

**AHWIAA WOOD CARVING INDUSTRY:  
NEW TRENDS AND THEIR IMPLICATION FOR ART EDUCATION**

By

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**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the Master of Arts (Art Education) degree and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the university, except where due acknowledgement had been made in the text.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Asantes are noted for their expertise in variety of specialized visual arts such as wood carving. Ahwiaa wood carving industry has developed; though production techniques have remained stereotyped. Tools have greatly remained simple, materials the same, variations in form have not changed much and conventional treatment has not promoted creativity and originality, yet some new trends, new approaches are noticeable today. At present, globalization, trade, education, Islam and Christianity, changes in societal values and cultural practices, political and economic challenges, technology, knowledge explosion have generated new approaches to the Ahwiaa wood carving industry. Besides, no organized documentation has been done on the Ahwiaa wood carving industry, so that the researchers almost always have to rely on oral tradition to source information from wood carvers. Therefore, there is a need to study new trends in the wood carving industry at Ahwiaa. The researcher employed qualitative method of research to carry out the study. The data were collected using interviews and observation. The researcher found out that simple tools are made by the local blacksmiths. Tools are sharpened and maintained by oiling and storing after use. The main material is wood, formerly acquired by felling special trees from the forest. Today the log for carving is bought from Timber contractors. The carving of an item follows specific processes, according to tradition. Women were prevented from carving in the past. Today women are free to carve if they so wish. The researcher recommends that the departments of Sculpture and Integrated Rural Art and Industry at KNUST should organize workshops for carvers at Ahwiaa and introduce them to modern wood carving technologies. The two departments should further adopt Ahwiaa carving village and initiate new ideas in wood sculpture to them. The wood carvers should

acquire appropriate skills in proper seasoning of the wood for carving. This can be done in collaboration with the department of Sculpture College of Art, K.N.U.S.T and Forest Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG) at Fumesua, Kumasi. The wood carvers should encourage the youth to get involved in the carving trade. Since the future of the carving industry depends on the youth. The female youth should be encouraged to carve, so that both males and females will come together to rejuvenate the wood carving industry.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Overview

This chapter is the introductory part that describes the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, delimitation, limitation, definition of terms, list of abbreviations, importance of the study and organization of the rest of the text.

### Background to the Study

Asantes are noted for their expertise in a variety of specialized visual arts. These include weaving, wood carving, ceramics, and metallurgy. Of these arts, wood carving is divided into many branches, each with its own specialists. Among the major products are wooden sculptures of outstanding artistic quality and the talking-drums (ntumpane). The famous wooden "stools" are symbolic and ritual objects rather than items of furniture. "In Ashanti, a generation or so ago, every stool in use had its own special name which denoted the sex, or social status, or clan of the owner" (Rattray 1927: p. 271).

Development in wood carving gained impetus due to demands of religious beliefs. This quality gingered many carvers to become experts. One is Nana Frimpong Boadu (chief carver of Otumfuo) at Ahwiaa. Many of Ahwiaa wood carvers became master carvers of *Asantehene* who is regarded as the intermediary between the gods and the people. The kind of carved objects produced were highly a matter of meeting royal demands of the *Asantehene*. He has been the power house and commander-in-chief whose demands propelled the growth of Ahwiaa wood carving industry.

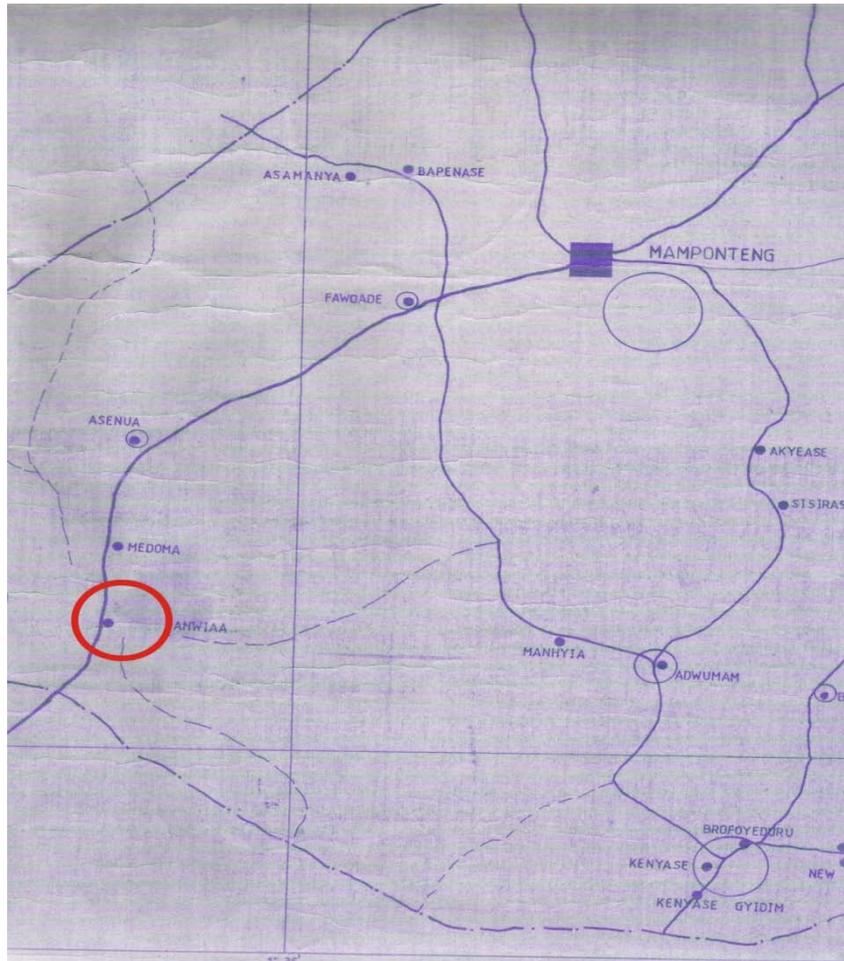
Ahwiaa, well known for traditional wood carving centre, is a small town located on the main Kumasi-Mampong highway, about 10 kilometres north of Kumasi in the Kwabre District of Ashanti region of Ghana. It has a population of about 5000 people. The major products are mainly traditional stools, statuettes, Akuaba dolls, animals and domestic products such as mortars, drums, mashing bowls, door panels, wall hangings, masks, to name a few.

The main occupation is peasant farming while some of the population are wood carvers. Wood carving, according to tradition, has been the preserve of males. Women do not carve because it is considered indecent for a woman to spread her legs and place a block of wood between them for carving. This is indecent exposure. Also, women, in respect of their monthly menstrual condition, were not included in the carving trade. However, modernity has changed the tradition such that women now are free to take up wood carving provided they are physically capable and are interested in the trade. In addition to this freedom, women today form an integral part of the wood carving trade.

Wood carving has been the sole business of middle aged males with apprentices. The average age of a wood carver at Ahwiaa is 50 years. The oldest wood carver at the time of this research was 75 years, while the youngest is 25 years. Previously, young people served as apprentices to master carvers. But with acceleration of education in Ghana, many young persons are now in school, leaving the apprenticeship in wood carving in the hands of a few non-school goers and Junior High School graduates.

A few blacksmiths serve as providers of simple metal tools for carving. Other tools are purchased from shops in Kumasi. The basic tools used in Ahiwaa are chisels, knife, adze, axe, gouges just to mention a few. The basic materials are wood, sand paper, wax, lacquer, shea butter and soot mix, wood dye, etc The logs of wood which were formally cut from the forest by the carvers are now sold to the carvers by timber contractors.

The products are sold locally; tourists have also intruded the market and a few carvers are exporting their carved works to other countries. The value of carving at Ahwiaa includes teaching morals, maintaining standards of behavior and attitudes, upholding traditions, providing functional and symbolic objects. Wood carving is a household work in the Ahwiaa village which has been passed on from generation to generation. The concept of wood carving is communal that is an artwork is owned by many. However, modernity has caused the emergence of new ways of doing things which are worth studying.



