

**The socio-cultural significance of canoe decoration among
the people of the Efutu Traditional Area in the
Central Region of Ghana**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at examining the socio-cultural significance of canoe decoration among the people of Efutu Traditional Area in the Central Region of Ghana. The research work was conducted at the Efutu Traditional Area precisely Winneba, Senya and Fete respectively in 2010/2011 academic year. The study was to answer the following questions: (i) what are the socio-cultural importance of canoe decoration among the Efutu people, in the Central Region of Ghana? (ii) To what extent do the canoe designs and inscriptions communicate to the people? (iii) And how does the socio-cultural importance of canoe decorations impact the people of the Efutu Traditional Area? The study was purely a qualitative descriptive research. A sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) people were selected out of the fishermen, chief-fishermen, canoe owners, canoe custodians and canoe artists (like painters, carpenters and carvers) from Winneba, Senya, and Fete respectively. The main instruments used for the collection of information were observation and interview. Again, it was observed that the Efutu people often preserve their beliefs and values and convey them from generation to generation through their arts. That is, through the symbols and inscriptions made on their canoes, music, dance and festivals such as the Aboakyir. This piece of work will serve as great source of information for historians, art critics, anthropologists and other art researchers who want to know more about canoe decoration, its philosophical and socio-cultural significance. Again, it would be beneficial to organizations such as Centre for National Culture, Museums and Monument Boards, Ghana Tourists Board for National Archives and other ethnic groups in Ghana who would want to dig into the symbols and inscriptions found on canoes in the Efutu Traditional Area.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the MA degree 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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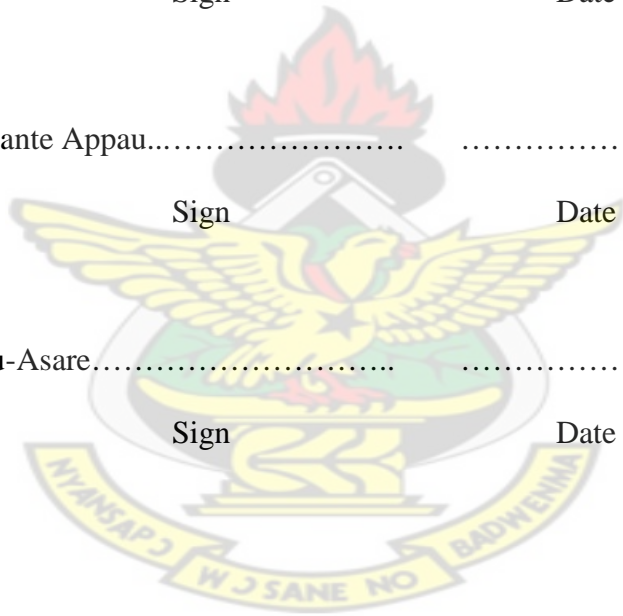


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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

This chapter provides a background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the research, research questions, delimitations, limitations, definition of terms, importance of the study and the organized of the report.

1.2. Background to the study

In Ghana, canoe is regarded as an important vehicle for fishing and travelling by the people living along the coast. When one travels along Ghana's coastline and visits the sandy beaches of the numerous fishing villages, one is very often struck by huge number of colourfully decorated canoes dug out from big timbers of different sorts and sizes. One might not only wonder where such big trees used in producing the canoe art grows but also he might want to know the meanings associated with the colourful inscriptions and symbols on these canoes.

Most intriguing and calling to be decoded is the series of more or less abstract designs, which seem to occur in endless variations and which look like a rebus containing a hidden message. According to the Britannica Concise Encyclopedia (1994), "the form and appearance of the canoes is such that one gets the impression that they have not changed much over time; and that the fishermen used age old and very traditional symbols as well as proverbs handed to them by their forbears who got them from generation to generation". In other words there has been only continuity and no change.

In this chapter, the researcher seeks to make it clear that there are grounds to think otherwise, that is there has been a lot of change. In order to illustrate this the researcher presents materials collected during her visit to the coastal communities on the beaches in Effutu Traditional Area concerning the kinds of symbols, written texts, and paintings occurring on canoes, and how they were read and interpreted by fishermen. Also, some historical data is presented in order to make it clear that the decorative patterns on these canoes have their socio-cultural significance.

1.3. Statement of the problem

Canoes are very important capital equipment for the fishermen in communities along the coasts of Ghana, especially along the Volta Lake and the coast of Central and Greater Accra Regions of Ghana. Owners decorate and identify their canoes with symbols and inscriptions meant to communicate. These symbols and inscriptions clearly have some social underpinnings that are relevant to the cultural heritage of the people of Effutu. However, not much has been documented in the scholarly circles on these socio-cultural underpinnings of the canoe symbols and inscriptions.

It appears that the general public lack in-depth understanding of the inscriptions and designs on the canoes. The inscriptions may carry socio-cultural values relevant for African Art and public education. Therefore, this research sought to identify and document the socio-cultural significance of the symbols and inscriptions found on the canoes in order to sensitize the general public about their values in the culture of the people of the Effutu Traditional Area.

1.4. Objectives of the research

The objectives of this study are to:

1. identify and document some symbols and inscriptions found on canoes of the fisher-folks in Effutu Traditional Area.
2. unearth the socio-cultural significance of selected symbols and inscriptions on canoes for the promotion of African Art and Culture.

1.5 Justification of objectives

The opportunity cost for undertaking the study explains the benefits to be derived from studying this problem which may outweigh all other considerations (Kwabia, 2006). Therefore the study can be justified on the following grounds:

1. Documenting the various symbols and inscriptions used in decorating canoes among the Effutu people will provide a data base for further research in this direction; and
2. Discussing the socio-cultural values of symbols and inscriptions will help establish that the designs “talk” about the cultural life of the people and therefore have significance in their lives.

1.6. Research question

1. What are the symbols and inscriptions used on canoes by fisher-folks in the Effutu Traditional Area?
2. What are the socio-cultural significance of these symbols and inscriptions among the fishing communities in the Effutu Traditional Area?

1.7. Delimitation

The study is geographically limited to the people of Effutu Traditional Area in the Central Region of Ghana. Contextually, the study focuses only the decoration of ocean fishing canoes, and its socio-cultural significance among the people of Effutu in the central region of Ghana. The research however does not focus on the making and construction of canoes.

1.8. Limitations:

The following were the hindrance to the study:

- **Time:** studying the problem at hand needed quite a lot of time but because it is an academic work and time bound, the researcher did not have enough time to discuss some of the issues raised by the respondents which were deemed necessary. This did not however affect the substantive issues the research sought to find. The above notwithstanding, the researcher suggests that further research on the subject be conducted to build upon the findings made by this study.
- **Funding:** this was another setback, without enough financial support the researcher had difficulty paying for all expenses, such as refreshments for the respondents who were used for the data collection. The researcher is of the view that a research fund be put in place to ease the burden of future researchers who might be confronted with financial constraints in the conduct of such research works.
- **The nature of respondents' occupation:** the nature of the respondents' occupation made meetings with them a real challenge for the researcher. Majority of the respondents

being fishermen who go to sea daily and sometimes stay at sea for days, made scheduling meetings with them a major problem. In order to overcome this problem, the researcher had to spend much more time on the data collection than planned since their meetings had to be adjourned on several occasions in order to have them interviewed.

