Agbenu, Creation, 11"x 8", 2010 Digital Painting**

profile posture yet with its head and tongue pulled-out and turns back in a "Sankofa" fashion towards the catlike pictograms on the third band canoe.

“Creation” concretizes hard work and diligence as two virtues shared between God and man: Divine and human, heaven and earth, water and land, blue and brown as an on-going chaotic blend which results in new things-creation. It is the blend of hard work and diligence that brings about creation. Things not well thought through begin definite; dramatic but at the moment of trial and test if they will abide forever they should pass the diligence test.

Unlike Ga and Adangbe canoe pictograms which appear definite - well defined shapes and forms - creation motifs are all reduced to tinted, textured tile impressions of shades and tints of reds and blue giving it a different presentation of the same motif. The indication here is that the nature of pictograms and shapes of canoe can be manipulated in different rendition yet retains its iconographic/ “pictogramic” outlook. Thus two different things can be held together in one to produce a new. All in all, this new one achieves such a cohesive blend hence the overall unified textured scenery of “creation” is appealing to contemplate.

### 4.4.6 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.66, Struggle

The entire surface of *struggle* is a downward blazing black, gray and white colour tones. Like a burning fire blown by the wind, the blazes turn and writhe curvehimently to the left.

**Plate 4.66 K. D. Agbenu, Struggles, 33”x 23”, Digital Painting, 2011**

This work was developed from Bonso. Using the “effect” tools, the artist creates a blend and division between the whites and grays. Although the surface appear busy, there are clear cut divisions (from top left to down right) between grays, blacks and gray tones. Each segment has at least two gray tones. The shape of canoe remains central to this art in the horizontal centre. Then from the middle, vertically, what seems as a radiating black sun amidst a cluster of things yet in a clear defined dark colour cuts across to the bottom. On the whole the canoe and the middle band give an image of a cross.

This painting of struggle is an exploratory exercise with complicated expressive force. The natural formal Bonso motifs have been used as shapes for improvisation,

invention and ambitious combination and recombination but at the same time subjected to the rule of Ga and Adangbe canoe banding. Hence it is easy to recognize the general shape of a canoe and the hand motif. None of the forms needs not be recognizable in specific details to relate this style of painting to Ga and Adangbe canoe art because each has been played with, inventively using the effect digital tool. The blurring effect in its blending has "killed" the otherwise clear cut ornamental shapes of Bonso motifs to produce a combination or blending of background with motif forms and gray tones that would not have been reached without preliminary experimentations as seen in "struggle ".

Thus working with the theme, "the struggle between elemental forces such as wind, storm and the ebb and flow on the sea against the canoe" as the canoe journeys in the aquatic world, this work evocatively gives a pictorial impression on the import of the elemental forces on the fishermen. *Struggle* is indeed a turbulent painting and turbulently painted in black and white colour that shatter and dangle across swarming and fluttering masses, expressing everywhere in the picture plane the agony and excitement of the fisherman's spirit. The hand motif, symbol of hard work is the only existing motif indicative of survival through hardness and struggle.

**4.4.7 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.67, "Akwadu Shao"**

"Akwadu Shao" is a Ga expression for a bunch of banana. Akwadu Shao is part of the pictogram of Noah Canoe of Ga Matrulemi fishing hamlet. The akwadu shao motif has been repeated nine times in this work into 3 vertical bands; all pointing to

the right side of the picture frame. Colour choice of this painting rest entirely in the pale yellow and browns. The first two vertical bands at the top left of the painting have ochre, relatively dark background colour, helping to trim out the white outline colour of the Akwadu shao motif. The visual interest of this contrast is asymmetrically balanced by the lighter background colour of the third and last vertical bands. Here, the "Akwadu Shao" motifs stand out faintly like a light colour printing on another lighter colour. But the dark outline makes them defined enough to recognize the iconographic/pictogramic significance of their variety.



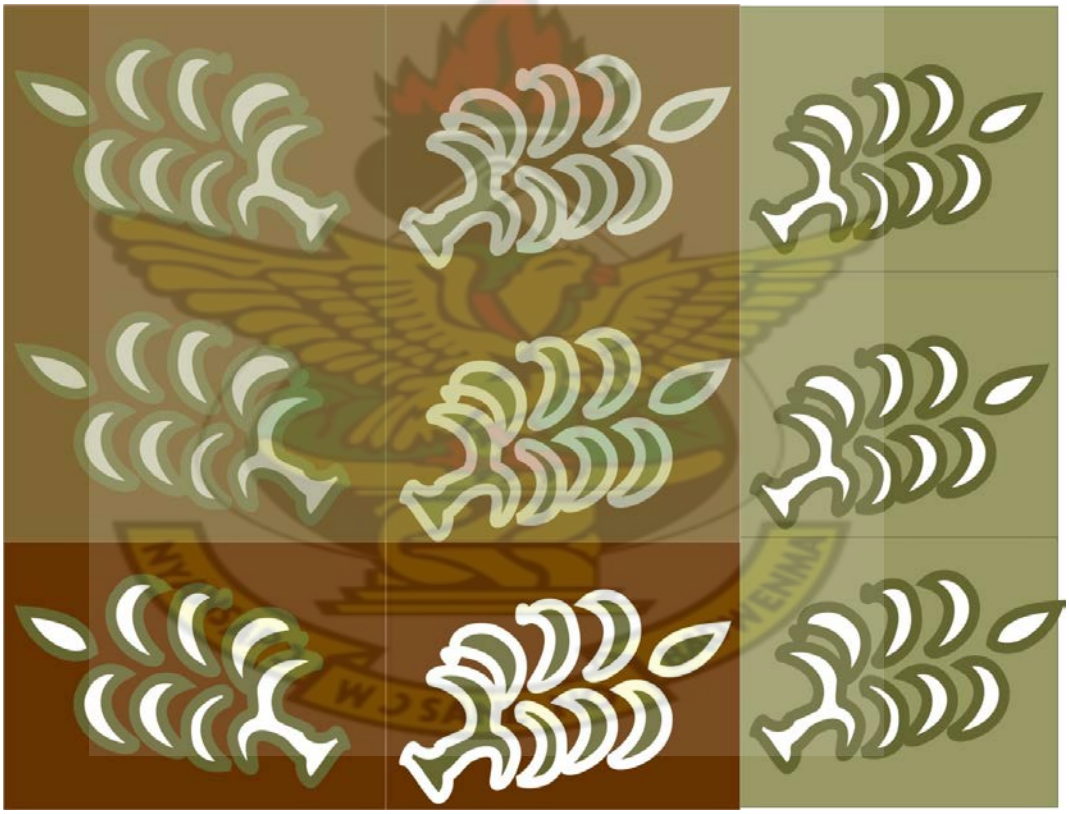


**Plate 4.67 K. D. Agbenu, "Akwadu Shao", 11"x 8" Digital Painting, 2010**

Maximum simplicity is the catch word for this work. Yet the gracefulness of the strong curvy nature of the abstracted bunch of banana creates pleasing visual echoes of controlled sinuous harmony to the eye.

### 4.4.8 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.68, "Akwadu Shao Ke Tsi"

Using Akwadu Shao motif and sword ("Tsi", Ga word for sword) motif, this painting is a follow up development of Akwadu Shao piece of painting. "Akwadu Shao Ke Tsi" is experimental in nature in that it relies on three (3) different background colours, Olive drab, Brown and Black in an unusual arrangement.

In each segmented background/band colour, two (2) different motifs are represented. The first segment (at the top most left) has a leaf motif (just like the club symbol) and Akwadu Shao motif. The second band, beneath the first band has two (2) versions of the Akwadu Shao motif: the first with dark outline and the second has light/white

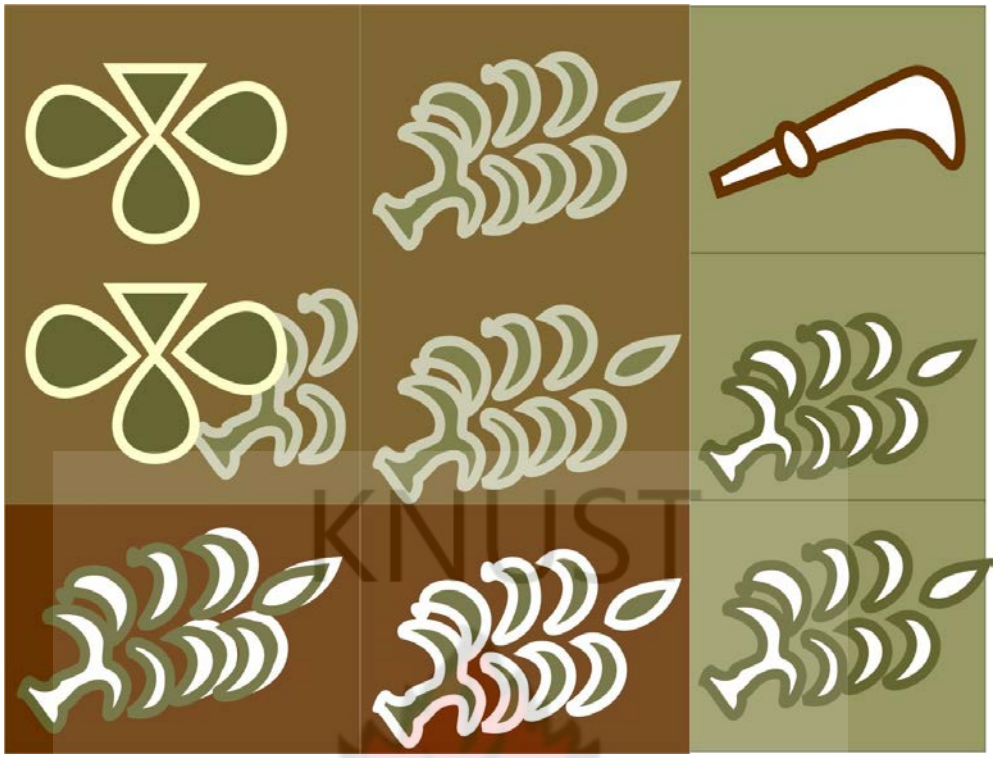


**Plate 4.68 K. D. Agbenu, "Akwadu Shao Ke Tsi", 11"x 8", Digital Painting, 2011**

outline colour. The last band has two *tsi* motifs in conjunction with the *Akwadu Shao* motif.