**Map 1: The marked area in red is Ahwiaa (the carving town)**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Wood carving at Ahwiaa is of a great social significance to the Asantes. It is believed that the Asante regard visual artists and musicians as spokespersons or mouth pieces of the supreme God. They are regarded as interpreters of the universal truths of creation. This means that Asante artists in general are regarded in a high esteem.

Wood carving is an old art form of Asantes. History has it that after the Asante-Gyaman wars, several artists were compelled to settle in the Asante Empire. Among them were wood carvers of great merit. They exhibited great skills, imagination, originality and feeling in their works. These gave a distinct quality to Asante wood

carving (Rattray, 1927). Many of the expert wood carvers at Ahwiaa have been producers of royal regalia, such as state swords, stools, handles, drums, umbrella-tops, staffs and so on. The stool became the epitome of excellence in wood carving. Also, household items such as pestles, mortars, wooden bowls, wooden plates, fertility dolls, human and animals figures, totemic animals and tool handles were produced.

Development in wood carving at Ahwiaa gained impetus in recent times. Though production techniques have been stereotyped, tools have greatly remained simple, materials the same; variations in form have not changed much and conventional treatment has not promoted creativity and originality, yet some new trends, new approaches are noticeable today.

At present, globalization, trade, education, Islam and Christianity, changes in societal values and cultural practices, political and economic challenges, science and technology, knowledge explosion have generated new approaches to the Ahwiaa wood carving industry. Besides, no organized documentation has been done on the Ahwiaa wood carving industry, so that the researchers almost always have to rely on oral tradition to source information from a few relatively younger generations of wood carvers. This research is designed to investigate new trends and challenges prompted by the effect of the rapid social change and to leave the records for prosperity.

### **Objectives**

1. To identify, describe and discuss the present state of Ahwiaa wood carving industry.

2. To find out and examine the new trends and assess their usefulness for public education and the teaching and learning of Art Education.

### **Research Questions**

1. What kind of tools/equipment and materials do the wood carvers use?
2. What production processes are followed by the wood carvers at Ahwiaa?
3. What kind of carved items are produced by the Ahwiaa carvers?
4. What are the new trends of Ahwiaa wood carving and their implications for Art Education?

### **Delimitation**

The research covers post-independence wood carving industry in the Ahwiaa community located in Kumasi in Ashanti region and emphasizes types of tools/equipment and materials, the production processes, types of products including new trends and their implications for Art education.

### **Limitation**

1. This research cannot make claims of covering every detail on Ahwiaa wood carving.

### **Definition of Terms**

**New trends**                      New ways of doing things.

**Metallurgy**                    It is an art of separating metal from ore, purifying it, and the art of working in metal.

**Last**                              This is a foot-shaped wooden material useful in making sandals and footwear.

## **List of Abbreviations**

- P.V.A** - Polyvinyl acetate.
- FORIG** - Forest Research Institute of Ghana.
- KNUST** - Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

## **Importance of the Study**

The outcome of this research will be valuable source of information and record to carvers at Ahwiaa, Asantes in general, anthropologists, non-Asantes, art students, art historians and researchers. This thesis is a documentation on wood carving at Ahwiaa. It is a body of knowledge to serve as reference for researchers, art historians, wood carvers and sociologists. The thesis is also a document that can be used in teaching wood carving. It will expose the Ahwiaa wood carving practices to non-Asantes.

## **Organization of the rest of the Text**

The thesis has been presented in five chapters:

Chapter one is the introduction outlining the problem and its setting.

Chapter two presents review of literature relating to the study.

Chapter three covers methodology employed.

Chapter four is the presentation and discussion of results.

The final chapter gives the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### **Overview**

Relevant literature on this topic is reviewed under the following sub-headings; wood carving in Ghana, wood carving tools, wood types for carving, wood acquisition, wood carving process and products.

#### **Wood carving in Ghana**

Wood carving is an age-old tradition in Ghana, practiced by various ethnic communities in Volta, Western, Eastern and Ashanti regions. The objects produced by the wood carver extend from domestic usage through religious, social, economic, political and educational purposes. Mortars, ladles and spoons, door panels, ancestral masks and figures, stools and thrones, drums and other musical instruments, weaving bobbins and other ritual and ceremonial objects are among a host of products of the Ghanaian wood carver.

The various communities across Africa carve their wooden objects according to their beliefs and customs. Their beliefs, customs and cultural practices and functions generally determine their various identifiable styles. Thus, it is easy to identify, for instance a Dogon, Baule, Senufo, Yoruba, Asante, Luba, Makonde and Kuba carving with their distinctive characteristic and stylistic features.

Newman (1974), writing in support of the fact that the African wood carver produces many wooden forms which serve useful and decorative functions, she opines that doors are carved; large trees are hollowed out to form grain mortars, drums and canoes, wooden pestles, beer troughs, handles and shafts, musical instruments,

walking sticks, dishes, plates and cups, stools vases and wooden pots, weaving bobbins, spoons and combs. Newman (1974) established further that

All are carefully hand carved according to tradition and need; and all are hand finished, and sometimes decorated. Size varies greatly from canoes to combs. Masks and sculptures too, may vary from heavy pieces six to eight feet tall to small delicate ancestor figures and small finely carved masks (p. 246).

The above assertions by Newman point to the creative prowess and delicate craftsmanship of the African wood carver which are dynamic in nature taking on new trends with the inevitable changes in the socio-cultural environment of the African world include Ahwiaa carvers in the Ashanti region of Ghana where this research is about.

As already indicated wood carving is an indigenous art tradition in Ghana. Ghanaian wood carvers have, for many centuries, made use of the various types of wood in their environment to make useful items for everyday life. Wood is an important material through which the carvers use to create their art to express their thoughts and feelings. The expression of thoughts and feelings manifests in a wide range of useful items already indicated. Even though the Ghanaian carver is versatile in his production of items, the stool and other paraphernalia of royalty which the carver makes have given him international recognition. To enable the Ghanaian carver exhibit his ingenuity, he relies on the use of a range of very simple tools which are on the contrary highly effective and efficient.

## **Wood carving tools**

Discussing wood carving tools brings to mind a set of basic tools which are used universally. There are the carving knife used to pare, cut and smooth wood; a gouge which comes in various shapes and sizes with a curved cutting edge for carving hollows, rounds and sweeping curves. The chisel, whose straight cutting edge is used for lines and cleaning up flat surfaces and comes in large and small sizes is another important tool. A special screw for fixing work to the workbench and a mallet complete the carver's kit.

The above mentioned carving tools could be described as conventional imported tools. But the indigenous wood carver is more conversant with locally designed tools made by blacksmiths. These include the 'soso' and 'Sosowa' (large and small adze), 'Bomye' (cutting tool for blocking), 'Paye soso' (hoe for splitting) and 'Pasoo' (chisel-like flat tool for planing wood). The others are 'Sekanmoa' (small knife), 'Akuntumoa' (double-handled tool for carving), 'Dawruwa, Akon, Pewa' and 'Fatiye' (an awl). 'Bower' (chisel with shaft) and 'Soso diamin' (hoe that cuts in big chunks) complete the list.

According to Adjin-Mensah (2001), tools are considered to have spirits which guide their use in cutting. Liquor is poured on the tools to appease the gods to circumvent accidents during carving. Sarpong (1971), corroborates this assertion when he states that:

The tools have a rite performed over them before any big task is started and when a job in hand is not proceeding satisfactorily. Wine is poured over them, and the blood of a fowl sprinkled upon them, with the appropriate prayers. They are also kept in special places free from

danger of desecration. This is done to secure freedom from accidents caused by the tools slipping and wounding the carver (p. 15)

To emphasize this traditional belief, Sarpong, (1971) tells a story about a carver wounded by his tools accidentally, and who upon consulting a herbalist for cure confessed upon enquiry from the herbalist that his sacrifice to his tools was not sufficient. After getting rapid healing from the herbalist, nobody attributed the healing to the efficacy of the herb but rather to the extra sacrifice to his tools as ordered by the herbalist before he applied the healing herb. The import of the story is that the people have a very strong faith in their rituals, and that they should under no circumstance be compromised.