1.9. Definition of Terms

Canoe: a long narrow boat that is pushed through the sea using a paddle.

Coastline: the land along a coast, especially when seen from the sea or the air.

Culture: a set of ideas, beliefs, and ways of behaving of a particular organization or group of people.

Decorate: to make something look more attractive by putting nice things or paintings on it or in it.

Design: a pattern that decorates something.

Dugout: a boat made by cutting out the inside of a log, that is, long piece of wood from a tree.

Endless: seeming to have no end or limit.

Forebears: the people in the family who lived long time ago.

Moor: to cause a canoe to stay in the same position on the sea by tying it to something on the land or at the bottom of the sea.

1.10. Importance of the study

- The documentation on canoe symbols would help people from other ethnic groups in Ghana learn about the culture of people of Effutu Traditional Area in the Central Region of Ghana.

- It would be beneficial to organizations such as Centre for National Culture, Museums and Monument Board, Ghana Tourist Board and for National Archives to ensure that these traditional values are preserved.
- Historians and art critics, anthropologists, and other art researchers would use it for future research.
- The recommendations, suggestions, and comments when adopted and implemented would help the canoe carvers and designers to contribute their quota effectively to the fishing industry and to deepen art education in Ghana.

1.11. Organization of the study

This section presents the summary of the research according to the various chapters covered. The chapters and sub-headings of the work have been summarized as follows: Chapter one introduces the research problem and identifies the background to the study. The statement of the problem; the objectives of the research; the research questions, delimitations; and limitations of the study are contained in this first chapter. It also highlights the definition of terms; importance of the study; and how the rest of the work is organized.

The Chapter Two discusses the related literature reviewed as part of the of the research process. It touches on empirical and theoretical information which is a systematic identification and analyzing of documents containing information related to definition and brief history of canoes;the evolution of canoes in Ghana;philosophy of decoration,the significance of symbols on culture;canoe decoration in Ghana; canoe production and decoration.

Chapter Three concentrates on the research methodology used in collecting data for the research. The methodology is divided into sections as follows: research design; types of data; library research; description of the study population; the sampling methods employed; the data collection instruments used; how the research instruments used were administered; and the data processing and analysis.

The Chapter Four and Five focus on the presentation and discussion of the findings made by the study and the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study respectively.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Overview

This section deals with the review of related works already done by other researchers. The review has been done under the following sub-headings: definition and brief history of canoes; the evolution of canoes in Ghana; the significance of decoration on culture; philosophy of decoration; canoe decoration in Ghana; and canoe production and decoration.

2.2. Definition and brief history of canoes

In the Akan language, canoe is called '*Hemba*' or '*Hyemba*'. The word *Hemba* or *Hyemba* according to Dadzie (1994) was derived from '*ehyen*' (vehicle) and '*ba*' a suffix meaning small. He contended that the word *ehyen* cuts across all the Akan dialects and refers to any vehicle used for travelling by sea, land, and air. For example he mentioned the Fante name for aeroplane as '*Wimhyen*' and it is so among the rest of the Akan.

Dadzie continued to say that, 'canoe decoration has been a practice with the fishermen long before the Europeans set foot on the coast of Ghana. It has only been handed down from generation through oral tradition'. The writer tried to explain how the Fantes derived the name *Hyemba* for canoe which is the base of his thesis. He placed emphasis on canoe as a means of transport and dealt into a little history of canoe in Ghana and also the definition of canoe. However, Dadzie failed to mention the accurate date when canoe decoration started in Ghana.

Asmah (1963) investigated on Ghanaian canoes with special emphasis on their making and decoration. He cited Meyerowitz (1950), the history of some Fante groups called Etsis to establish the fact that the Etsis were the first makers, and users of canoes in Ghana. He however failed to mention the decorations made on them and their implications to both the owners and the public.

Thompson (2003) wrote in his poem that of all the craft that sail on inland waters, the canoe is the queen. For beauty of line and colour, for grace, for pleasantness, and for poetry, the birch canoe, the Redman's boat, is easily the wearer of the laurel crown. According to him, the gifts that the “Redman” brought the world, the canoe alone was quite unique in this; it was quite perfect at the beginning; and so new in our world of thought that we had no name for it, but accepted the name its wood-haunting maker bestowed on it—“*canot*”, “*kahnu*”, etc.

The two writers are of the same view, regarding how canoes came into existence and how they were regarded by the people; the names given to the boat by the people and also laid much emphasis on the first groups of people to use the canoes. Tetteh (2001) wrote precisely on the canoe paintings of the Gas. His studies covered the various practices of canoe symbols that have changed over the years, which include painting materials, and methods of painting. He also discusses the current trends of symbols and their meanings in Ga area and some new designs he has developed.

Thompson (2003) however added that, the sport of canoeing organised at the top level by the International Canoe Federation, uses the word *canoe* to cover both canoes (*kayaks*) for fishing and for games. In fact, the sport of canoe-polo is exclusively played in kayaks. This confusing use of “canoe” to generically cover both canoes and kayaks is not so common in American usage, but is common in Britain, Australia and presumably many parts of the world, both in

sporting jargon and in colloquial speech. In these circumstances, the canoe as defined here is sometimes referred to as an open, Canadian, or Indian canoe, though these terms have their own ambiguities.

Wordiq.com/definition defines canoe as a relatively small human-powered boat. It is propelled by one or more paddlers, depending on the size of the canoe. The paddles are almost always single-bladed. The paddlers face in the direction of travel, either seated on supports or kneeling on the hull. Canoes are often open on top and pointed at both ends. A *kayak*, according to the Wikipedia.com, differs from a canoe in that the kayak uses a double-bladed (one on each end) paddle while canoes use a single bladed (one blade at one end and a t-grip at the other) paddle, while canoes are generally open decked and kayaks are generally closed deck there are exceptions, such as wildwater canoes which are closed decked and surf kayaks which are open decked.

A double-bladed paddle allows for more efficient propulsion (higher stroke rate possible, etc.), but is more difficult to use effectively in a wider craft (canoes tend to be wider than kayaks). The spraydeck (also known as a skirt) is used to seal the gap between the deck and the paddler, making it possible to recover from a capsize without flooding the interior of the hull with water. In some parts of the world kayaks are considered canoes, and open-decked canoes are called "Canadian canoes".

The Wikipedia brought about a bridge between a kayak and a canoe. He explained that the construction of the two differs from each other and also their uses are not the same. He added a third type of canoe which the writer calls the spraydeck or the skirt.

In Smith (1970), Dapper described the manufacturer of canoes on the Gold Coast differently.

He writes:

“They are made all in one piece, from Single tree trunk, which the Negroes fashion in this way. They round off the trunk at each end, and then dig it out with an iron too. They live the thickness of two fingers at the bottom and one finger on the sides and then burn straw in the hollow, in order to prevent the sun from splitting the boat or worms from entering. The sides are propped up by wooden pots (presumably to prevent expansion of the wood on heating). ...Some of the largest size is made at *Cabo das trespuntas*, where trees grow which are seventeen or eighteen spans in circumference”.

Meyerowitz (1950) associated the first makers and users of canoes with the Etsi group of Fantes.