This feature of variety within each band unit is a cardinal characteristic in Ga and Adangbe canoe art where almost always two categories of pictograms are present in any given band division. In this work however, the easiness of how this painting presents the mystery of easy slashing through of sword in a banana plant to get a bunch of banana for easy going children who enjoy it whiles their parents embark on the next fishing expedition is the story of "Akwadu Shao Ke Tsi."

### 4.4.9 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.69, "Akwadu Shao"

This work is a further development of "Akwadu Shao" and "Akwadu Shao Ke Tsi" where the artist used only the background/band colour of the latter and the motifs of the former respectively in a slightly new way. The background colour and band division of "Akwadu Shao Ke Tsi" was used without any modification but the motifs of "Akwadu Shao" were used with a few changes.

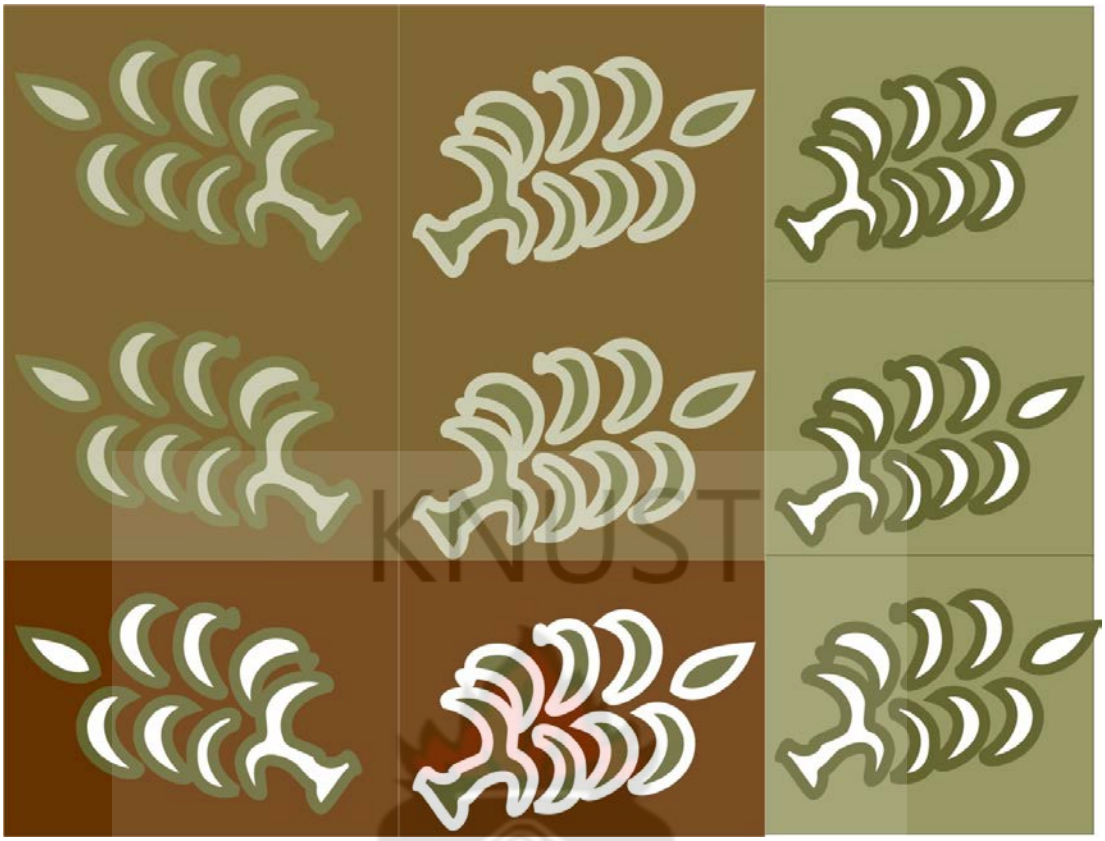


**Plate 4.69 K. D. Agbenu, "Akwadu Shao 1", 11"x 8" Digital Painting, 2011**

Whereas in "Akwadu Shao 1" the motifs in the third vertical band has been mirrored in the first and second vertical bands, the middle section remains exactly the same. And this is where the interest and stimulation in this painting resides. The tonal difference between the first and second band colour makes the first two (2) motifs in the middle section a bit lighter because of the relative middle tone colour of the first background/band and the third (bottom) motif very strong as a result of the relative dark second band /background colour; then to the left side of this motif, in the same background/ band is its reflection but this time with a white fill colour and dark outline. The dark outline binds this motif to the band colour. The overall visual or tonal drama is a kind of light, dark, middle tone and dark tone, then light, middle tone and dark tone in both the fill colour and outlines of the motifs.

Far from decoration; “Akwadu Shao I” can be interpreted as a more surprising flat, clear regular band shapes conspicuously arranged over by irregular motif form colours defined by outline colours.

### 4.4.10 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.70, “Guitar Kpann 4”

From a highly schematized pictogram, “Guitar String” is one of the motifs of the Kootey Scholar family of Chorkor Mantsuru. The entire pictogram is an abstracted guitar string (Guitar Kpann–Ga). Composed of a profile flying- bird like shape, mirrored at (top and down) and supported to the front by a “V” shaped leaf motif and at the tail ends by triangular shapes which are also mirrored (at the top and down).

The entire visual impression of this 3 band composition structure is a stool shape or in alphabetical terms an “X” shape. From the top left corner, a top and down repeat of the unit guitar motif in brown fill colour and white outline colour. This has been mirrored at the top right corner; down left corner and down right corner pushing them forward against the black background colour. In the central part of the second and third horizontal bands are side by side repeats of the guitar motif unit. It is also in brown fill colour and white outline colour in a fashion that is reminiscent of the stool shape. On top of this in the first horizontal band are two (2) stool motifs which appear on the guitar pictogram. The two (2) stools are a repeat hence the six (6) almost equilateral triangles that flanges the first stool on either sides are exactly the same for the second stool. The rest of the repeats of the guitar motifs are without any outlines hence are drawn backward into the background/band colour.

The painting approach of “Guitar Kpann 4” is a very decorative enterprise solving an abstract problem of balancing motif outline colour in light tones against motif fill colour in dark tones to depict the concept of stool: a stool which is almost always represented in the central part of Ga and Adangbe canoe pictograms. This emphasizes the importance of the Ghanaian stool. Colour-wise, this work of art blends tints of a lot of browns with blues to give a sombre painting. Earlier and later developments of this work are in plate 4.71 and plate 4.72.