“The impact made by African sculpture is the result of a broad, vigorous treatment using a wide cutting-edged tool – the adze” Bull (1972:18) describing further the attributes and effectiveness of the adze Bull states that with the adze one achieves precisely broadness and bigness of form. “The adze is a primitive tool of utter simplicity and effectiveness. It is a mallet and chisel combined and has great cutting power. An experienced craftsman can achieve surprising accuracy with it: it becomes part of him, an extension of his hand” (Bull, 1972).

“The adze is an indispensable tool in the wood carver’s kit all over Ghana including Ahwiaa. Since the wood carver has no working bench with a vice to hold his work, he sits down, holds the work with one hand and his adze in the other. He aims the tool, “throws” it at the wood in a repeated rhythmical, radial movement and the operation is under way”. This is how Bull describes the way the indigenous wood carver operates the adze in the carving process using variety of wood (Bull, 1972).

## **Wood types for carving**

The indigenous wood carver generally utilizes soft woods often in their green state which are then easier to work. Wood such as Nyame Dua (*Alstonia gongensis*) and Osele (*Holarrhena wulfsbergii*) are the principal species used. Tweneboa (*Entanchotheca* for drums), Twafu yeden (*Harrisonia occidentalis* for umbrella frames), Funtum (*Funtumia elastica*) for stools, bowls, combs, Odee (*Okonkaka ambrevellei*) is evil tree for religious dolls and Gyenyene (*Cedrela mexicana*) among others are the trees commonly carved.

Mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) has a reddish tone that deepens beautifully over the years. It is a strong yet light wood with a straight and even grain. Shaves well and takes extremely fine detail. Used in furniture making, veneers, carving, and turn work.

Obeche (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*) also called Wawa, an extremely soft wood with a very featureless graining. Obeche is easily indented with any pressure and requires careful treatment in pattern tracing and handling. Carving knives need to be finely honed for the best cutting strokes. It is exceptionally light weight, and used in model making and three dimensional carving.

Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) a hardwood similar to walnut in its ability to be carved. It has a very interesting, distinct grain pattern that is straight. Its medium to heavy weight wood: that is creamy tan, with darker brown grain lines. It smells wonderful; while you are carving. It is used in furniture making, furniture carving, and carving (Irish, 2007).

Gyenyene (*Cedrela mexicana*) it is reddish in colour and has odour like that of

onion, hence its name. It is quite soft and because of its bad odour no pest attacks it. It is a pleasure to carve when well-seasoned and takes polish very well. It is used for carving stools, 'owarri' boards, footwear last, pair of heels and other object.

Nyamedua /Sinnuro (*Alstonia boonei*) and Funtum (*Funtumia elastica*) are in the same family. They are soft, light weight and not durable. They are promptly affected by shrinkage while drying and pest attack it easily. Used for making stools, bowls, combs, linguist staffs, Akuaba doll, totemic animal forms etc.

Osese is pale yellow when fresh, it fades as it dries. It is evenly textured, fairly soft, straight grained and free from knot and bumps. Its colour is light, brilliant and has smooth finishing. It is very durable and used for making stool and other objects. Tweneboa (*Entanchofragma*) it is hard and durable. It is able to stand the test of time and do not crack easily. It is used for making drums (Adu-Agyem, 1990).

It could be noticed that only a few trees are mentioned. This is because according to Sarpong (1971: 9), "there is a traditional choice in the species of wood for carving. Only a few trees are considered proper for it. It can also be said that the choice of wood is made on practical grounds, since whatever is carved is expected to last for a long time, and should also be light enough to be carried about."

Explaining further, Sarpong (1971:9) continues that "more important in the choice is the religious reasons, and that the wood is chosen because it is believed to have a supernatural character (spirit) of its own. The Osese and Nyamedua are the most frequently used because they are soft and white in character. Their softness enables easy carving and their whiteness lends cleanness to the carved products".

## **Wood Acquisition**

There is an Akan belief that many plants have spirits including Osese, Nyamedua and Tweneboa mentioned earlier as wood carving trees. These three are said to possess very vindictive spirits. “The root of Tweneboa can turn into a most venomous serpent to protect itself against any “aggressor,” the three are believed to be capable of moving themselves from one place to another, and make themselves invisible to man when in danger” (Sarpong,1971). These beliefs guided the carving industry for years. Today, these beliefs have no scientific basis, however as long as the carvers think these beliefs have a way of controlling their social behaviors then they are still useful.

Due to these spiritual characteristics of these trees and the fact that they have souls, the craftsman usually performs some rituals to appease the spirit before the trees are felled. Usually eggs, fowls and sheep are sacrificed. Sarpong (1971) laid bare the prayer that accompanies the sacrifice:

Osese tree, here is a chicken for you. I am going to fell you and make a stool out of you; receive an offering and eat. Please, let not the tool cut me. Do not let me suffer afterwards; and let me have a good price for the stool (p.11)

However, today, in the wake of civilization, science and technology it is no longer tangible to offer eggs or objects to the trees before they are felled for carving. Since the carvers buy the logs from timber contractors.

## **Wood Carving Process and Products**

The African woodcarver through his trade or profession has provided his society with all the useful wooden products needed to keep life going. He is a very creative

individual who puts his communities' abstract, religious, socio-cultural ideas into tangible, symbolic forms for use by his compatriots in whatever ways appropriate. His creativity is therefore driven by the aesthetic and functional dictates of his patrons. His artefacts must of necessity be made to serve certain purposes which may determine the value or otherwise of his works. The works are deemed good and useful if they fit the purposes for which they were created. When this criterion is not met, the works have no value in the estimation of the community. It is therefore true to state that the African woodcarver holds a place of pride in indigenous communities all over the African continent.

The woodcarver deserves his status. According to Newman (1974), "He is a highly trained craftsman. He understands the characteristics of wood, use of tools and the ethnic stylistic language. Most important about the carver is the automatic, spontaneous, or instinctive way he expresses the spiritual aspects of his carving." (p. 261). Newman opines further that "the sculptor is obsessed with poetic and spiritual themes that have been imbued in him and embodied in generations of religious ceremony and folktale".

The wood which provides the raw material for these carvings is in the rudimentary, cylindrical form of branch or three-trunk section. As Bull puts it "this form conditions the manner of the sculptural approach and determines the general character of most ethnic styles" (Bull, 1972:18) "When the cylinder of wood is cut through with the adze, a special feature of African sculpture – the intersection of planes in the cylinder is revealed. This is a dramatic juxtaposition and is obtained with little effort and economical means.

Generally the woodcarver holds the cylinder of wood in the hand and continually turns it and chops it. This rhythmic action of turning and chopping is called a “motor action” according to Bull. The carver grows with the knowledge of the style and of his art so much so that this becomes second nature. According to Bull “he does not have to think about the forms in the style, these are predetermined. He is not required to create anything new as a personal expression: what he is concerned with is copying a known pattern of forms releasing these forms from the wood and thus perpetuating the style (Bull, 1972:19).

Bull again compares the indigenous African carver’s abilities to carve out excellent forms from a piece of cylindrical wood with what Michelangelo said of a stone carver and a block of stone thus:

Michelangelo said that in every block of stone there is a figure waiting to be released. With the African woodcarver – the same thing. Uninhibited by rules concerning natural human proportion he can carve the style from memory: he can see it in the wood and he is trained to chop it out. He has to see it or to feel it because one cannot do too much drawing on a cylinder. But the point is that as he turns the wood to meet the rhythmical strokes of the tool, in the meeting of the blade with the turning wood, there results what seems to be this magical, spontaneous growth of form (Bull, 1972)

Bull believes that this is part of the process of carving wood in Africa which gives African sculpture such power and rhythmic sequence; that is, the rhythmic action of cutting into a cylinder which is in movement. It is a process which can only be fully appreciated when one is engaged in carving a copy.