The Etsi were said to have been brothers of the Bono and were fishing for Bono kings. Due to political intrigues, they migrated to the great Benin City in Nigeria, where they learnt carving after mingling with some of the people in their new settlement. Meyerowitz (1950) gives an account of how the Etsi made their canoes. He said:

“Originally, the Etsi maintained, they built their boats in two halves, sewing them together with string made from cane and burning the holes for the string with the pointed end of a red-hot iron-rod, a tool they called *fitii*. The sails, they say, were made from the fibers of bark cloth woven into large mats and fastened to bamboo poles”.

These are conflicting accounts about canoe construction in Gold Coast when the two extracts are compared. Whilst Dapper (1970) asserts that the canoe is made in one piece from a single tree trunk and dug out with an iron tool, Meyerowitz contends that the vessel is built in two halves and then sewn together. The researcher posits that canoe manufacturing in the Gold Coast might have taken different approaches or methods. Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia (2003) supports this assertion:

“The canoe was developed by many cultures throughout the world; it varies in shape, size and construction, according to its place of origin. The oldest form of canoe was probably a tree trunk hollowed out by tool or fire”.

The World Book Encyclopaedia (1995) asserts that the word canoe comes from “*Kanu*” the Caribbean term for a dugout. It also identified two types of canoe and mentioned the Canadian canoe and the kayak as the canoes used for both recreation and for travelling. The World Book

Dictionary (1993: 293) shares the same view as other writers who have described the canoe as a light boat which is often tapered at both ends, moved with a paddle held in both hands without fixed support.

The Microsoft Encyclopaedia (2003) defined canoe as a light, narrow boat, generally with identical shape bow and stern and covered size usually propelled by at least one oar or paddle held in both hands without fixed support. It shares the same idea as the World Book Dictionary.

The Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary (2010) also explains a canoe to be a light narrow boat with both ends sharp that is usually propelled by paddling. The idea of the canoe being smaller as compared to the other boat differentiates the canoe from all other sea salient.

The Britanica Concise Encyclopaedia defined canoe as a lightweight boat pointed at both ends and propelled by one or more paddles. It went on further to say that the earliest canoes had light frames of wood covered by tightly stretched tree bark. It added that the birchbark canoe was first used by the Algonquian Indians in what is now the northeastern U.S. and Canada, and its use passed westward.

It explained that the canoes were often about 20 ft (6 m) in length, though war canoes might be as long as 100 ft (30 m). The dugout canoe, as described earlier by Dadzie was made from a hollowed-out log, was used by Indians in what is now the southeastern U.S. and along the Pacific coast as far north as Canada, as well as by peoples in Africa and New Zealand. It concluded by saying that Modern canoes are made of wood, canvas over wood frames, aluminum, and molded plastic or fiber glass and are open from end to end, of which the kayak is also considered a canoe.

Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary (1913) had this to say of canoes:

1. A boat used by rude nations, formed of trunk of a tree, excavated, by cutting or burning, into a suitable shape. It is propelled by a paddle or paddles, or sometimes by sail, and has no rudder. Others devised the boat of one tree, called the canoe;
2. A boat made of bark or skins, used by savages; birch canoe, with paddles, rising and falling on the water; and
3. A light pleasure boat, especially designed for use by one who goes alone upon long excursions, including portage. It propelled by a paddle, or by a small sail attached to a temporary mast.

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According to Sayour (2010) a canoe is a boat in which a person sits down on a seat with his or her legs on the floor underneath them and uses a single-bladed paddle to propel the boat through the water. Canoes are typically "open boats" in that everything in the boat is exposed to the environment.

Dartey (1984) researched into canoe decorations of the contemporary Ga people and concentrated on Ga ethnic paintings on fishing canoes. He gave the history of the Gas to their present settlement. He traced their origin from Benin City in Nigeria in the fourteenth century. His research also focused on felling of trees from the forest, carving the canoe out of the log, smoking the canoe and all the necessary touches done before the canoe is put on the sea.

Dartey again, discussed both old and new materials and methods of decorating the canoe. The old materials include; vegetable colours, animal fats, clay, plant dyes, lime and bitumen whilst the modern materials comprise; enamel paint, lime and bitumen but did not include tools in the study. Finally, Dartey touched the significance of few designs on the Ga canoes. He contended that most of the Ga canoes decorations were believed to have been borrowed from the Fantes.

This may be true since they were said to be the first makers and users of canoes in Ghana.

Rattray (1968) cited an example with Lake Bosomtwe in Asante Region where logs with sides roughly hewn called “Padua” were used as vessels for fishing. The tree trunk could be shaped, giving it a tapered hull, while the soft part of the wood was hallowed (or dugout), a process which was completed by the use of fire.

2.3.The evolution of canoes making processes in Ghana

The production of a huge dugout canoe has always taken a large commitment of time and labour. Good sources with regard to the production and the use of canoes in the 17th century are the publications by De Marees and Bosman who were regular visitors of the coastal area between Takoradi and Cape Coast, and keen observers of the life and work of its “Fante” population. In those times the huge trees used for canoe building (the Wawa trees or *Triplichiton sclerexylon*) were still growing in the forest near the coast (Brown.1947:24). But soon they were not available there any longer, and one had to travel inland in order to find the trees with the right diameter, at least 165 cm.

Since one had to transport the dugouts to the coast and a suitable road system did not yet exist, it goes without saying that the production sites were almost always near rivers. In the 18th century Shama at the mouth of the Pra River used to be an important production centre where the canoes were constructed. In the beginning of the 19th century one had to travel six hours upstream in order to find such a place on an island in the middle of this river (cf. Bowditch 1819).

Today the main areas where the right wawa trees grow are in the centre of Ghana. They are found in all vegetation zones and most abundant in the moist semi-deciduous north-west subtype,

which occurs in the area of western Ashanti Region, southern Brong Ahafo Region and to the north of the Western Region' (Sheves 1991:3).

The production process of canoes is found in the Canoe's Story by Asare M. (1982):

“One by one our friends left us. I knew that one day my own turn would come. And it came. One early morning a small gang of men came to me. They brought with them presents of cloth, a fowl, a bottle of gin and some eggs. They offered the gifts to me and my spirit, the spirit that had been with me for the hundreds of years it took me to grow from a sapling to the towering giant I had become. They prayed that no harm should come to them while they fell me and worked on me. I was rather pleased about this. With their gifts and prayers they had shown their respect for me. Every time a team of carvers starts with a felling it has to pour a libation in order to please the tree, which is perceived as a living being having a spirit and even a particular sex”.

This perception continues after a wawa tree is turned into a seaworthy canoe. Fishermen speak about their canoes as male and female beings that are able to talk to them about the right time and place to go fishing. Brown (1947:42) who made a thorough study of the Fishing industry of the La community before the Second World Warthus wrote. A good boat well treated will come to the owner when there are fish about and call him 'fi-fi-fi-fi-fi'. If he is not at home she goes to his mother's house and calls there. When she arrives at the place where the fish are she will call again. That is the place to anchor and there many fishes will be caught. According to him it is perceived that male canoes moved differently, were stronger and more powerful.

Asare (1982) wrote on canoes and personified trees to portray the way carvers fell them from the forest and carved the big wawa log to construct canoes. The study that is in the form of a story reveals that the traditional carvers perform rites to pacify the trees before they are felled. It also tells the sort of suffering and trauma that the trees go through in the hands of the carvers by making their friends and relatives disappear one after the other. However, the trees tend to admire and appreciate their new shapes and appearance after they have been carved into canoes

with all the embellishment and their useful functions they are made to perform in the society. It also touches on the amount of time spent on carving the logs into canoes.