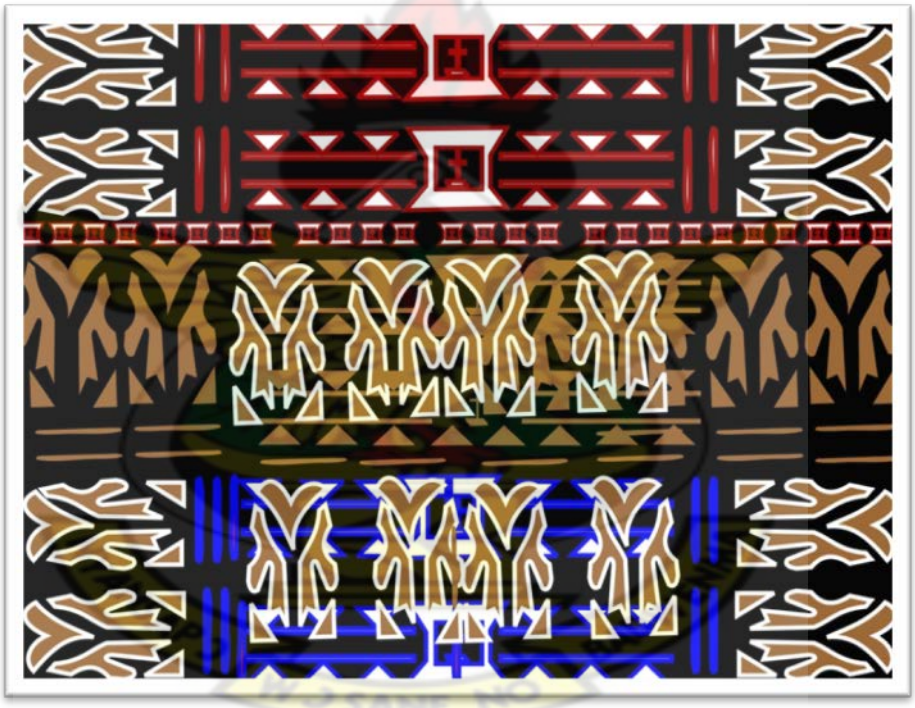


**Plate 4.70 K. D. Agbenu, “Guitar Kpann 4”, 33”x 23” Digital Painting, 2011**

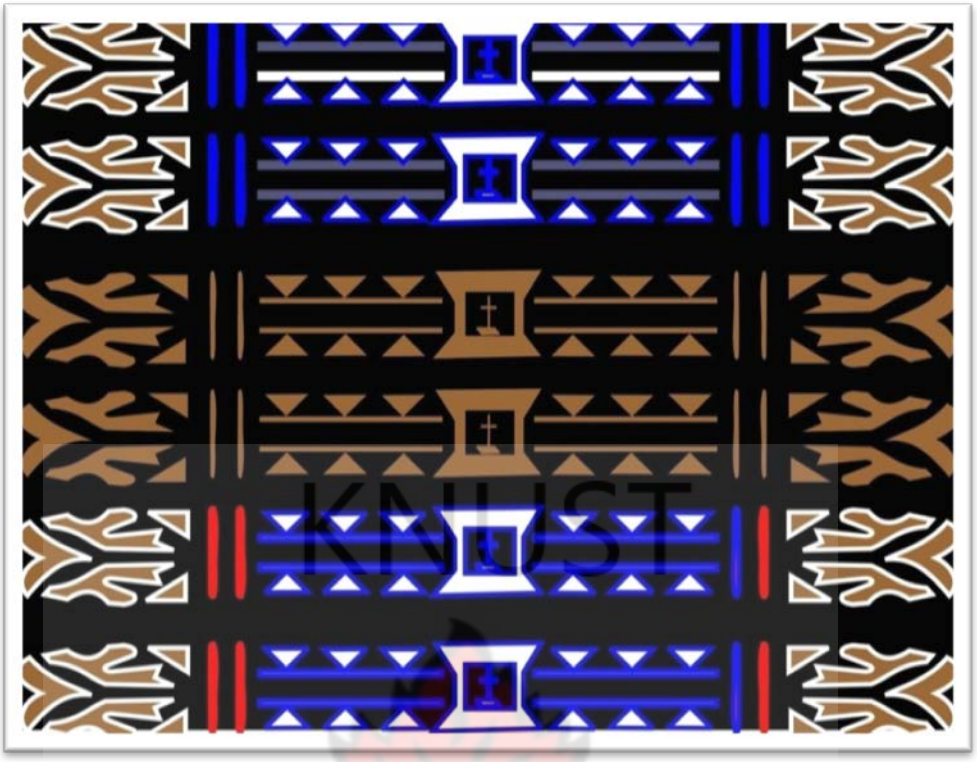


**Plate 4.71 K. D. Agbenu, Guitar Kpann 3, 33”x 23” Digital Painting, 2010, An Earlier version of “Guitar Kpann 4”**

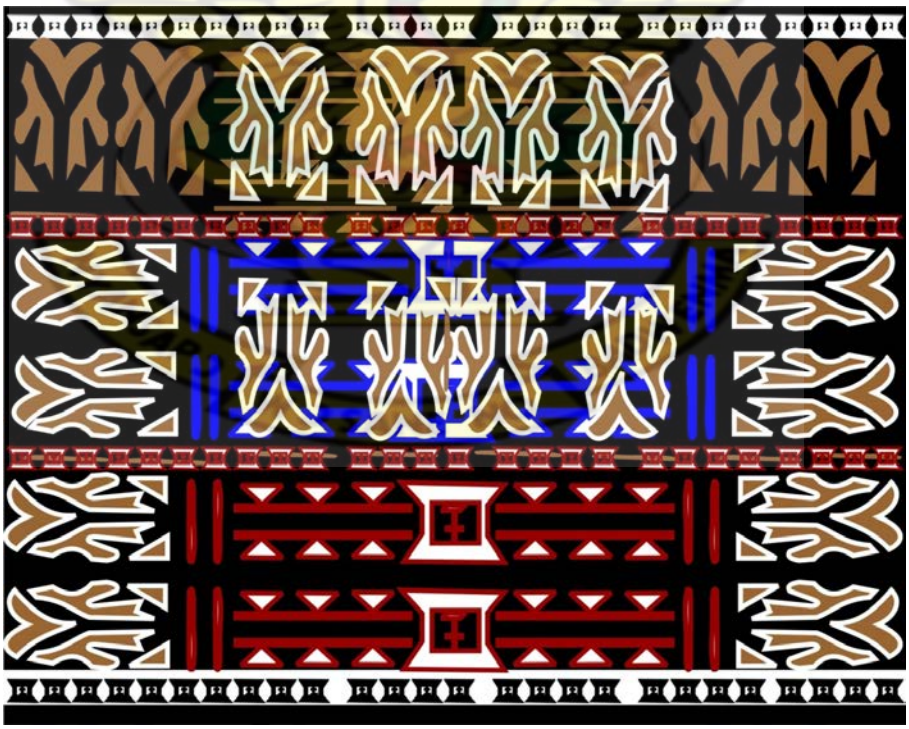


**Plate 4.72 K. D. Agbenu, Guitar Kpann 5, 33”x 23” Digital Painting, 2011, Further Development of “Guitar Kpann 4”**

### 4.4.11 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.73, The Visible and the Unseen

"The Visible and the Unseen" pays tribute to the continuing technical and cultural innovations of Ga and Adangbe people in developing the canoe. Canoes were integral to the Ga and Adangbe ancestry. They used the canoe for transportation, trade, fishing/hunting, warfare, gifts and ceremonies. Ga and Adangbe trading were responsible for moving materials such as mirror, gun, gun powder, some gold crafts, and shells to and from the European trading ships miles away the high seas before the building of the Tema harbour.

**Plate 4.73 K. D. Agbenu, The Visible and the Unseen, 11"x 8" Digital Painting, 2006**

Of eight (8) dugout canoes: four (4) small ones place over four (4) bigger ones. The four small ones represent early innovations whiles the bigger ones indicates

innovations as response to needs of the people. Each small canoe is rendered in similar flat colours. On the other hand the bigger canoes are rendered in three (3) dimensional forms – emphasizing the sculptural techniques such as embossing, low and high relief carving of the canoe.

Ga and Adangbe canoes in use currently involves various improvements, starting from enlargement of size and strength of hull, multiple planking and sophistication of canoe design on the gunwales.

One of the small canoes unlike all the others is suspended on water. By this the artist places canoe in its manoeuvrable environment as against canoes observed as art objects at the shore. The picture is generally placed on a plain background emphasizing space. The visual impact is strongly suggestive of emptiness yet enticing in the following ways.

Each of the group is rendered in a different style. From the top of the picture frame, the first big canoe is created in embossment style. That is, a visual illusion of three (3) dimensions is made not with brush but with digital embossment technique. Various planes/sections of the canoe; the gunwale, the first planking which receives the first section of design, the free baseline section which are all rendered in burnt sienna colour are differentiated from each other by the illusionary embossing method- low and high relief effects. The impetus for this approach is the interpretation of the manual carving techniques in digital painting form. Thus depth in the three (3) dimensional forms is still portrayed not by “moulding” in colour through gradual tonal variation and hue intensity. Superimposition on the first big canoe,(to be known

as canoe A) is the first small canoe (to be known as canoe A1) rendered in different flat colours (moon green, deep yellow, walnut, and murky green) to define the various planes of the canoe form which is three (3) dimensional. It seems that between canoe A and Canoe A1 is a play between carving and painting techniques. Theoretical questions raised or rather solved by this work is a fusion between painting and carving by emphasizing the strength of painting and sculpture visual techniques.

The next group of canoes takes on similar composition yet tread on stylistic questions. While the big canoe beneath the small one is rendered in flat colours (in profile) the small one takes on an impressionist style. Here, a strong message of non-conformity between styles is being called into attention. So that no matter the style in which a canoe is rendered as an art object, it can be created to serve its purpose or intended use. The middle section is dramatic in that, the big canoe is flanked on the top by two small one and under, by one buoyantly on suggested water. In all these, canoes are rendered in the same style but they show significant differences.

### 4.4.12 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.74, Origin, Afterwards and Fusion

Ga and Adangbe land is a land of lakes, rivers and Ghana's lowest coastline. The materials needed to build canoe – wa-wa wood, "onyaa" – flourish naturally in the Western, Eastern, Ashanti and Brong Ahanfo Regions of the Republic of Ghana. The symbolic designs on Ga-Adangbe canoes are believed to be expressed ideas of the fusion between origins and aftermaths among other things.

“Origin, Afterwards and Fusion” explores the canoes relationship to the environment, featuring a dramatic falling of pictogram from the skies, enormous displayed rocks, the beach, and a map showing Ga and Adangbe extreme network of waterways. The work is a composite design of photographs taken from the Prampram shore, drawings made from pictograms on the Ga and Adangbe canoes and a map of Ghana. Making use of electronic devices as the main tool for the creation, the artist composed this picture by electronic montage. The idea here is to make the viewer see canoe in context of the native artists’ (carvers and painters) response to their environment.