The woodcarvers in Ahwiaa also exhibit the same traits in their daily routine of carving various artefacts. At Ahwiaa, carvers neither draw on the block of wood what they intend producing, nor do they hold the wood in a vice. They usually hold the piece of wood with one hand which turns the wood round while the other hand throws the adze to cut the wood as described earlier. Above all, the verticality of the tree trunk determines the straight, vertical form of the finished carving.

Sarpong, (1971) expressing his views on wood carving in Ashanti says that wood carving is the art which produces the various drums and stools for ceremonies. He emphasizes that through wood carving images of gods are made, and figures of chiefs, queens, court attendants put into wood. He opines further that for practical purposes, therefore carving is second to none; and that without carving the Akan would not have their wooden combs, spoons, plates, and mortars. Sarpong Peter is of the view that the most important of the carver's products is the stool which apart from its practical uses as a seat, it is also a work of art as well as a religious object.

### **The Stool**

The stool is among the most important pieces of furniture of a chief's regalia and is a symbol of his high office. It is unique for its architectural construction and symbolic decorative design pattern. The stool became the epitome of excellence in wood carving. Several varieties and designs are carved so that the poorest person can own one.

The stool is believed by the Akans to inhabit the soul of the nation, that is, it marks continuities across generations and groups. It also marks close solidarities between the living and the dead. Through the stool, the reigning king serves as a link between the

living, the dead and the yet-to-be-born members of the society. The king, therefore, has the responsibility to preserve the stool for posterity.

Sarpong (1971:23) opines that “in the Akan traditional life, a stool symbolizes the soul of the society. The seat, which is in the shape of a crescent, symbolizes the warmth of a mother’s embrace”.

According to Sarpong (1971:17), “stools are also classified according to the sex of the user. There are men’s stools, women’s stools (generally presented by a bride-groom to the bride), and stools used by both men and women”.

The social status of the persons who use stools for official purposes, affords still a thirds division of stools. We have the Ahennwa (chief’s stool). The Ahemmadwa (queen’s stool) and the Adammadwa (literally two-penny stool, i.e. the poor man’s stool) Priest have their special stools with single centre supports, and so have certain attendants at the Chief’s house e.g. Padlock stool used by the Chief’s spokesman (pp. 18)

There are also specially patterned stools with names, which serve as stool-models for carvers, thus providing a further division of stools identified by name. The Porcupine stool, leopard stool, moon stool and Elephant stool are examples.



**Plate 2.1 Stool**

I. The Top (Seat)

II. The Middle Section that carries the design

III. The Base

The stool consists of three parts- the top, the middle and the base. The top is carved smooth, and curved to facilitate safe and comfortable sitting. The middle is the design section of the stool. The design in the middle section identifies the kind of stool it is, who can own the stool and its value in terms of money and culture. The middle section of the stool is artistically the most expressive and impressive part of the whole composition and the carver must have great attention, imaginative and creative sensibilities to produce an exquisite master piece. The base serves as the ground support.

According to Amenuke (1995), the top of a stool (shaped like a crescent moon) symbolises the loving embrace of a mother. It also represents the warmth of the female influence in society. The four rectangular-shaped pillars at the corners of the stool represent the influence of male power in society. They signify the strength, power and good fortunes of the society. Ideally, they symbolize how the society depends on its male members for subsistence, growth and protection.

On the sides of each of these pillars are a number of small triangular or rounded projections. These are usually in odd numbers and they represent male and female children in society. Those that have pointed ends represent male children, while those with rounded ends stand for females. The way in which these projections are attached to the pillars signifies how children usually cling to their parents.

The strong circular, centre pillar of a stool symbolizes the power and presence of God in society. The small square or rectangular holes in the centre pillar signify the justice and fairness for which god stands in society. The base of the stool signifies the stability of the earth. Moreover, if the stool is designed with curved pillars shaped like the arc of the rainbow it signifies a common sharing of responsibility among men and women in society. Expressing admiration of the carver's creative sense, Degan (1988) writes thus:

When an Asante carver is commissioned by a chief, priest or other high-ranking member of society to carve a stool, it means the patron believes the carver meets a set of rigorous qualifications. He must not only be highly skilled technically, but have creative talent and imagination. Most significantly, he must conscientiously observe the religious and moral codes and be a devout practitioner. For the Asante, this adherence to moral precepts is important because the stool has much more than practical attributes. The use of symbols in the carving means that the stool will convey messages, and these must be expressed with artistry. More importantly, the stool will eventually house the spirit of its owner (p. 34).

Degan (1988) expresses the view, as cited in Edusei, (2004) that the status represented by the stool is significant. Chiefs who do not perform as expected and fail in their duty can be destooled. This strips them of their duties, authority and prestige and consequently, of their status. On the other hand if a chief fulfils his traditional duties and roles as expected by his community he is honoured after his demise with a blackened stool. (p 63)

Kyerematen (1964) stipulated as cited by Edusei that, "it was on a stool that a deceased person was bathed before being laid in state". He continues further that it

was customary for a husband to present his newly married wife a stool to make sure of keeping her”. (p.63)

Moreover, Kyeremanten (1964) indicates that “a young girl undergoing the rite to mark her attainment of puberty was placed on a stool.” He also emphasizes that “the first gift to be made by a father to his child when the latter began to crawl was a stool”. (p.63). There is close association between a person and his/her stool that has brought about the saying “there is no secret between a person and his/her stool”. Traditionally, a person is advised to tilt his/her stool whenever leaving it to prevent some other spirit from occupying it. This implies that the stool is thus imbued with the owner’s personality.

The profession of wood carving is restricted to males and requires exceptional skill and patience. The trade, according to Sarpong Peter, has always been a privilege, lucrative and honourable. The honour attached to the art is due to the fact that it makes even the chief dependent in a sense on the carver. The high intelligence and creative sensibilities in visualizing the end result (artifact) before the carving is made are among the greatest assets of the carver.

Sarpong (1974) concludes, citing among other virtues of the carver, that “there was a time when chiefs relied for their stools on special stool – carvers who had attained a certain standard of proficiency in the art. These of course, got very high reward for their services”.

It can therefore be concluded that the art of wood carving occupies a very high position in the socio-cultural life of Ghanaian carving communities and is regarded as an honourable job.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Overview**

This chapter deals with the methodology that was used in conducting the research. It covers the following headings: Research design, Library research, Population for the study, Sampling design, the sample, Primary and Secondary data, Data collection instruments, Validation of instruments, Administration of instruments, Data collection procedures and Data analysis plan.

#### **Research Design**

The researcher used qualitative method of research to carry out the study. Qualitative Research is a field of inquiry that crosscuts disciplines and subject matters. Ary et al (2001) focus on qualitative research as understanding social phenomena from the perspective of the human participants in the study. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) reiterated that qualitative research is typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' point of view. According to Merriam, 1998 as cited by Best and Kahn 2003, qualitative research includes the following: it is descriptive; it involves field work; it is 'concerned primarily with process rather than outcomes or products'; it is inductive in that researchers build abstraction, concepts, theory and hypotheses from details; the 'researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis'; and it is primarily 'interested in meaning – how people make sense of their lives, experiences and structures of the world' (p.19). In qualitative research, data are collected in natural settings, and the researcher aims at generating a theory rather than testing theory.

Research type employed was descriptive. Sellgren (1991), defines descriptive research as factual, accurate and systematic research of a phenomenon being studied. Best and Kahn (2003) opined that descriptive research uses non quantitative methods to describe “what is”. It uses systematic procedures to discover non quantifiable relationships between existing variables. Again, Best and Kahn (2003) described descriptive research as the following: hypothesis formulation and testing, the analysis of the relationships between non manipulated variables and the development of generalization or generalization as its goal. Also, it is to describe systematically facts and characteristics of a given population.