Asare further discussed how the canoe is conveyed from the forest to the beach by trucks; how libation is poured or made at the beach after arrival of new canoe before the final touches are done on the canoe. These touches include the carving of designs and paintings, making of the thwart (seats), and smoking it just to mention a few.

Asare, however, mentioned in brief the decorations on canoes but did not discuss them in details. He also did not say anything about the meanings of the various cane symbols and their significance. This study would discuss the philosophical, artistic, and socio-cultural significance of canoe decorations which are of prime significance.

Amenuke (1995) examined canoe symbols and their meanings. His research did not extend to the construction, smoking (charring) and decoration of canoes as others did. In his work he explained the anchor as a device used in keeping the canoe from being drifted by the current of the sea or river. The anchor is seen as a symbol of stability. He looked at the arrow as a symbol composed of an arrow with arrow head attached to either end of it, and a cord wound loosely around the stem. This was meant to symbolize truthfulness and security.

Verrips (1991) maintained that this was not a mere drawing. It was explained by a chief fisherman at Winneba beach to be an Arabic writing that is; ‘‘Bismillahi Maj’rihā Wa Mur’sahā Inna Rabbi Lagafūrun Rah

2.4. Philosophy of canoe decoration and its meaning

Gray (1996) said that decoration is an integral part of Ghanaian culture. This decoration extends from facial scarification to elaborate hairstyles to exquisite clothing. It includes the names and designs which adorn *tro-tros*, taxis, and even storefronts. He explained that decoration often involves symbolism using a word, design, or image to represent an idea and added that Ghanaian decoration is rich in this symbolism from the *adinkra* symbols to the stools to the linguist staffs, which all employ symbols that represent proverbs.

Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, (2002:361) gives a precise meaning of the word “decorate” as to make something look more attractive by putting nice things on it or in it. Decoration is therefore explained as any nice thing put on or in something to make it more attractive. The Webster Reference Dictionary (1983:260) also defines decoration as the act of adornment; embellishment that which decorate or ornament. The contextual meaning of the word decoration here is the act of making the canoe more attractive by either carving designs on or onto it or by painting. The decoration includes all the accessories used together with the canoe for fishing.

Verrips (1991) gave a comprehensive discussion on canoe decorations. He touched on the various aspect of the topic including, the history of canoe, coming into being of a canoe, meaning of canoe symbols, pictograms, written texts and paintings on the Ga canoes. He criticized Coronel (1970) for his bias contention that Fantes are better than the Gas in terms of canoe symbols. Verrips further quoted Smith’s (1970) remarks that the Fantes have the reputation of being the best fishermen on the Ghanaian coast. Thus, according to oral tradition, they were the ones who in the eighteenth century introduced fishing to the Gas in

Ga Mashie, Central Accra, La, Teshie and even to the Ewe of the Volta Region, (Brown 1947:23-24).

This may be the reason why Coronel (1970) adjudged the Fante as the being best canoe decorators. To Verrips, this seems to be exaggerated, for it is reasonable to assume that the Gas and the Ewes knew how to catch fish. Perhaps, the Fantes introduced a particular technique to them.

Nunoo (1970) wrote on canoe decorations in Ghana. His research covered initiation of a fisherman's son into the fishing profession, skills in the profession such as swimming, diving, canoe paddling, how to locate a school of fish, selection of the right net for harvesting various kinds of fish and rudiments of astronomy. He also talked about how to acquire a canoe, types of wood suitable for carving canoes, how the canoe is constructed, smoked, decorated and the significance of some canoe symbols. However he failed to discuss decoration into details and also showed no philosophy concerning decoration in general.

Coronel (1970) handled Fante decoration. His work covered the construction of canoe, its conveyance to the coast, charring or smoking and final construction. He also examined the meaning of special designs belonging to certain groups such as Asafo companies and individuals. A survey conducted by Coronel from Axim, Ghana to Lome in Togo on canoe decoration reveals only one separate, definable style concentrated at Winneba. That is the gunwale pattern repeated with greater consistency than the rest found in other communities.

Coronel explained that the erect genitalia is a popular proverb which means “only a brave man goes under a Kropon tree” (a Kropon tree is believed to be the biggest tree in Ghana). Verrips (1991) and Tetteh (2002) posit that a man with an erect penis on a canoe means either the owner of the canoe has many wives or likes women.

Coronel is the only person who talked about bow decoration. He identified an external bow ornamentation located at the waterline, a place usually reserved for guardian images. He found two examples of prow decorations in coastal Ghana. These are; shark's head, which signifies ability to locate a school of fish and a bull's eye, representing a charm to ward off evil.

2.5. The significance of decoration on culture

Culture, is a way of life; a set of ideas, beliefs, and ways of behaving of a particular organization or group of people. Every community has its own culture and it has always been there ever since the human being came on this planet. As the man evolved through the ages, culture also evolved, developed and took new shapes with respect to time and space.

In a quotation, Baraka (1934), said “culture is simply how one lives, and is connected by habit”. This justifies that there must be something behind the names, greetings, economic activities, religion, politics and social activities intertwined with other aspects of the culture of a particular group of people. This influenced Gray (1996), when she mentioned that Ghanaian culture is composed of an endless number of different aspects, all of which are intertwined to the extent that one can hardly decipher between them. He discovered that it is often impossible to separate African art and African religion, visual art and performing art, and even religion from politics in Africa.

Though of the same view, Norton (1827-1908), made this quotation that, on European culture “knowledge of Greek thought and life ... is essential to high Culture. A man may know everything else, but without this knowledge he remains ignorant of the best intellectual and moral achievements of his own race in Europe”.

According to Harskovitz(2008), “Culture is man-made part of environment. “He continued that, the uniqueness of Indian culture lies in its geographical diversities, natural wealth, vast population and people's attitude among other things. There are few countries, which have extreme climatic conditions like India has.This suggests that the individuals through decoration and inscriptions can create a cultural environment which could be spread throughout the earth’s surface when well copied from its origin.

Again, Harskovitz (2008) explained that, in talking about natural wealth of India, one can only say nature was biased in favor of this part of the world while endowing its blessings. Not surprising, the world's latest longing for alternative medicines like ayurvedic/ herbal, Reiki and homeopathy has been grandmother's recipe in India for ages. The impact of natural wealth on Indian culture is not confined to medicine only; it also has great impact on economic activities, food pattern, fashion, trends and style of the people.

The huge treasure of Indian arts and literature has always been matter of research around the world."Due to the overwhelming impact, influence and enduring legacy of *The Grammar of Ornament*, it can be easy to forget that Jones was, during his lifetime, well known to the public for his work as an architect. This skew in our contemporary perception of Jones’ work is made particularly acute due to the fact that many of Jones’ built projects have since been demolished or otherwise destroyed - most notably the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, which was lost forever due to a fire in 1936.

2.6. Canoe decoration and their meaning

Katz (1983) identified the large sea-going canoes used by the Trobriand Islanders for fishing and trading and describes them as having dugout hulls stabilized by single outrigger floats, and large

triangular sails woven from stripes of dried pandanus leaf. The ends of the canoes are reversible and both ends of the hull features decorated “prow” board.

He continued to describe how the canoes are decorated and added that a set of prow-boards includes a lobed, asymmetrical board mounted transversely and a second board which projects at right angles towards the end of the hull. Both boards are elaborately carved and painted red, black, and white.