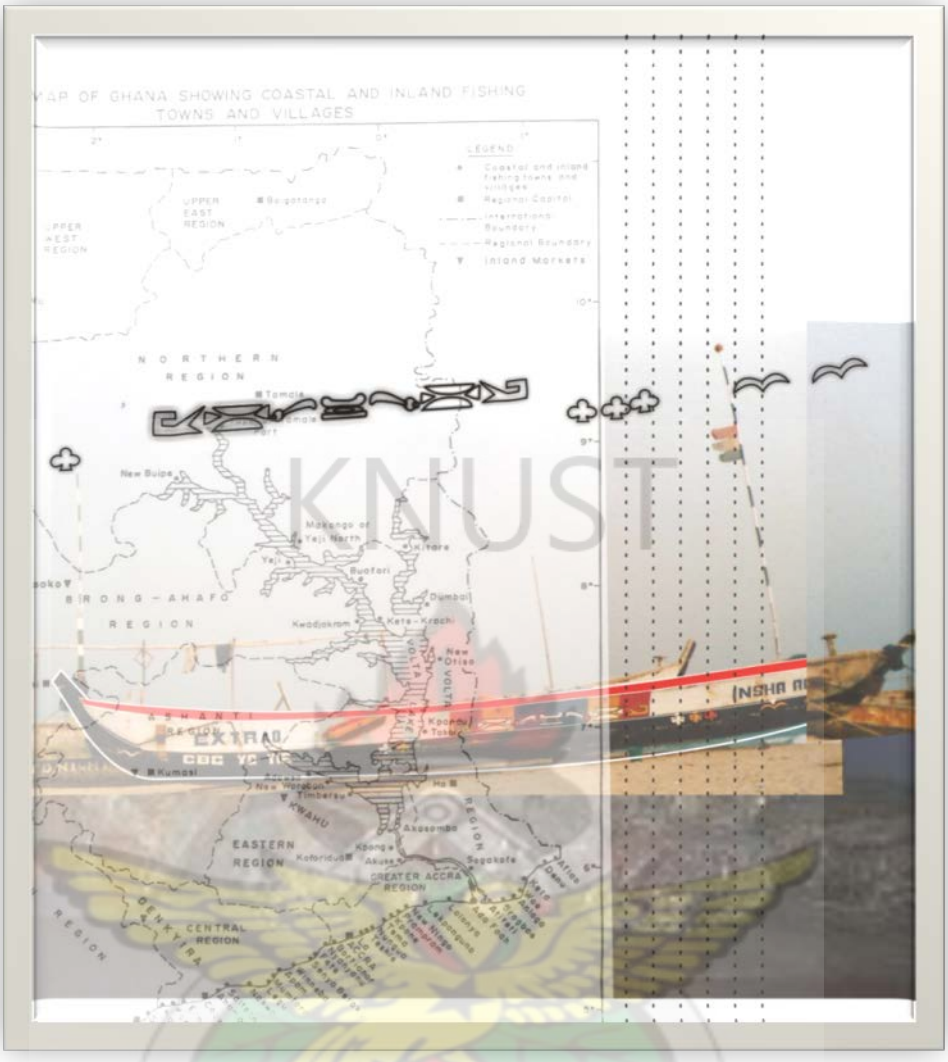



**Plate 4.74 K. D. Agbenu Origin, Afterwards and Fusion, 33”x 23” Digital Painting, 2006**

### 4.4.13 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.75, Shapes in Reflection

This picture recapitulates and defines form in space by exploring an assortment of similar shapes possible as the canoe travels along water against sea or river tide and waves. Two canoes are joined together by drawing one over a photograph of the other. The yellow shapes above the photographed canoes give ideas of sails on the sea. One does not see any water body; instead a dark cloth-like background fills the

whole picture frame. As a digital/virtual installation, he (the artist) delineates his ideas in colour, shapes, objects and material art as it relates to canoe.

"Shapes in Reflection" is a personal interpretation of canoe shapes, shapes created by canoe in motion and shapes reflected on the water body of a moving canoe.

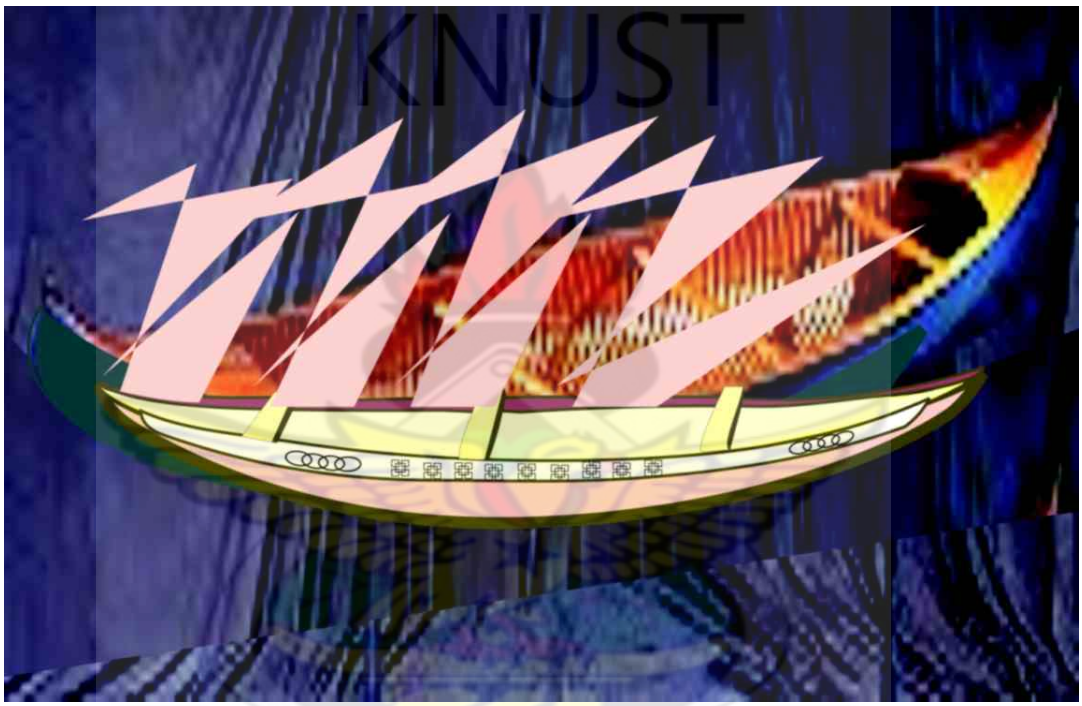


**Plate 4.75 K. D. Agbenu Shapes in Reflection, 11"x 8", Digital Painting, 2006**

### 4.4.14 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: "lele": Plate 4.76, Cultural Icon

Ga and Adangbe traditional canoe industry continues to exist because of the canoe. "lele": Cultural Icon salutes the enduring significance of the canoe of the people of Ga and Adangbe. The background is fashioned in grades of yellow each representing gradual movement from one level of improvement to the next and higher level. This is superimposed with a skeleton frame work of a canoe as a symbol of continual

creation. The artist brings to the fore the need to see canoe as a basic industry that has more room for improvement in design, function and use (in the utilitarian sense).

“lele”: Cultural Icon, is very graphical than any of the art forms created. Created in a polychromatic scheme and calculated with segmented bands and lines: one colour tone is close in proximity to the next, line near the next; the visual band created provides a support for the superimposed sketchy canoe. Thus the uncomplicated nature of the superimposed canoe is uniformly complemented by the segmented background.

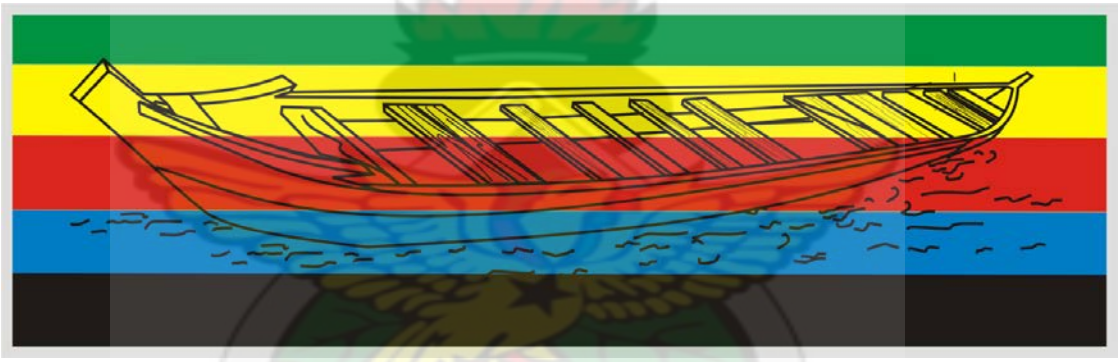


**Plate 4.76 K. D. Agbenu, “lele”: Cultural Icon, 11”x 4” Digital Drawing and Painting, 2006**

### 4.4.15 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.77, “Bordeegme”

This painting celebrates labour in its purest form. The hand motif has been used in this work overly to emphasize the use of “man power” by the Ghanaian fisher folks for livelihood. Downed in flat colours, the topmost band of motif has been repeated at the topmost right and exactly the same way in horizontal middle of the picture frame. Two (2) other repeats occurs; one closely over the central stool motif and the second a

bit away below it. The rest thereafter follows the repeat of the hand motif in overlaps, opposing angles and in stretched forms.

**Plate 4.77 K. D. Agbenu, "Bordeegme", 33"x 23" Digital Painting, 2011**

### 4.4.16 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.78, "Bordeegme" Stool

This painting was also developed from Bordeegme nearly the same way but the central stool and a few of the open palm motifs outline colour have been lightened or highlighted by pure white colour and thickening of their sizes.