### **Library Research**

The following libraries were visited in order to collect relevant information for the study.

- KNUST Libraries, Kumasi.
- Ashanti Library, Kumasi.
- British Council Library, Kumasi.
- Personal Libraries of Dr. K.Edusei and Dr. S.K.Amenuke.

These libraries were selected because the researcher had easy access to them without travelling long distances. Also literature on art which would be closely related to wood carving, the researcher’s chosen topic, could be easily obtained from some of these libraries.

### **Population for the Study**

Sidhu (2003) asserts that population is a group of people or objects that have common characteristics that are of interest to the researcher. All wood carvers in the Kumasi

metropolis will benefit from the research so they constitute the target population for this study. However it is not possible to reach the target population. Therefore an accessible population was selected in Ahwiaa traditional area, accessible population is defined by Harris (2002), as the “aggregate of cases that conform to designate criteria and that are accessible as targets for study”. Out of the eighteen master carvers cited; thirteen master carvers were purposively selected.

### **Sampling Design and the Sample**

Best and Kahn (2003) stipulated that a sample is a small proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis. It is not selected haphazardly; it is chosen in a systematically way to draw valid inferences on the basis of careful observation. The researcher employed purposive sampling. According to Cohen et al. (2000) purposive sampling is when researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of typicality. In this way, the researchers build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs.

For convenience, the thirteen carvers selected were grouped into three: six old carvers who carved only stools; one old carver specialized in carving footwear lasts for shoe makers and shoe dealers, while the third group consists of six carvers who concentrate on new trends in carving.

### **Primary and Secondary Data**

According to <http://www.tiscali.co.uk/reference/encyclopedia2009>, Primary data are information that has been collected at first-hand experience. Primary data were obtained through personal interviews, field notes, pictures and direct observation at the workshops of the master carvers. Secondary data were obtained from relevant literary materials and internet sources.

## **Data Collection Instruments**

The collection of data in any research is necessary. It is upon the data that research questions are tested. There are many methods and procedures, which aid in the acquisition of data. These are termed research instruments which are of many kinds and employ distinctive ways of describing and quantifying the data. Data collection instruments used by the researcher are the interview and observation methods.

### **Interview**

Interview is in a sense an oral questionnaire. Instead of writing the response, the respondent gives the needed information orally and face to face. Kvale (ibid 14) remarks as cited by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) that an interview, is an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data.

### **Observation**

Observation is acquiring a comprehensive picture of a situation that is being described. Observation gives the researcher opportunity to gather 'live' data from 'live' situations.

Morrison 1993:80 argued that as cited by Cohen et al (2000) observation enables the researcher to gather data on:

- The physical setting (e.g. the physical environment and its organization);
- Human setting (e.g. the organization of people, the characteristics and makeup of the groups or individuals being observed, for instance gender ,class);

- The interactional setting (e.g. the interactions that are taking place, formal, informal, planned, unplanned, verbal non-verbal etc.);
- The programme setting (e.g. the resources and their organization, pedagogic styles, curricula and their organization).

### **Validation of Instruments**

The first draft of the interview and observation guides/schedules were proof read by the researcher. The interview guide was later shown to colleagues for further vetting and then to the supervisor for final approval.

### **Administration of Instruments**

The work of this nature demands face to face interaction and so the researcher made personal visits. The respondents were first contacted and appointment was booked for the interviews to be conducted and then copies of interview guide were given to the respondents in advance.

### **Data collection procedures**

Since the qualitative research method was required for the study, interviews, visits, oral tradition and observation were the main data collection instruments that were used.

The researcher took a series of visits to the workshops of respondents and conducted direct interviews. The researcher established a friendly relationship with the respondents, which proved very useful as it motivated them to supply useful information. The prepared questions for the interview were translated and conducted

in Asante Twi (local language of the respondents) although some respondents were literate.

This was done because the researcher realized that most of them could more easily express themselves using the local language. However, certain words remained unchanged for emphasis and for better understanding. The respondents were interviewed individually so that they will feel free to give candid opinions about the questions they were asked.

The researcher directly observed the wood carvers at their workshops to obtain information using the observation guide/schedule. This procedure was repeated on seven occasions each time observing two carvers a day. With this, the researcher observed a step-by-step procedure employed when carving from blocking to the finishing of the work.

### **Data analysis plan**

The data collected were assembled and analyzed in terms of research questions using simple percentage tables. Interpretations were made and conclusions drawn, from which recommendation were made in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

**Overview**

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in terms of research questions.

**Background information of the respondents**

**Table 1: Age of respondents**

Age range	Number of Respondents	Percentages %
26 -35	4	30.77 %
36- 45	1	7.69 %
46- 55	2	15.38 %
56- 65	3	23.08 %
66- 75	2	15.38 %
76- 85	1	7.69 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100 %</b>

The Table 1 indicates that out of the thirteen carvers interviewed, four representing 30.77% are between the ages of 26-35. Seven carvers (53.84%) out of thirteen are between the ages of 45-75. This presupposes that four carvers are young. One carver, (7.69%) is between 36-45 years of age.

Three carvers are in their middle age and six carvers are old. It means that if six are old and stop carving, majority of the carvers will still be carving. From the interviews one out of thirteen carvers, is 77years. Also, the average age range of a carver at Ahwiaa is between 51-60 years. These facts go to confirm that majority of the carvers are relatively young.

**Table 2: Gender of Respondents**

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentages %
Male	13	100 %
Female	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Table 2 indicates that all the thirteen carvers interviewed are males (100%). This suggests that women do not carve at Ahwiaa or women do not want to carve or women are not allowed to carve by tradition.

According to the male carvers at Ahwiaa women are free to carve provided they are physically capable. Women are held in high-esteem so they are not encouraged to carve because the work involves a lot of energy. The work is tedious for the women's body make-up. When the women sit down and open their legs they expose their private parts; this is indecent. Since the carving tools are usually sharp the men feel that they will hurt the women.

Originally, items carved at Ahwiaa were commissioned by the king of Ashanti Otumfuo and therefore, women are not allowed to partake in the carving by tradition. Also the carving is confined to the domain of man's world because of the obvious physical endowments of men.

But in modern times, civilization allows women in their right to carve if they so wish and furthermore, Ghana needs all hands on deck for national development. Therefore, the carving potential in women should be tapped for national development.

**Table 3: Marital Status of Respondents**

Marital Status	Number of Respondents	Percentages %
Married	10	77 %
Single	3	23 %
Divorced	-	-
Widowed	-	-
Separated	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the Table 3, ten (77%) out of thirteen are married with children and have an average of four children. This may be due to the fact that the carvers are responsible to their wives and children. The ten carvers are compelled to work hard and make enough money out of the carving to look after their wives and children. Having wives and children makes them dignified in the society. This raises their status in society and will qualify them to carve royal objects for Otumfuo. The children who are in school will not be available to help their fathers in their workshop. The carvers' children who may have talents for art will do well if they pursue carving in future and can help educate their fathers in new approaches. Even though, the children are not engaged in the carving they help their fathers in various ways to improve the carving industry.

From the carvers interviewed, three (23%) are single. Sometimes, the married carvers have problems to resolve in their homes so they do not have time to carve. The three carvers paid full time attention to carving because they do not have marital problems hindering their carving.

**Table 4 Education Level of Respondents**

Education Level	Number of Respondents	Percentages %
No education	-	-
Primary school	-	-
Junior High school	3	23.08%
Middle school	9	69.23%
Technical / Vocational	-	-
Secondary school	1	7.69%
Other	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

The Table 4 indicates that out of the thirteen carvers interviewed, twelve (92.31%) have basic education and one (7.69%) has secondary education. This means that majority have basic education so the carvers could read and write therefore could improve their knowledge by reading literature on carving.