Nunoo (1974), made mention of the colours usually used by the canoe owners on the canoe which are: white, blue and red to fill in the patterns. Concerning the designs on the gunwales, Nunoo said it has 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. For example, two crocodiles with one stomach were illustrative of *funtumfurafu ne denkyem furafu*, meaning “That all may be one”. About twenty years later, the designs became more conventionalized. These often included objects such as tools, clocks and guns, and some are purely abstract decorative fantasies. He said the most popular design of this period is the heart which was represented in many variations; this image represents the Fante proverb, *Akoma da yamu* or “be patient”.

Next to observing particular taboos many non-Christian fishermen also put shrines or juju in their canoes in order to catch much fish and be protected against danger and malicious people. A common place to hide these shrines is in the inside of the stem under a small lead plate. Next to these plates one sometimes finds small bottles with a yellow, white or blue liquid in it, often covered with egg and fowl’s blood. Christians often paint (white) crosses at this particular spot.

Another way to avoid all kinds of danger and be lucky is the use of flags with symbols derived from the 6th and 7th Books of Moses, a publication popular amongst fishermen. Canoes then are

very particular objects for all Ghanaian fishermen that they treat with great respect and perceive as a particular kind of animated beings, with whom one can communicate and which can be influenced not only in positive but also in negative ways.

They carve all kinds of symbols into their hull, and paint a name, slogans, and usually colourful images on the gunwale and topsides to let them look beautiful. According to Asare's (1983) personification of the canoe, it tells that "a man came to work on me. He carved some patterns into my sides. Then he painted my patterns with bright colours. Finally he stood back, looked at me closely and said, 'it is beautiful'".

In The Teachers' Journal of 1931 was the article in which 'The fisherman's canoe' was published. At the end of the 1920s A.P. Brown made a study of the iconography as it occurred on the canoes in and around The Effutu-Awutu-Senya communities. However, the canoe designs of the thirties as they are shown in the National Museum of Ghana and as Nunoo (1974) have published them were collected by Brown. These motifs when shown to every chief fisherman will be able to tell you in most cases what they represented. Some of them are still in use.

After Brown, Nunoo (ibid.) and Coronel (1979) studied the designs as they occurred on the canoes in Fante communities. Coronel's study is much detailed than Nunoo's. Nunoo, as a matter of fact, 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.

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).

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 Fante 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. It appears that Coronel is somewhat biased with regard to the ability of the Fante fishermen to better decorate their canoes than other fishermen.

What he remarked about La near Accra illustrates this bias quite well: 'Labadi, while a major fishing community is a Ga-speaking area and lacks the Fante traditional heritage; as one might expect, canoe decoration here is not of the quality seen on Fante canoes' (ibid.). The canoe decorations seen at the beach of La were, at least in view, of the same quality as the ones in Winneba.

But perhaps this has to be related to the fact, evidently not known to Coronel, that it were the Fantes who introduced the Ga of La to the fisheries (cf. Brown 1947) and therefore possibly also to their decorative style. Just as in Fante coastal communities most of the canoes in the Ga fishing communities have their decorations, slogans and names on their gunwales.

But in case one wants to decipher, decode or 'read' this text one is immediately confronted with all kinds of serious difficulties, especially with regard to the interpretation of the pictograms. On the basis of Nunoo's piece one might get the impression that it is rather easy to understand what

a single pictogram or a specific combination of pictograms stands for and that there is a broad communal opinion among the fishermen concerning their meaning. Sometimes one finds them also on a second or – very rare – third band above these gunwales on the topside planking, but then they are rarely carved and mostly painted.

The topside planking of the big canoes, which was increased in height in this area almost always painted white with a blue rectangular in the middle. This particular combination of colors makes them at sea immediately recognizable as Ga canoes coming from Jamestown (Accra). With respect to the iconography one can distinguish between abstract designs, such as horizontal and vertical stripes, triangles, rectangles, circles and ovals, in short geometrical forms on the one hand, and pictograms on the other.

These pictograms can be divided into five categories: 1) pictograms of things, such as stools, swords, flags, arrows, and crosses; 2) pictograms of (parts) of plants, and trees; 3) pictograms of insects, birds, fishes and land animals; 4) pictograms of human beings or body parts such as hearts, hands, arms, penises; and 5) pictograms of celestial bodies, such as the stars, the moon and humans.

The pictograms and abstract designs occur almost always in combination with written texts, such as proverbs, slogans and (biblical) names, specific abbreviations, numbers and references to passages in the Bible. Most of the gunwales contain a strip-like decoration of a very specific nature because it is a combination of images, letters and numbers, in short a peculiar text.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Overview

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the area of study, research design and the instruments used for the collection and analysis of data. This chapter considers the methods and procedure followed to answer the questions posed in the study. The research methodology is divided into sections as follows: the area of study; research design; library research; population and sampling for the study; data collection instruments; types of data; administration of instruments; data collection procedures; and data analysis plan.

3.2. Area of study

Effutu Municipality which has Winneba as its capital in the Central Region of Ghana was chosen as the study area. The Effutu Municipality was founded around the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Municipality has a Paramount Chief and thirteen Divisional Chiefs with eight settlements and covers a landscape of about 433 square kilometres, with a population of about 65,000. Its capital is about 66 kilometres from Accra, the Capital of the Republic of Ghana and 90 kilometres from Cape Coast, the capital of the Central Region of Ghana.

The major economic activity of the people of Effutu is fishing and the language they speak is the Effutu language. A number of the Effutus are not elite because they attach importance to their economic activity-fishing to make their daily bread than the schooling which think waste time to complete.

The Effutu Traditional Area is bound by the Agonas on the North, Awutus on the East, Gomoas on the West and the Gulf of Guinea on the South. The map of the Republic of Ghana which

depicts Effutus capital Winneba-the study area has been inserted at the Appendix of this report and could be referred to by readers as to where the area is situated. The area is blessed with several music ambassadors including the famous Winneba Youth Choir. Another unique characteristic of the municipality is its famous annual Aboakyer Festival which is celebrated first week in May every calendar year.

3.3. Research design

The descriptive method of qualitative study was adopted for the study. A descriptive study is concerned with the relationship that prevails, beliefs, points of view held, ongoing processes, effects that are being felt and trends that are developing. This does not involve manipulation of variables. The descriptive study was considered appropriate for conducting this study because it is the one that deals with things as they currently are. The design also provides information on which decisions could be based.

This study focuses on the vital facts of people; their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations, behaviours and provides information on which to base sound decisions. This is the research design the researcher deems appropriate for conducting this study because it helps in getting insight into the philosophical and socio-cultural significance of canoe decoration among the Effutus of Winneba, Fete and Senya in the Central Region of Ghana and also helped to document or portray the culture of the people, the everyday experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing them on relevant others issues.

3.4. Library research

The researcher visited various institutional and research libraries to tap information. They are as following: College of Art library-KNUST, KNUST Main library(Ghana collection), Art Education library in KNUST, University of Education, Winneba-North and South Campus libraries, University of Education, Ashanti-Mampong campus, Ashanti-Mampong main library, St. Monica's College of Education library, Winneba Main library, and Apam Senior High School library.