**Plate 4.78 K. D. Agbenu, "Bordeegme" Stool, 33"x 23" Digital Painting, 2011**

### 4.4.17 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.79, Transformations

This evocative work captures the remarkable shape of dugout canoe with its designs on the gunwale into a covered bowl object. The "transformations" examines how

canoe basic shape is akin to other domestic utilitarian objects found among the Ga and Adangbe people.

“Transformations” is a slender, narrow canoe and a covered layered bowl in identical colours. This creation was moulded with electronic tools showing the relationship

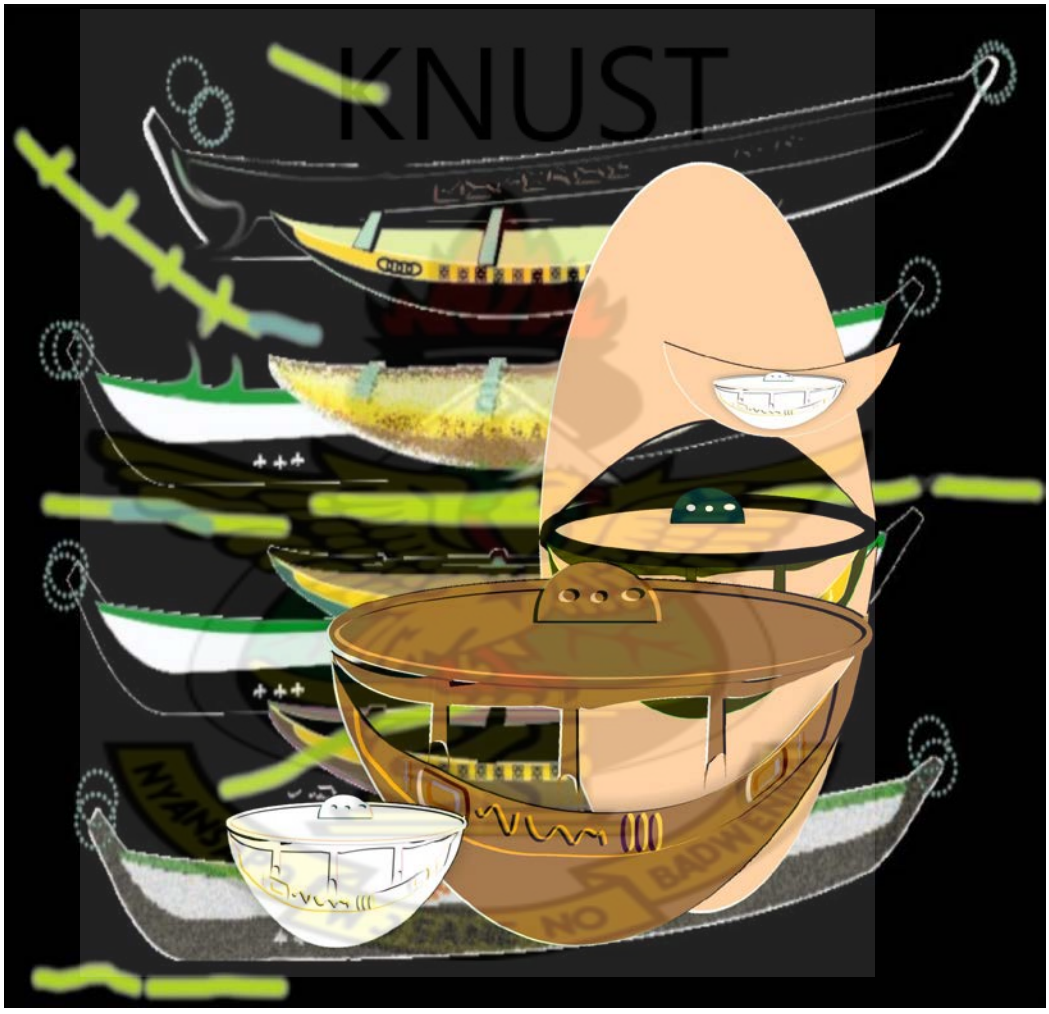



**Plate 4.79 K. D. Agbenu, Transformations, 11”x 9” Digital Painting, 2006**

between domestic and industrial objects. The question about which objects are art objects as against which objects are not art objects are put to rest in this work as the artist demystifies any of such classification. The artist explores values attributed to the

canoe to correspond to that of a domestic object, a bowl, hence making the declaration of no partition between them.

### 4.4.18 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.80, Sacred Insult

Three (3) motifs, man with oversized penis, stool, and open palm are placed in four (4) vertical bands in this work. From left to right the first vertical band, man with oversized penis in white fill colour and khaki outline colour on a khaki band colour is facing the second band, murky green band colour with the two open palm motifs in gray fill colour and outline colour superimposed by the stool motif. The point of interest is the overlaps between the first palm motif in to the first band and the touching of the penis to the palm creating a subtle transparent effect. The same overlaps is seen on the third vertical band with white band colour where man with oversized penis is facing leftward in white fill colour and khaki outline superimposed upon the other hand motif also in white fill colour and khaki outline. The final vertical band is a mirror repeat of that of the first band; hence the man with oversized penis is facing leftward.

The serenity, beauty and fine appeal in this work is seen both in the choice of Khaki, brown, murky green and black colour scheme and the simple compositional structure. Earlier and later developments of this work are in plate 4.81, plate 4.82 and plate 4.83.