The carver's background education is enough to help them access credit from the banks to buy more modern and sophisticated equipment. It will be more progressive for the carvers to learn how to apply information communication technology (ICT) to modern trade in order to obtain better quality of work. When the carvers are educated productivity will be amplified and they will get more money.

**Table 5 Training of Respondents**

Training of the Carvers	Number of Respondents	Percentages %
By apprenticeship	4	30.77 %
By family tuition	7	53.85%
By observation	2	15.38%
Others (specify)	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5 indicates that four (30.77%) went through apprenticeship. Seven (53.85%) went through family tuition and two (15.38%) went through observation. This means that all the carvers went through some form of apprenticeship. That is training by observation and imitation. The method of indigenous training is also known as learning by slow absorption. The training goes on for less or more than three years. When the master finds out that the apprentice can produce work of great quality he is graduated. After graduation some trainers remain and work for the master to gain knowledge on workshop management and managing a carving business.

In the past, apprentice work was to do the finishing of the carvings made by the master i.e. from sanding to polishing. Today the master hires the services of people for the finishing of their carved works. Since the young people are interested in anything that brings out money they are attracted to finishing services of the industry. They are interested in selling the artifacts instead producing of them.

## **Discussion of Findings in terms of Research Questions**

### ***Research Question 1***

#### **What kind of tools/equipment and materials do the Ahwiaa wood carvers use?**

The Ahwiaa wood carvers use simple tools usually fabricated by local blacksmith:



**Plate 4.1 Adze (Soso)**

Adze: Is used for blocking and carving wood



**Plate 4.2 Axe (Akuma)**

Axe: Is a tool with a wooden handle and a heavy metal blade used for chopping wood.



**Plate 4.3 Knife (Sekenmoa)**

Knife: Is used to pare, cut and smooth wood.



**Plate 4.4 Flat Gouges (Bomye)**

Flat Gouges: Is used for clearing flat surface or space.



**Plate 4.5 “V” Gouge**

“V” Gouge: Is a ‘V’ shaped cutting edge used for parting, outlining or emphasizing lines and decorative cuts.



**Plate 4.6 “U” Gouge**

“U” Gouge: Is used for cutting deep and round curves and boring holes.



**Plate 4.7 Tools box**

Tools box: Is a storage box which is large enough to contain tools and to prevent them from being damaged.



**Plate 4.8 Mallet (Abosoboa)**

Mallet: Is used to drive a chisel or a gouge when cutting wood.



**Plate 4.9 Oil Sharpening stone (Kebaboo)**

Oil Sharpening stone: Is used for sharpening chisels, gouges and other tools



**Plate 4.10 Sharpening Stone**

Sharpening Stone: Is used for sharpening tools with water



**Plate 4.11 Chisel (Pasoo)**

Chisel: Is a straight cutting edge ranging from 5cm to 2.5cm and used for cutting registered marks.



**Plate 4.12 Spoke shave**

Spoke shave: Is used to shape and smooth convex and concave wooden surfaces



**Plate 4.13 Brush**

Brush: Is used for applying dye to the finished carvings



**Plate 4.14 Cutlass**

Cutlass: Is a flat and slightly curved blade used for blocking



**Plate 4.15 Hand drill**

Hand drill: Is used for drilling holes in carvings.

## Equipment used in Carving

In the past, simple equipment such as the brick wood oven were used to dry the finished items before they were sold.



**Plate 4.16 Brick wood oven**

Brick wood oven: Is a compartment warmed by a heat and used for drying finished carvings.

Today a little more sophisticated equipment are being used such as solar dryer, gas kiln, hygrometer and chain saw.



**Plate 4.17 Solar Dryer**

Solar dryer is used to quicken the drying process before the carvings are exported, so as the gas kiln. Due to heavy demand for wood carvings from customers these relatively modern equipment are being used to quicken the drying process so that carvings can be delivered to customers on time.



**Plate 4.18 Gas kiln**

Gas kiln: The finished carvings are stacked in a special drying kiln where the temperature, humidity and air circulation are controlled manually from outside the kiln. This makes drying too rapid and easily. Also, this leads to cracking of the carved items.



**Plate 4.19 Hygrometer**

Hygrometer is an instrument used to measure humidity or moisture content of wood. The hygrometer is used to test the dryness of the carving to make it ready for export.



**Plate 4.20 Chain Saw**

Chain Saw: Is a portable motor driven saw with cutting teeth made of links that form a continuous chain and is used for cutting wood into smaller pieces and felling of trees.

### **Materials used in Wood Carving**

The main material used in wood carving is wood of different varieties. For example, the most commonly used wood are Osese, Gyenegyene and Nyamedua. Previously the wood carvers themselves were felling the trees for carving. Today the trees are felled by timber contractors and the logs sold to the wood carvers.



**Plate 4.21 Gyenegyene (wood for carving)**



**Plate 4.22 Nyamedua (wood for carving)**



**Plate 4.23 Osese (wood for carving)**



**Plate 4.24 White glue (PVA)**

White glue (PVA): Is used to seal cracks which develop when the wood dries fast.



**Plate 4.25 Super glue**

Super glue: For joining of broken pieces of carving.



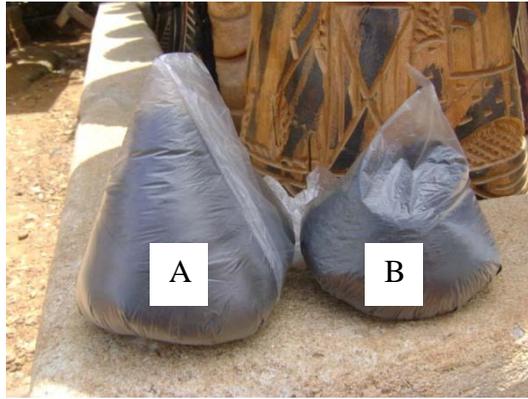
**Plate 4.26 Mansion Polish**  
Mansion Polish: For polishing the carvings



**Plate 4.27 Sand paper**  
Sand paper: Is used for sanding the finished carvings to make the surface smooth. The reason is that smooth carvings when polished will reflect the light of intelligence that went into the carvings.



**Plate 4.28 Wax polish**  
Wax polish: Is used to polish the finished carvings



**Plate 4.29a & b Potash and dye**

Potash and dye: Is used for dyeing carvings. If a carver needs to create special effects on the carving he uses dyes to do it.



**Plate 4.30 Oil**

Oil (gas oil or engine oil): Is used for sharpening tools.

### ***Research Question 2***

#### **What production processes are followed by wood carvers at Ahwiaa?**

The wood carver begins a new carving by selecting a chunk of wood with the approximate size and shape of the figure he wishes to carve and allows it for three to seven days seasoning. The seasoning is moderate because he wants to carve in mostly the green state for easier carving.



**Plate 4.31 Blocking**

### **Blocking**

Blocking is the shaping of a log to bring out the form. The adze is used to demarcate the various parts and straighten the faces of the billets to make them roughly parallel. The carver swings the adze with a sharp, chopping movement and holds the log with one hand. In this way the amount of wood removed at each blow can be controlled almost exactly. Single block carving is a subtractive process.



**Plate 4.32 Designing**

No preliminary designs are done on the wood before the forms are cut out. The adze is still used to remove various portions of the wood to bring out the form.



**Plate 4.33 Detailing**

Chisels and gouges are used to make intricate designs and also to remove the unwanted areas to show the actual design. Here the carver utilizes great imagination, experience and dexterity to carve abstract, symmetrical and symbolic features logically.



**Plate 4.34 Finishing**

Finishing is termed as smoothing (sefa). The smoothing knife is used in the process to remove small pieces of wood evenly and quickly. The knife comes in different sizes depending on the sizes of the work being made.



**Plate 4.35 Sandpapering**

The carving is sand papered to make the surface smooth and all the cracks are sealed with glue and sawdust.



**Plate 4.36 Polishing**

Potash or dye is used to brush over the carving to create special effects. Wax polish is used to finish up the polishing. Stools made from Osese are not polished.