The researcher made effective use of the World Wide Web in addition to the libraries. In all these places visited, efforts were made to collect the necessary information with the help of the librarians, by making notes, photocopies and taking of snaps where necessary from reports, journals, theses, periodicals and books. All the above mentioned libraries were of immense help to the study. The materials got were precise, relevant and useful to the study.

3.5. Population for the study

According to the Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Method, Population in a study refers to every individual who fits the criteria (broad or narrow) that the researcher has laid out for research participants.

Kumekpor (2002), also explained population (universe) of investigation as the total number of all units of the phenomenon to be investigated that exists in the area of investigation, that is, “all possible observations of the same kind”.

The target population for the study included all fishermen, chief-fishermen, canoe artists like painters, carpenters, custodians, and canoe owners and carvers in the Effutu Traditional Area. The study area was purposively selected because it is believed to have many fishing areas and

therefore needed as a subject for this study and the views of these respondents were the true representation of the people. These areas are Winneba, Fete and Senya all in the Central Region of Ghana.

The population was stratified into fishermen and canoe artists since they do different work towards the same goal and need to have sizable representation in the study sample. Also it was important to consult these people as they are directly involved in fishing and can provide the appropriate information needed for the study.

3.6. Sampling

According to Kalton, (1983), sampling is the process of choosing actual data sources from a larger set of possibilities. He added that, this overall process actually consists of two related elements: defining the full set of possible data sources which is generally termed the population and the selecting a specific sample of data sources from that population.

The researcher used the purposive sampling due to the nature of the population. This is an appropriate procedure for a study of this nature. Best (1981) shared the idea that sampling makes it possible to draw valid inferences, or generalizations on the basis of careful observation of variables within a small proportion of the population.

Since sampling is a fraction or part of population selected by the researcher to effectively represent the whole population or set of the values; in the case of Effutu Traditional Area of the Central Region of Ghana, fishermen, chief-fishermen, canoe artists like painters, carpenters, canoe owners' custodians, and carvers were selected from Winneba, Senya and Fete to represent the whole.

A sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) were selected out of the fishermen, chief fishermen, and canoe owners, canoe artists like painters, carpenters, custodians, and carvers of Winneba, Senya and Fete respectively and classified under two categories.

The homogeneity of the population assures the researcher that the sample is a good representation of the population and for that matter, the result obtained from it would be good for generalization. The areas selected were also representing the fishing communities in the Central region of Ghana. The interest group was selected purposively because of their important place in the fishing areas in the central region of Ghana. The various categories are described as follows.

The first categories were fishermen. These were fishermen, chief-fishermen, canoe owners, crew leaders and elders. They represent the various fishing areas in the Effutu Traditional Area. The second category was canoe artists. These were painters, carvers, and carpenters. The sampling procedure is diagrammatically illustrated as follows;

- A. Fishermen: chief fishermen, canoe owners, crew leaders and elders.
- B. Canoe Artists: painters, carvers and carpenters.

The total number of population selected from each group was 100 and 50 respectively:

Category A -100

CATEGORY A – (100)

Fishermen – STRATUM 1

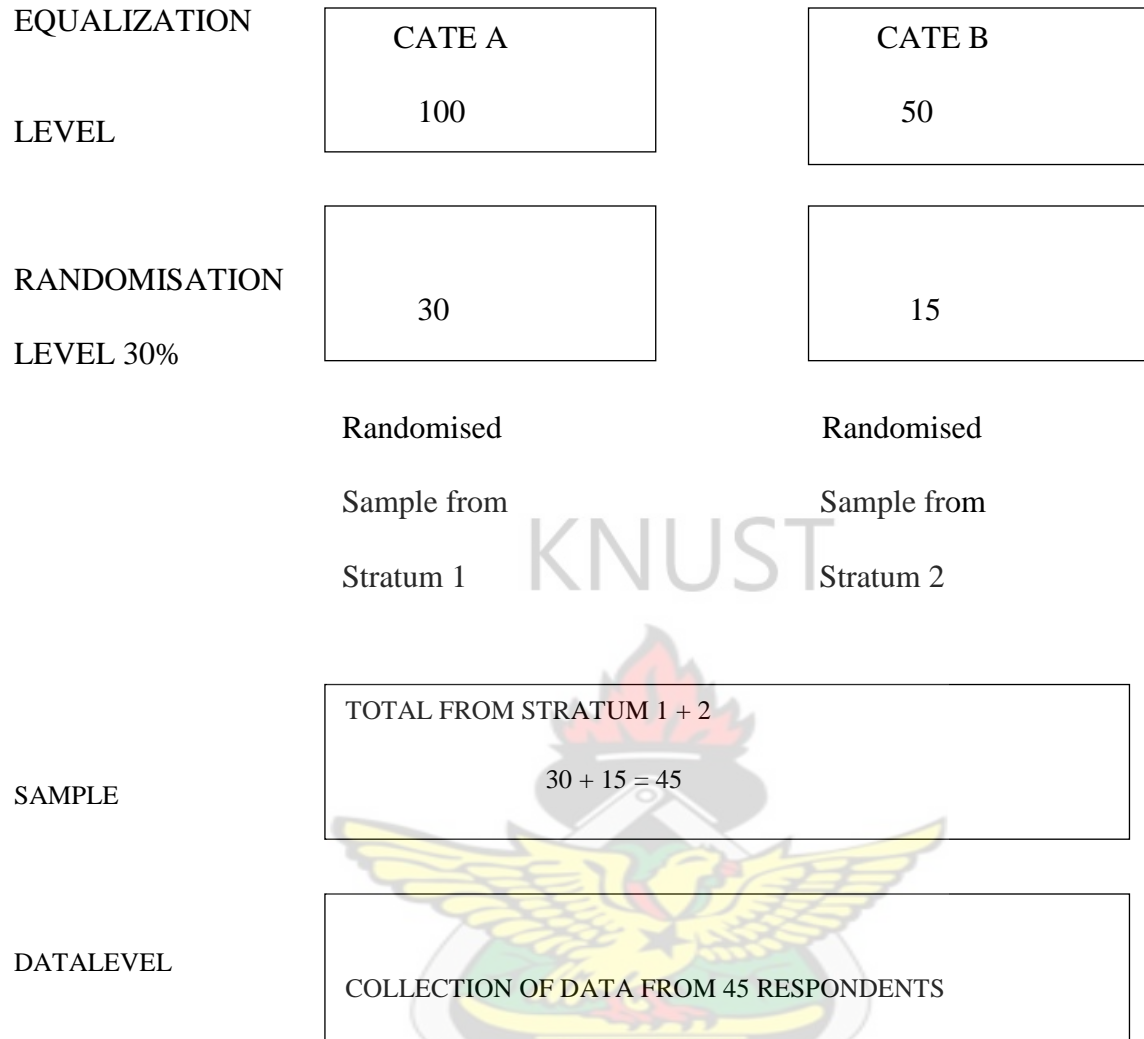
CATEGORY B – (50)

Canoe artists – STRATUM 2

POPULATION LEVEL

The sample for this study was one hundred and fifty (150). This number comprises fishermen (chief fishermen, crew leaders, canoe owners and elders) aged between 35-70 years and 40-70 years was selected for the Artists.