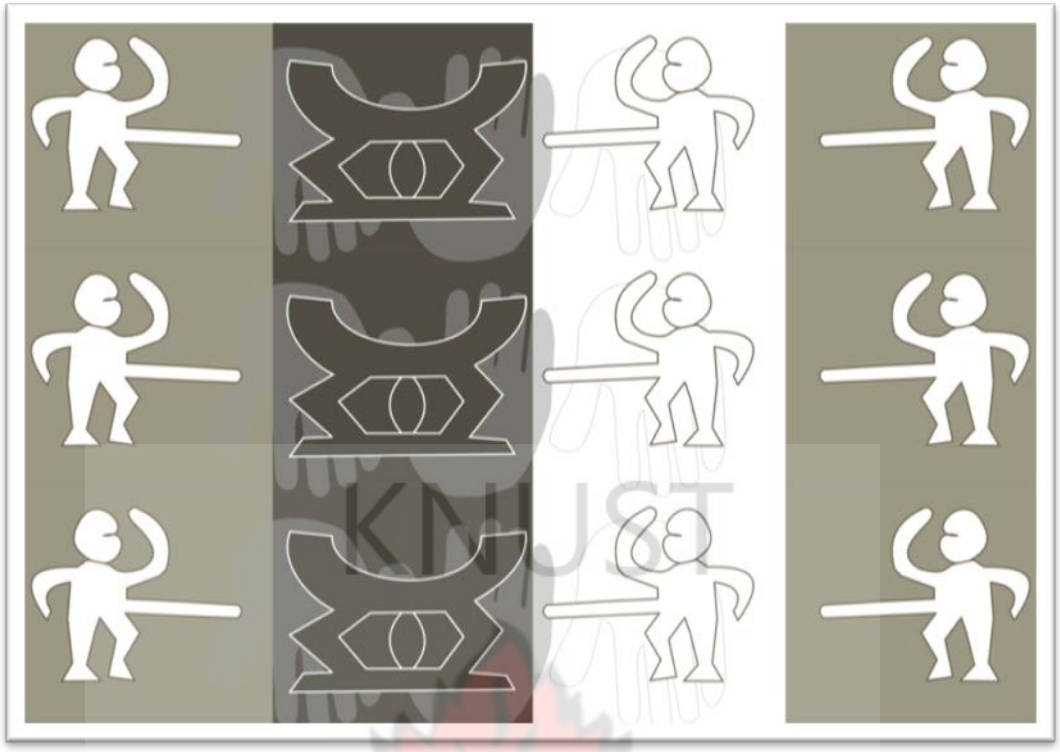


**Plate 4.80 K. D. Agbenu, Sacred Insult, 33”x 23” Digital Painting, 2011**

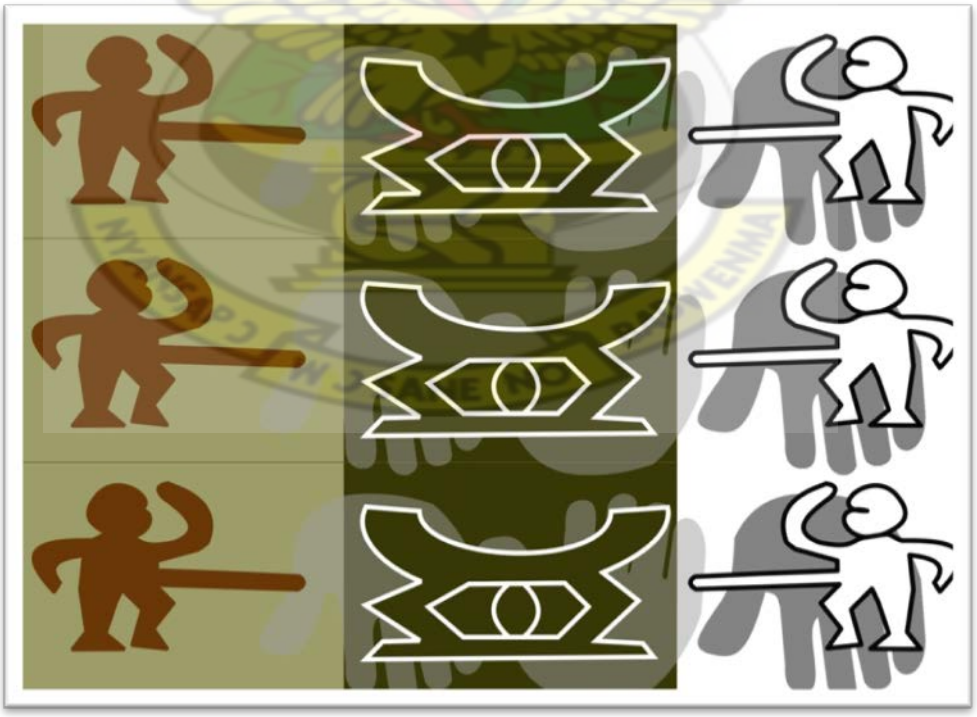


**Plate 4.81 K. D. Agbenu, Real Man, 11”x 8” Digital Painting, Follow -up Development of “Sacred Insult”, 2011**

**Plate 4.82 K. D. Agbenu, Two One Two, 11”x 8” Digital Painting, Follow -up Development of “Sacred Insult”, 2011**

**Plate 4.83 K. D. Agbenu, "Abasan", 33"x 23" Digital Painting, Follow-up Development of "Sacred Insult", 2011**

### 4.4.19 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.84, "Kpann Shimor"

"Kpann Shimor" is a sports and recreational festival among the Ga and Adangbe people which involve tug of war, singing and dancing. It brings about many fishermen to have fun and to test their singing abilities, strength and endurance. The schema for placement of motifs for this work from the top left corner of the picture frame to the downright corners are repeats of "guitar kpann" – guitar string pictogram in exactly the same way for most instances but in different directions - horizontally and vertically either to continue a background line or break to start a new line in the background/band colour. Starting from the bottom part of this painting are two (2) strong horizontal lines that runs across the picture frame from left to right, then breaks into four (4) verticals. From that point on the horizontal line do not run across the full length of the picture frame instead can be seen around segments of the motif.

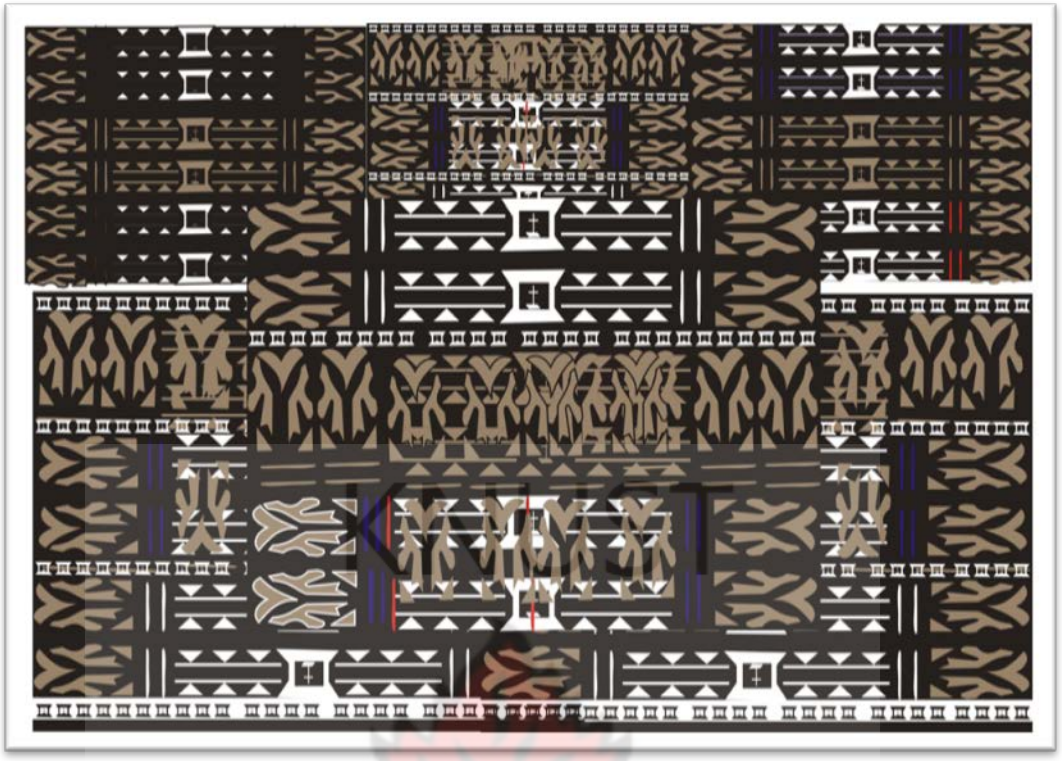


**Plate 4.84 K. D. Agbenu, "Kpann Shimor", 33"x 23" Digital Painting, 2011**

In this visual world of "Kpann Shimor", the artist creates lines presumably for tug war by arranging various versions of the guitar string pictogram on different levels. Horizontal lines run in-between the band of each level of arrangement. Unlike previous paintings, this conglomeration repeats of motifs have only one band colour. And this is understandable since the entire surface texture is intense and so a segmented background might create a visual distortion of the idea of "Kpann Shimor" – cord/line pulling.

The overall impression of "Kpann Shimor" is a total monotonous conventionalization of Ga and Adangbe canoe pictogram in a painting that offers less contemplative depth yet has so much surface excitement.

### 4.4.20 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.85, "Kpann Shimor 1"

A built upon of Kpann Shimor, this painting experiments with a pyramid compositional structure by enforcing the outline colour of some of the motifs. The placements of the motifs are exactly the same as in Kpanshimor. There are no fill colour alterations either, except in the strong white outlines that seem to suggest steps from the top of the painting to the base on both left and right sides.



What this painting features uniquely is a show of difference between highlighted outline through the use of white and not highlighted ones; the variations and suggestiveness of movement and finally the synchronization of the white outlines, the strong horizontal lines, circles, triangle and most importantly the stool motifs.

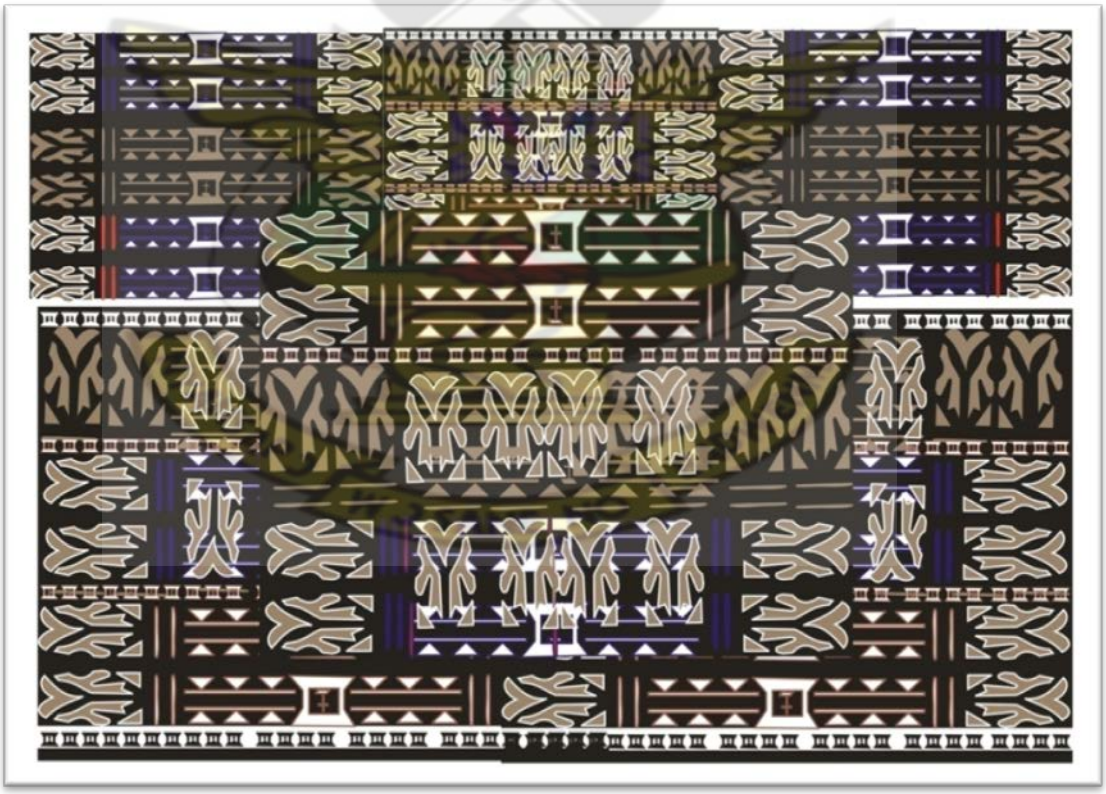


**Plate 4.85 K. D. Agbenu, "Kpann Shimor 1", 33"x 23" Digital Painting, 2011**

Suddenly what used to be lacking contemplative depth begins to assume both the dynamism of illusion and spatial qualities. The only drawback to this attribute is the still dark monotonous background/band colour. On the whole “Kpann Shimor 1” is relatively brighter and more opened unlike “Kpann Shimor”.