### ***Research Question 3***

**What kind of carved items are produced by the Ahwiaa carvers?**

#### **Types of Carvings made previously**

The old carvings of Ahwiaa include stools (Plate 4.38) Ancestral masks as shown in Plate 4.39 and *Akuaba* dolls as depicted by Plate 4.40. Others are wooden combs used to express beauty, love and fertility. A man may carve and give a wooden comb to a woman to express his love for her and “oware” board is a game played by two people, as shown in Plate 4.41 and 4.42 respectively. Walking sticks 4.43 is used by men and carved to incorporate several expressive symbols to communicate one's status and beliefs. Linguist staff 4.44 completes the examples of old carvings. The linguist staff is used for political and judicial purposes. In the king's court, for example, the linguist will carry the staff to express profound messages relating to justice, peace, conflict resolution, and arbitration. The linguist will also carry a staff on diplomatic missions for the chief and also it promote group identity and cohesion, national integration, and to express legitimacy of authority.



**Plate 4.37 Stools**



**Plate 4.38 Ancestral Masks**



**Plate 4.39 Akuaba Dolls**



**Plate 4.40 Wooden Combs (Dua afe)**



**Plate 4.41 “Oware” board**



**Plate 4.42 Walking Sticks**

**Plate 4.43 Linguist Staff  
(Akyeame Poma)**

### **New Carvings (Products of new trends)**

New carvings at Ahwiaa comprise of a chair plate 4.45 which serve as a decorative and utilitarian purpose, abstract figures locally called shadows as shown in plate 4.46. Animal figures have also assumed some prominence. The figure of the elephant and the lion in various postures are popular as depicted in plate 4.47. There have also been new masks introduced which are different from the ancestral masks of old. Plate 4.48 shows examples of the new type of masks in vogue.

The carvings of profiles and figurines have also become popular (plates 4.49 and 4.50) show examples. Miniature stools probably meant for decorative purposes have become new additions to the traditional stools carved in Ahwiaa as shown in plate 4.51. the new intriguing set of abstract human figures carved from one wooden block which are interlocked and could be opened out and closed up have developed. These are known as Unity as shown in plate 4.52. Footwear last as depicted in plate 4.53 has become the latest addition to new products carved by Ahwiaa carvers.



**Plate 4.44 Chair (Decorative piece)**



**Plate 4.45 Shadows (Abstract)**



**Plate 4.46 Animals**



**Plate 4.47 Masks**



**Plate 4.48 Profiles**



**Plate 4.49 Figures**



**Plate 4.50 Miniature Stools**



**Plate 4.51 "Unity"**



**Plate 4.52 Footwear last**

**Factors which have prompted new trends in the carving industry at Ahwiaa, Kumasi**

The indigenous carving industry at Ahwiaa in Kumasi has resisted change for several decades due to strong traditions. Modernity and fast social change have however not left indigenous traditions intact. Somehow, certain factors in modern life have impacted positively or negatively on wood carving at Ahwiaa.

The first of these factors is trade, buying and selling, exchange of goods and services have exposed Ahwiaa tradition to the outside world, so that carvers could adapt to new ideas and ways of thinking. Various religions other than traditional African religion have also placed the wood carver in contact with ideas other than they have known.

Education has diverted attention from carving to the classroom so that young people prefer to go to school rather than remain at home to carve. The youth who continue their education beyond Basic Education Level, sometimes end up in sculpture where wood carving is done, and therefore could pass on new ideas to their parents. Besides, carvers come into contact with persons knowledgeable about wood carving, and

through interaction and exchange of ideas become exposed to new ways of doing things in wood carving.

Tourists have thronged Ahwiaa for years. They bring new ideas to Ahwiaa from their various cultures. Through comparisons and discussions, Ahwiaa carvers become aware of new ideas and alternative ways of carving. Tourists place orders for particular carvings with specific themes, so that themes and shapes may differ.

Modern Technology has brought ideas about designing and making things. Though carvers would not normally design their work on paper or elsewhere before they carve criticisms about shape, form and meaning of their carvings have resulted in certain types of works produced. Technology should now open the way for new ways of doing things. For example, at Ahwiaa carvers have begun to measure certain works because they should know how many works will fit into containers for export. Carvers now use the hygrometer to check the moisture content after slow regulated drying before export. Presently, in Ghana there is so much information about ICT meant to quicken the way or procedure for doing things. The question now is whether or not the carvers are prepared to adapt their work to technological ways of going about the carving business.

Sawmills now fell the trees for timber, using sophisticated machines. Wood carvers buy logs for their carvings. This is the time carvers at Ahwiaa would adapt more sophisticated gadgets to quicken the pace of carving. This will increase production levels and quality of carvings. These possibilities are now ripe at the door steps of the carvers. It is not clear whether they are prepared to adjust to new suggestions and recoil from their traditional ways of doing things into alternative approaches to

carving. Eventually, new ways, new ideas or new trends will tend to improve the carving industry at Ahwiaa, and place the works in a global picture.

There is so much knowledge today around the world. The world has become a global village such that it is so fast to source, retrieve and compile information using electronic media to acquire knowledge, just about anything, including wood carving. The picture of globalization is such that it is possible today to stay at Ahwiaa in Kumasi and be placed in touch with wood carving information from other cultures of the world. This would enrich various aspects of the wood carving industry at Ahwiaa.

#### ***Research Question 4***

#### **What are the new trends of Ahwiaa wood carving and their implications for Art Education?**

The wood carving industry at Ahwiaa provides a consistent history of development of wood carving. The history is enhanced by factors which promoted and continue to promote the growth of the industry. Such factors are many, among them, royal demands from the Otumfuo *Asantehene's* palace for wood carvings, effects of trade, religion, cultural practices, demand from domestic needs, tourism, global economy and technological challenges do promote development of new trends in tools, materials, processes and other related practices. These factors and their effects are ripe grounds for Art Education.

The tradition that women do not carve wood in Ghana is now obsolete. At Ahwiaa, the tradition goes on. However, today, the male carvers indicate that there is no restriction on women any more. Women can carve wood if they so wish, and if they

are physically capable. These developments constitute new trends in the carving industry, and therefore provide a good ground for study in Art Education.

The beauty of a carved item is not in its physical appearance and no one talks about western concepts of aesthetics in Ahwiaa carvings, though this is possible. Beauty is in the significance of each carving. The knowledge that there is no “blanket word” that is, a common word meaning or describing Ahwiaa carvings as “Art” is a source for learning. Each carving has its own name and is for a specific purpose. If there is no need for a carved object, no one will carve it. This is great knowledge to be learnt in Art Education.

Appreciation and criticism are areas in Art Education that can be derived from Ahwiaa wood carving industry. The features which constitute a good and bad carving are in the heads of the carvers and the criteria for making informed judgments about carvings are sources for research in Art Education. Art Educators should study the elements of aesthetics, appreciation and criticism of the wood carving industry at Ahwiaa and develop what could be known as “Ahwiaa Aesthetic Criteria” to enrich the content of Art Education.

Procedures in the practice of wood carving, such as identification of tools and materials, the preparation of tools and materials, care and maintenance of tools and materials, storage of tools and materials could be studied by sculpture students. The indigenous and new technologies in wood carving can constitute content for study in Art Education.

One most important feature of Ahwiaa wood carving industry is apprenticeship. The formal way of training a carver is “schooling” in wood carving. This is a methodology

that Art Educators could study and adapt to formal training in wood carving in educational institutions.

Apprentices practise carving first by learning how to smoothen finished carvings. This is done so that when polished, the surface of the carving will reflect light. It is believed by some writers on African Art that the shiny surface of a wood carving reflects the intelligence of the carver. This kind of information is “classified” and should be known to African carvers and students.

Finally, wood carvers at Ahwiaa do not design their images on paper before carving. This and the so many variations in carved objects is a sign of unparalleled creativity. Carvers have been endowed with vast dimensions of creativity so that they are able to think, produce and feel the greatness of their carvings. The foregoing facts together with the related issues constitute a fertile ground for Art Education.