In all, the researcher met a whole bunch of fishermen and Artists but decided to work with the old canoe owners, chief fishermen and crew leaders on the part of the fishermen. In the case of the carpenters and artists, only master artists and master carpenters were selected. These consist of a hundred (100) fishermen selected from Winneba, Senya, and Fete respectively and fifty (50) canoe artists also selected from Winneba, Senya, and Fete respectively. The chart below is a summary of the various categories selected for the study.



3.7. Data collection instruments

Both primary and secondary source of information were collected for this study. Primary source of information was mainly people's ideas and opinions on the topic, which were gathered through interviewing of the respondents and the secondary source from related literature as well as files and documents from the internet and libraries in institutions mentioned.

The instruments used to elicit data for the study were interviewer's guide and observation (participant and non-participant). The interviews were designed to tap information from canoe artists (carvers, carpenters, painters) and fishermen (fishermen, chief fishermen, and canoe

owners). The questions covered the name and sources of the symbols and inscriptions on the canoes, its philosophical and socio-cultural interpretation.

In constructing the instrument, the researcher was guided by the supervisor. A total of sixteen (16) questions relating to acceptability and feasibility were selected for the study. These questions were modified to suit the purpose of this study. The researcher personally met the respondents and interviewed them, this helped to ensure a high return rate and afford the chance to explain certain terms and questions to respondents. A copy of the guide is annexed to this report.

The study involved subjects who are illiterate and busy, so the researcher arranged to meet their schedule. The interview was both formal and informal form where the questions to be asked were of no order. The instrument was used because of the following advantages identified by Bailey as cited in Sarantakos (1993).

And also the researcher observed that, the respondents were sometimes in the middle of activities and is hardly to come by due to their busy schedule.

1. It is flexible: interview can be adjusted to meet many diverse situations.
2. Easy administration: Interviews do not require respondents to have the ability to read, handle complex documents or long questions.
3. More complex question can be used, because the presence of the interviewer can assist in answering the questions.

3.8. Types of data

3.8.1 Primary data: is that information very close to solution of the research problem, and are collected directly from respondents via the instruments. They are derived from sources such as oral historians, or their transcribed statements, or written testimony of other types of eyewitnesses. These tend to be the original artifacts, document, and items related to some direct event, or outcome of an event, or some experience of an individual.

3.8.2 Secondary data: this information is relevant but a little far away from the solution of the problem and are collected directly from library sources. According to Creswell secondary data include oral or written statements, books journals etc. from people who may not have been immediately present during the event or phenomenon being described, but they convey information provided by others who were present or have knowledge about some specific research interest or subject.

3.9. Administration of instruments

Interviews conducted: The researcher used personal interviews to collect data for the research. The medium of expression was in Fante and Effutu. The former was used specifically for fishermen and Artists who can speak and understand the Fante whiles the later was reserved for those who only understand and speak Effutu. Both of the languages and the type of interview were suitable to deal with respondents who are mostly illiterate like the fishermen and “wayside” artists.

Observation:The researcher through series of questions, and search was able to identify a number of canoe symbols and inscriptions, their philosophical and socio-cultural significance. These were examined physically and photographs taken for documentation.

3.10. Data collection procedures

Preparatory work for this study started with the reviewing of the related literature. This was followed by preliminary field trips aimed at tracing the relevant materials for the study and selecting the key fishing centers for the study.

There were many fishing towns and villages along the coast of Central Region which should have been covered by this study but due to the size of the population, limited time and resources it was not possible for the researcher to go round all the fishing towns and the numerous fishermen in the Central Region to grasp them.

Effutu Traditional Area was the major fishing centre chosen for the study after the trip. This area was selected because the people represent the same characteristics of symbols and inscriptions of fisher folks in the Central Region.

Interview was conducted for the fishermen and canoe artists from Winneba, Senya and Fete respectively based on the interviewer's guide. A sound tape recording which employs a conventional tape recorder to record was used by the researcher. Here the respondent was made to know during the familiarization period about the intention of the researcher to record the conversation between them and permission was sought to do so.

3.11. Data analysis plan

In summing up, the interview, personal observations and photographs taking, the information gathered from the sample was categorized into A and B, which consisted of canoe artists (master carpenters, master artists and master painters) and fishermen (chief fishermen, crew leaders, fishermen, and canoe owners) respective.

Through descriptive and analytical methods, both primary and secondary sources of information on symbols and inscriptions on the canoes were identified, described and critically analyzed. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made to determine the future of canoe decoration.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Overview

This chapter covers the analysis and discussions of the data gathered from the field. Its main focus was to find out the socio-cultural significance of canoe decorations among the people of the Effutu Municipality. The chapter has been sub-divided and discusses briefly on the following: Canoe designing, Canoe inscriptions and abbreviations, and socio-cultural functions of the designs and inscriptions.

4.2. Canoe designing

The designing of the canoes commences immediately after a log of timber has been cut into a required shape of a canoe as shown in plate 1. This is usually done at hinterlands or forest zones and transported to the coast near the fishing site for work to be completed on them as shown in plates 2 and 3.



Plate 1: log of timber shaped into a canoe.

Source: Researcher's field work.

KNUST

According to Parley and other native informants, before the canoe could be designed and used some rituals must be performed to pacify the newly constructed canoe. These are done because there is a believe that the newly constructed canoe could be inhabited either by a good spirit or a bad one; and that if it is an abode for an evil spirit it could bring bad omen to the fisher folks in the area. This ritual usually brings the people together and they all help in the pacification process. This is a sign of unity among the folks. Before the occasion announcement would be conveyed to the community members through the local announcer to the community members inviting them to assemble at a said date for the commemoration.

In doing this, libation is poured and the gods and the ancestors of the land are called upon to pacify, bless and welcome the new property. The people of Winneba in the Effutu Traditional Area believe that canoes are vital properties which could be inherited. The canoes can be passed on by the father to the son as an inheritance.

Designing of the canoes begins with the carpenters who are usually employed at the coast to shape the newly constructed canoe to the required size and form as shown in plate 2. Some of these carpenters are fishermen themselves who understand the dynamics of fishing.

As could be seen from plates 2 and 3, the shaping is usually done by mounting wawa boards as an extension on the carved canoes. Apart from giving the required shape of the canoe, the wawa boards also make it possible to keep the fishing nets and the harvested fish. The wawa boards also serve as the “support” for the subsequent inscriptions and designs made on the canoes.



Plate 2

Plate 3

Plate 2 and 3: mounting of the two big wawa boards on a canoe.

Source: Researcher's field work.

The choice of symbols and inscriptions for the canoe decoration is usually influenced by religious, social and economics values of the owner of the canoe. Underwood (1952) asserts that, most wooden products have common religious appeal. This assertion confirms one of the reasons for canoe decorations in Winneba in the Effutu Traditional Area. Some of the canoes found at the coast were decorated with Bible verses, written information of the name of the owner, date of carving the canoe and source or place of purchase of the canoe. Others are images of celestial

bodies and deities, group names, mottoes, flags, abstract designs, and various small symbols from animals and swords.

The designing of a canoe section may last from two to three weeks. The researcher observed that usually a skillful carver is commissioned to carve intricate designs on the canoe. These designs are meaningful ones curled out from symbols of everyday scenes, experiences, morality, spiritual emotions, and proverbs express the philosophical and socio-cultural braveness of their ancestors.

KNUST

The canoe symbols and inscription found at Winneba, Senya and Fete in the Central Region of Ghana could be classified into the following: pictograms of regalia, pictograms of parts of plants/trees, pictograms of animals, pictograms of human beings, inscriptions and abbreviations on religious and social themes.