**4.4.21 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.86, “Nitsumormli Saji”**

Worked in five (5) different colour background this painting is highly segmented into six core areas, two (2) of them identical. Except for the central zone which is worked in sand, gray, walnut, olive drab and black, all other areas appears as block printing of outline drawing of motifs over bright coloured surface. The only exception to this observation is the black and white motifs that stretch across the entire length of the painting at the bottom part. It seems the painting was worked in a “montaging” approach; the top left corner section was placed first, then followed by the red brown band area and next was a repeat of the left corner section at the top right section. The orange background area followed and was imposed upon by the light orange section which was finally superimposed by the gray area as the central motif.

The central motif is the theme for “Nitsumormli Saji”. The hand motif has been identified as a motif that typifies hard work and diligence. But in this composition quite apart from that, the hand motif is placed or situated as if to say “it is king” and eluding to the fact that if you are a real man, as the “man with oversized penis” stands for, your manliness will not be complete unless you can work hard.

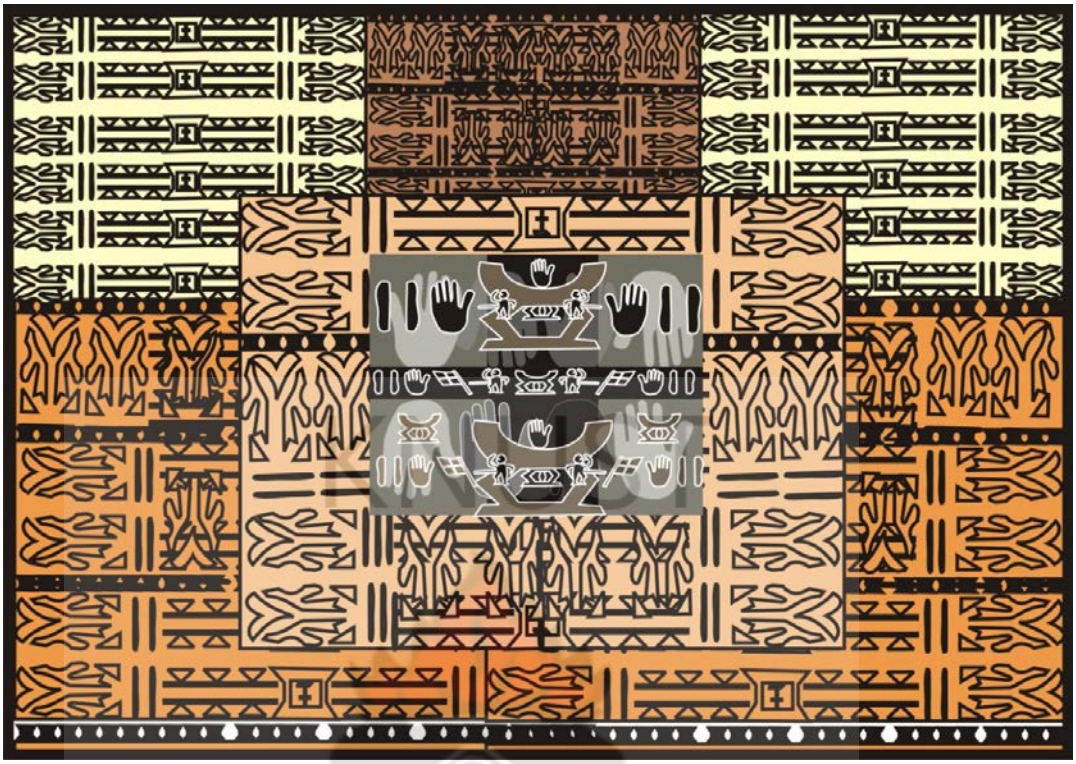


**Plate 4.86 K. D. Agbenu, "Nitsumormli Saji", 33"x 23" Digital Painting, 2011**

### 4.4.22 Analysis of the Digital Paintings: Plate 4.87, "Samai"

"Samai" a Ga word for symbols is a "large" painting, a near climax of this new style and probably the cardinal painting of this project. It is a further development of "Bordeegme". The motifs which are easily identified are, open palm, stools, flags, poles and "man with oversized penis". Some are in full view. Others are blocked by banding effects, yet others are stretched or elongated to fit the overall structure of this composition. The colours used, olive drab, khaki, light and dark brown, walnut, light yellow, murky green and grays are pure, and flat. They visually blended into each other despite the rigidly well-defined outline colours of each motif and fill colours of bands

**Plate 4.87 K. D. Agbenu, "Samai", 33"x 23" Digital Painting, 2011**

Basically, only two (2) design units have been repeated severally in this work. The first (topmost left) band of motifs have been replicated at the third (topmost right) band which is also duplicated beneath the second (topmost middle section) band but this time with a little blocking by the fourth and sixth bands. The second group of repeats is seen in the second, fourth and sixth bands. Portions of the second band have been blocked at both left and right side and elongated by stretching of the full band as seen in the fourth and sixth band repeats simultaneously. From then on the same approach is followed up to the bottom parts where only the second type of band, the open palm and stool motifs, are seen from left to right. But motifs of the first group have been superimposed without any band colour to hold them.

The surface depth of this painting is intriguing, in many ways the motifs are imposed, superimposed, and juxtaposed on each other but carefully to avoid any clashes. As the motifs overlap or turn at opposite angles, the main pictogram groups they belong are not lost, rather they are totally revealed. And most importantly unlike other large complicated works, the background colours of “Samai” are not the same but they neatly fit together.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Summary

There were three (3) objectives for this thesis project. The first was to examine the artistic nexus underlying the creation of Ga and Adangbe canoe as a composite art using fundamental known theories of art. This arose out of a quest to look at Ga and Adangbe canoes solely as floating painted sculptures since most of the predecessors on this subject ventured into other areas in addition to art. Secondly, interpretations of oral tradition and linguistic similarities between the Dangbes and Gas have suggested a common cultural heritage connecting them and as the researcher finds out the artistic nexus underlying the creation of *lele/le* as a composite art it was assumed by the researcher that it will be useful to find out how that common cultural heritage connecting them is reflected in their canoe carving and painting practice. Therefore the next objective was to find out how the common cultural heritage connecting the Ga and the Adangbe is reflected in their canoe carving and painting practice. Thirdly and finally, I wanted to explore those artistic nexus as an artist and evidence of my understanding of Ga and Adangbe canoe art.

To achieve the above outlined objectives, the researcher reviewed related literature (secondary data) on the subject at major libraries of institutions of higher learning, such as Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, University of Ghana, legon - Accra, and research libraries, which included FAO reports at the George Padmore Library Accra and Fisheries Research Unit, Tema. He also

conducted field studies at project sites for primary data in order to frame the appropriate questions.

Haven framed the research questions, the researcher, conducted interviews, and did participatory observations and observations to acquire primary data through purposeful sampling techniques. This was followed up by descriptive analysis of all the data that was relevant to achieving the objectives of the thesis project.



With regards to the first objective, it was found that the size of the canoe, determined work space hence the compositional structure of the canoe, its "decorative" carvings and subsequently, its painting procedure. The nature and procedure for carving the canoes were the same in all the research sites. As an art process involving sculpture and painting, the creation of a *lele/le* is in two (2) main parts; 1 Forest Studio Carving and 2. Beach Studio Carving and Painting.

Forest Studio Carving which is making a dugout from a single log/timber in the forest involves:

Acquisition of permit to fall trees

Tree felling procedures

Removal of limbs – large branches of trees

Initial Dug-out Carving

Conveyance of the Dugout: Half-carved canoe from forest to the beach

Beach Studio Carving and painting which is construction of planks and other extension, carving and painting at the beach involves:

Fashioning out final size and shape of dugout

Construction of sides, thwart, gunwale, brackets, bow and stern

Carving of pictograms on canoe sides, gunwales and other parts

Painting of canoes

As a sculptural form, canoe making involves the techniques of carving in the round as in slashing with chain saw and cutting saws, and scooping with adzes called “Omen” and “Oti”. Construction and assemblage methods are also employed in the building of sides, thwart, gunwale, brackets, bow and stern through cutting and bending of wood and joining with nails and adhesives (glue).The technique of incised carving is the main method for carving the pictogram and texts on the canoes.

All canoes sampled were completed by painting them with bitumen and enamel paints which serves as a means of protecting the Wawa wood for the canoes and also a way of beautifying the canoes. Most of the curvilinear planes and shapes which appear on the *lele/le* are cocoa leaves and fruits or leaves of “sese”, an herbal concoction laden with potent power for healing, attracting good luck or subverting bad premonition.

Choice of colour for the painting was of two kinds; the first consists of canoes that followed a particular family tradition. A tradition means; it is associated to clan, stool or religion. This type is strong in the Ga areas. Examples are the SS Apapa, Kootey Scholar and Kimplin canoe owners’ families. The second type of colour choice for *lele/le* is individuals who choose out of admiration for a particular group: Football clubs, popular player(s), Companies, Political parties and countries asked the canoe painter to use that colour or group of colours. There is also a new development where companies such as the MTN mobile telecommunication company are sponsoring the

painting of canoes. In such instances, the connecting factor for all those canoes in MTN colours is commercially driven.

To a large extent Gas and Adangbes follow the same procedures in all artistic decisions in connection to the making of canoe; same tools and materials, and same style of carving and painting. Therefore, findings confirm to a large extent the evidence of common heritage.