### **Main Findings**

1. Simple tools are made by local blacksmiths.
2. Tools have specific names.
3. There are taboos about tools e.g. women in their menstrual period do not touch carving tools. Rattray (1927) confirms that “a woman in this state was formerly not even allowed to approach wood carvers while at work, on the pain of death or of a heavy fine. This fine was to pay for sacrifices to be made upon the ancestral stools of the dead kings and also upon the wood carver’s tools”
4. Tools are sharpened and maintained by oiling and storing after use.
5. The main material is wood, formerly acquired by felling special trees from the forest. Today the log for carving is bought from Timber contractors.

6. The wood is half-seasoned before carving i.e. the wood is not carved in the dry state.
7. The use of wood is presently limited to only three types of trees.
8. Sandpaper is used to smoothen the finished carvings. Polishing of carved items is done with a variety of materials such as emulsion paint, wax polish, dye, potash and soot mixed with shea butter.
9. The carving of an item follows specific processes, according to tradition.
10. No carving is done when someone dies in Ahwiaa.
11. Women were prevented from carving in the past. Today women are free to carve if they so wish.
12. Wood carvers now carve non-traditional items they did not previously carve.
13. Carved items today are more complex than before.
14. Carving has been influenced by tourism, education, trade and modernity.
15. Carved items are now dried using hygrometer to determine the relative dryness of the item.
16. Carved items are now packaged and exported.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

Ahwiaa is noted for wood carving, the carvers carved several royal items and other products which benefit Otumfo as well as the community. However, the tools materials and processes have remained the same because of tradition. Today, education, trade, globalization, science and technology, Islam and Christianity, political and economic challenges, changes in societal values and cultural practices and knowledge explosion have given right to new ways of doing things. Therefore, Ahwiaa can boost of new trends and new products.

This thesis sought to:

1. Identify, describe and discuss the present state of Ahwiaa wood carving industry.
2. Find out and examine the new trends and assess their usefulness for public education and the teaching and learning of Art Education.

Qualitative research method was adopted specifically descriptive research and the main data collection instruments were interviews and observation. In order to satisfy the objectives, four research questions were formulated. A twenty item interview guide was prepared, validated and copies administered to thirteen respondents. Responses were analyzed and the following results were arrived at:

1. Simple tools are made by local blacksmiths.
2. Tools have specific names.

3. There are taboos about tools e.g. women in their menstrual period do not touch carving tools. Rattray (1927) confirms that “a woman in this state was formerly not even allowed to approach wood carvers while at work, on the pain of death or of a heavy fine. This fine was to pay for sacrifices to be made upon the ancestral stools of the dead kings and also upon the wood carver’s tools”
4. Tools are sharpened and maintained by oiling and storing after use.
5. The main material is wood, formerly acquired by felling special trees from the forest. Today the log for carving is bought from Timber contractors.
6. The wood is half-seasoned before carving i.e. the wood is not carved in the dry state.
7. The use of wood is presently limited to only three types of trees.
8. Sandpaper is used to smoothen the finished carvings. Polishing of carved items is done with a variety of materials such as emulsion paint, wax polish, dye, potash and soot mixed with shea butter.
9. The carving of an item follows specific processes, according to tradition.
10. Women were prevented from carving in the past. Today women are free to carve if they so wish.
11. Wood carvers now carve non-traditional items they did not previously carve.
12. Carving has been influenced by tourism, education, trade and modernity.
13. Carved items are now dried using hygrometer to determine the relative dryness of the item.
14. Carved items are now packaged and exported.

## **Conclusions**

After going through the research the following conclusions have been arrived at:

The carving tools used at Ahwiaa are still traditional and not modern. It is difficult to change the traditions of the carvers. The main source of material, wood is threatened due to the government regulations against the depletion of the forest. This will be detrimental to the industry.

Due to heavy customer demand of products, the wood is no longer adequately seasoned before it is carved and this affects the product. Due to traditions no new skills are being acquired, therefore expansion of the industry is difficult.

The carving industry is now a purely business affair and therefore little attention is paid to creativity. The youth are not involved in the carving trade therefore the future of the wood carving industry is threatened. Both men and women are free to carved if they so wish.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are put forward to help improve the wood carving industry at Ahwiaa. It is recommended that:

- A research centre fully equipped with modern tools and machinery for Ahwiaa is to be established by the district assembly and stakeholders to research into tools, materials, processes and marketing strategies.
- A tree planting project should be instituted by the carvers. So to ensure a sustainable supply of wood for carving.
- The wood carvers should acquire appropriate skills in proper seasoning of the wood for carving. This can be done in collaboration with the Department of

Sculpture, College of Art, K.N.U.S.T and Forest Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG) at Fumesua, Kumasi.

- The departments of Sculpture and Integrated Rural Art and Industry at KNUST should organize regular workshops for carvers at Ahwiaa and introduce them to modern wood carving technologies.
- The departments of Sculpture and Integrated Rural Art and Industry at KNUST should further adopt Ahwiaa carving village and initiate new ideas in wood sculpture to them.
- The wood carvers should encourage the youth to get involved in the carving trade, because the future of the carving industry depends on the youth.
- The female youth should be encouraged to carve, so that both males and females will come together to rejuvenate the wood carving industry.
- The wood carvers at Ahwiaa should form a vibrant Association to help sustain the wood carving industry.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Interview Guide/Schedule

##### Background Information about the Master Carvers

###### Age

➤ How old are you?

.....

###### Gender

Do women also carve? Yes [ ] No [ ] If no why

.....

###### Marital Status

Married [ ] Single [ ] Divorced [ ] Widowed [ ] Separated [ ].

###### Number of Children

.....

Are children involved in any aspect of carving? [ ] if yes, what aspect?

.....

###### Education Level

❖ No education Yes [ ] No [ ]

❖ Primary school education Yes [ ] No [ ] if yes, what level?

.....

❖ Middle school education Yes [ ] No [ ] if yes, what level?

.....

❖ Technical education Yes [ ] No [ ] if yes, what level?

.....

❖ Secondary education Yes [ ] No [ ] if yes, what level?

.....

❖ Others (specify)

.....

**Training of the Carvers**

✓ By apprenticeship    Yes [       ]    No [       ]

✓ By family tuition    Yes [       ]    No [       ]

✓ By observation        Yes [       ]    No [       ]

✓ Others (specify)

.....

✓ Duration of training

.....

**Number of years of carving**

▪ How long have you been carving?

.....

**Number of Apprentices**

• How many apprentices do you have?

.....



## **Materials**

### ➤ **Types of Materials Used**

---

**Materials ( Asante)**

**Material ( English)**

---

## **Types of Wood**

---

**Wood ( Asante)**

**Botanical names**

**Product made from wood**

---

## **Methods of Production**

---

**Stages**

**Specific Activity**

---

**Demand for product**

<b>Customers</b>	<b>Types of Product sought</b>

**Current trends**

- ❖ Types of old products

.....  
.....

- ❖ Types of new products

.....  
.....

**Factors which call for the New Trends**

- Tourism

.....

- Education

.....

- Religion

.....

- Trade

.....

- Technology

.....

- Globalization

.....

- Societal changes

.....

- Other factors

.....

Storage of artworks

.....

Costing, Pricing and Marketing of artworks

.....

Packaging of the product

.....

## **Appendix B**

### **Observation Guide/Schedule**

#### **Tools used**

Identification –name

Description –with photo

Storage, Care and Maintenance

Uses

#### **Materials Used**

Identification –what is it?

Description –with photo

Uses

#### **Carving Techniques** (with photo)

List them

#### **Types of Products** (photo)

List them

#### **Processes**

Observe seasoning of the wood.

Observe blocking of the wood.

Observe the workshop.

Observe objects, tools and materials under the workshop.

Observe the sitting postures of the carvers.

Observe the treatment process for export products.