My findings on the four (4) artistic categories of Ga and Adangbe canoes (Isotropic, Optimized, Orthotropic, and Hydrostatic) which correspond to four (4) distinctive compositional structures (Isocomp, Opticomp, Orthocomp and Hydrocomp) are primarily based on dimensional (size) consideration. That was the best denominator identified for categorizing canoes artistically. Therefore the bigger the canoe, the more sophisticated the pictogram on that canoe. Hence hydrostatic canoes have the highest pictogram and naming variations, followed by orthotropic, optimized and isotropic in that order.

In describing the visual elements (motifs) on *lele/le*, the term "pictogram" was preferred to "symbol" because, pictogram offers formal artistic description to Ga and Adangbe canoe motifs than symbol. So the five (5) distinctive visual elements categorized with subdivisions were visual descriptions of the forms of the pictograms: how they present and not what they represent. They include**:** pictogram of living and non-living things

The *lele/le* motifs which can be identified as animals range from naturalistic and realistic rendition to abstracted rendering of insects, birds, fishes and land animals. The general symbolic meanings of these visual elements are related to totemic and proverbial sayings. Pictogram of non-living things was the largest in variety. They range from things associated to daily utilitarian use, to chieftaincy and history of the canoe users. Some of the items include stools, swords, hats, keys, flags, anchors, arrows, and crosses. The general symbolic associations of this pictogram group are royalty and history of their users.



My digital drawings and painting relied on borrowed ideas I discovered from this thesis project. As stated earlier on in chapter Five (5), working space preconditioned by size of canoe and banding or paneling are the two artistic nexus underlying the making of my works which where my discoveries. The paintings are twenty (20) with their titles ranging from Security, Bonso, Creation, Struggle, "Akwadu Shao", "Akwadu Shao KeTsi", "Akwadu Shao 1", to Guitar "Kpann 4", The Visible and the Unseen, Origin, Afterwards and Fusion, and Shapes in Reflection. The rest are "lele": Cultural Icon, "Bordeegme", "Bordeegme Stool", Transformations, Sacred Insult, "Kpann Shimor", "Kpann Shimor 1", "Nitsumormli Saji" and "Samai". The paintings were described and analyzed in chapter four (4) of this report.

The findings can be summarized as follows:

- Four (4) Parameters are used in describing Ga and Adangbe Canoes

- Marine Fisheries Research Division of the Ministry of Fisheries way of grouping canoes is akin to Ga and Adangbes way of grouping canoes in terms of common parameter usage
- canoe size alone is the constant variable for categorizing Ga and Adangbe canoe art into artistic groups
- canoe size precondition the principle of paneling/banding in Ga and Adangbe canoe art



- paneling/banding is the main artistic nexus between the carving and the paintings in Ga and Adangbe canoe art
- paneling/banding principle outlines 4 artistic Ga and Adangbe canoe groups corresponding to 4 compositional categories
- Isotropic - Isocomp
- Optimized - Opticomp
- Orthotropic - Orthocomp
- Hydrostatic - Hydrocomp
- Primary reason for canoe "pictogramy" the same

  Choice of colour for the painting is of two kinds

  - family tradition and individuals
- Commonality of Visual Elements usage in Ga and Adangbe Pictogramy
- Commonality all four (4) artistic groups of Canoes
- Commonality of procedure for canoe art making in;

  1. Forest Studio Carving

  2. Beach Studio Carving and Painting.

- Techniques tools and materials

## 5.2 Conclusions

Findings from this research indicate that Ga and Adangbe canoe is a versatile cultural art object with integrated or inter related features. For instance it is a functional sculpture both in the artistic sense and in the utilitarian sense. As functional floating sculptures, the overall artistic decision on the sculptural form and structure is made on their suitability in the utilitarian sense. Hence, the canoe carver will not decide to elongate or distort any part of the canoe to develop or enhance the aesthetic look of the canoe. That becomes necessary only if it is a necessary utilitarian function of the canoe e.g. how it will help to maneuver through water. So whiles considering Ga and Adangbe canoes as art in the aesthetic sense, it becomes pervious to move in and out to consider the utilitarian aspect also.

Several connections exist between the practice of Ga and Adangbe canoe art and many other art forms such as decorative and functional sculpture pieces undertaken by art schools in Ghana and the world at large. This can be seen in terms of media (wood and paint), tools, material and techniques (carving, construction, assemblage and painting) they both utilize. Beside the above, the carved canoe shape has resemblance to hemispherical fishes, arcs and crescent moon which makes it rest on both land and on water bodies. Pictograms on Ga and Adangbe carved canoe among others are invented motifs imbedded with layers of ideas, topics and concepts, making canoe art rich in content. The Ga and Adangbe carved and painted canoe shapes and pictograms subject matter range from the realms of representational, semi- representational to

abstract. Hence through the practice and exploration of Ga and Adangbe canoe, the teaching of art especially art-theory dichotomy can be transmitted easily.

The aesthetic satisfaction in canoe art is mostly identified in the painting and carved pictogram aspects because the freedom of artistic expression is mainly seen in the art on the surface of the canoe and not in its structure. Very little artful ingenious decisions are taken on the sculptural part. That is why the basis for the artistic canoes types identified by this thesis project is structural/form categories but the compositional types and pictogram groups identified are purely artistic categories. The former are mostly utilitarian decisions but the latter are mainly aesthetic decisions.

Art works by the researcher can be clearly described as diagrammatic in composition because of the paneling rule, thus have less contemplative depth yet possessing enough surface excitement.

Any artist wishing to experiment with pictograms and pictogramy will find Ga and Adangbe canoes versatile cultural art objects with several connections for art-theory practice and exploration.

### 5.3 Recommendations

With respect to findings about objective one, it is recommended that there should be standardized way of building of *lele/le* so as to ensure regularization of canoe sizes

since that is the only definite constant among all the factors in Ga and Adangbe canoe practice. Once that is done, research and reports on fishing gears on each canoe can be useful in governmental planning on the fishing industry for instance licensing.

Based on my findings about the second objective, I recommend that the carving and painting of pictograms on either sides of *lele/le* should be done on separate boards and glued or nailed as attachment to the main hull. This will prolong the life span of the canoes because although the carved pictograms serve identification and beautification purposes they cause rescind of strength in the sides of the canoes' hull. Since similar to almost the same procedure is followed in the making of the *lele/le* among the Ga and Adangbe respectively, once this new approach is introduced in one hamlet, soon it will be seen all over the entire coastal belt of the Greater Accra region.

It is also recommended the research findings about art should not remain as thesis reports only. Researchers on the subject of canoe art should publish books on the history, role and importance of canoe in Ghana. This will help to popularize canoe pictograms and symbols and significant role of canoe in the life of the Ghanaian especially the coastal dwellers.

Additionally, it is regrettable to mention that not even a single book by a Ghanaian exist that is dedicated to the canoe practice in Ghana. For the sake of dissemination of knowledge and education purposes more publications to this effect will begin to rectify this situation.

For a country that has a national association for canoe carvers and owners, art works with canoe attributes should be found in their offices, and arena of operation. But perhaps they are not there because the artists have not done enough popularizations of this art. To this end, exhibitions, seminars and art workshops should be organized by art institutions to raise the awareness of this fascinating aspect of the Ghanaian iconography and visual culture.

The national museum has one exhibit of canoe from Winneba. It is recommended that as a national museum, it must have in possession for display the various types of canoes (Isotropic, Optimized, Orthotropic, and Hydrostatic) with enough data on them to inform the general public.

As more and more hotels and recreational sites like Korle-Gonno Beach, Kokrobite Beach and Dansoman Beach are situated near the coast, soon swimming and canoeing will be fashionable in Ghana especially among local and international tourists. To keep the canoe pictograms for posterity it is recommended that efforts should be made by hotel operators, to employ canoe artists to include some of the *lele/le* pictograms on their boats. Alternatively, makers of surfing boards for swimming can include Ga and Adangbe pictograms to enhance the adaptation of native images for commercial ends.

A university course structured around Ga and Adangbe canoe and art will build avenues for both industry and university faculty to interact. This will open up interest and research into boat making (with alternative materials) in Ghana. Subsequently, it will promote Ga and Adangbe canoe technology and art as well as invigorate artistic

idea development and diversification of research areas and techniques through teaching and practice. Such a course may include field tours, art and technology workshops and canoeing. In this regard, the researcher has drawn up a proposed university second year course around this thesis. (See appendix B)

### 5.3.1 Implication for Further Research

This thesis did not cover several things about the nature of canoe art because they were considered irrelevant to the research problem and objectives. They include; canoe accessories; paddles, nets, flags and canoe propulsion systems such as sails etc. Other aspects of the Ga and Adangbe canoe art that were not studied include the art of mending spoilt canoes and various imported chemicals and innovative approaches being adopted by canoe artists which the researcher overlooked but can be the main focus of a research work. The following themes and topics are highly recommended for researchers, some of which the researcher has already started researching into.

1. Ga and Adangbe canoes flags: source and usage
2. Paddles for dugout Ga and Adangbe canoes, their types and designs
3. The relationship between nets and fishing canoes
4. Types of colouring mediums used in Ga and Adangbe canoe painting
5. Carving Techniques in Ga and Adangbe Canoe Making
6. Ga and Adangbe Canoe locations and canoe types
7. Ga and Adangbe Canoe names in relation to owner names
8. Canoe names and inscriptions on Ga and Adangbe Canoes
9. Ga and Adangbe Canoe symbols, meanings and uses
10. Ga and Adangbe Pictogram Groups

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