4.1.1. Pictograms of Regalia

Stool Symbol



Plate 4: Asesegua (the stool) in abstract

Source: Researcher's field work

The symbols of stools, swords, flags, crosses, arrows and other regalia are signs of authority as stated by Sarpong (1971). In Winneba, the researcher was informed by the older fishermen that

the stool design on the canoe (plate 4) does not only serve as an authority but also as a sign of stability. This means any canoe with the painting of a stool can withstand any devastation at sea can never be crushed or destroyed. The heart symbol in the middle of the abstract stool symbolizes the good heart of the owner and the shouting colours of the painting depict the joyous heart of the owner and also the happiness the canoe has brought to the family as a whole.

Other fishermen in the Senya beach see the stool as a sign of peace because whenever there is a dispute, the parties are summoned by the chief fisherman and together they sit to settle the dispute.

The Sword Symbol

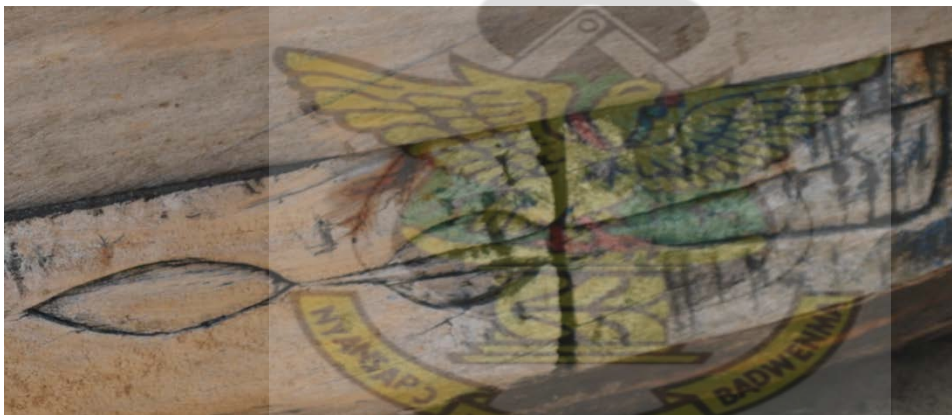


Plate 5: The sword (akonfena).

Source: Researcher's field work.

The sword which is a powerful symbol of authority and strength in leadership is among the symbols found on most of the canoes in the area of study. Canoes with this symbol shows how strong and powerful the owner of the canoe is. It can also mean that the owner is a good warrior and a royal.

The Flag Symbol

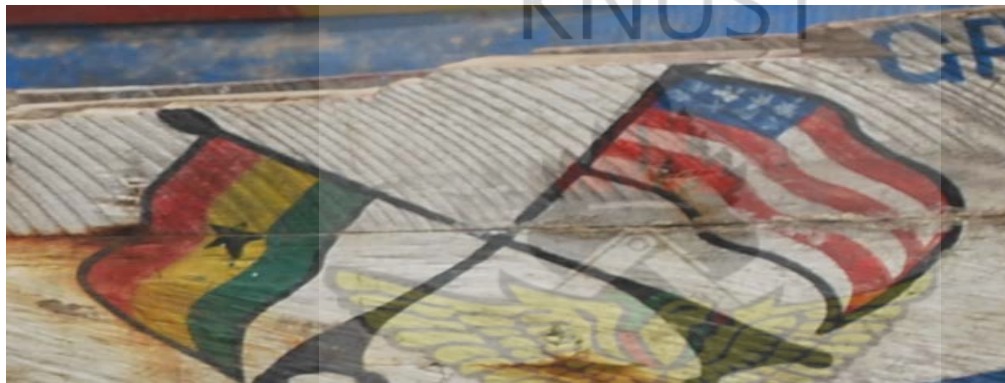


Plate 6a: flags of Ghana and the United States of America painted on a canoe.

Source: Researchers field work.



Plate 6b: flags of Senya Youth Fun Club.

Source: Researchers field work.

Almost every canoe observed by the researcher in the area of study has either a flag painted on its gunwales or a flag hoisted on it. Flags are used as a means of seeking protection and terminating evil spirits. Flags are also used to detect the direction of the wind in order to avoid strong currents at sea. At the gunwales of this particular canoe, the researcher observed the symbol of the flag of Ghana and that of the U.S.A. The appearance of the flag of the USA on the canoe represents foreign and western influence and the seemingly national move to become more of another nationality.

According to Neenyi Tetteh (personal interview), during the *Aboakyir* festival, the “*Frankaatunyi*” (the flag bearer) dances ahead the chief with the flag in the hand to protect the chief from being incapacitated by evil spirits. The flag bearer in this context uses the flag as a form of security to lead his people; in a similar context, the symbol of the flag on the canoes serve as protection against all evil spirit and any disaster that may befall the fishermen during their fishing expeditions.

The arrow symbol



Plate 7a: the arrow.

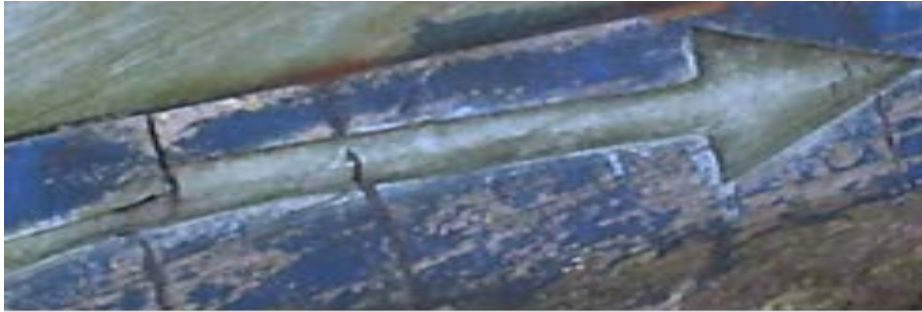


Plate 7b:the arrow.

Source: Researcher's field work at Winneba beach.

The arrow is a piercing implement used by hunters and warriors. Its representation on a canoe is an indication that the canoe is pursuing expedition to harvest fish. Some fishermen believe that a representation of this on their canoes psychologically depicts the advantage the fishermen have over the fish and the dangers at sea.

Concerning the heart, the researcher observed that a representation of it symbolizes love and caring potentials of the owner in dealing with the crew members. Again, fishermen are strong and work zealously to achieve their goal, that is, for bountiful harvest, but when it happens that this goal is never achieved, and then they become pessimistic or disappointed, hence the arrow deafening the heart.

4.1.2 Pictograms of parts of plants/trees

The bird with the twig symbol



Plate 8: A part of a plant and a bird.

Source: Researchers field work.

Trees are intended for shelter, food and aid in flora. But Uncle Mensah who owns this particular boat bearing this symbol narrated a striking story about how this symbol originated. This is the story: a bird by a twig as shown in (plate 8) caught the attention of Opanyin Nkansah (an elderly man) at the shores of the Winneba beach.

The two of them unquestionably followed the bird and at a point the bird dived into the seawaters. The two of them decided to cast their net in that area and to their disbelief had a bountiful harvest. It is believed that the sight of that bird brought about the bumper harvest. The informant confirmed that a bird by a twig is a sign of virtuous presage and added that this symbol would be transferred to the offspring.

4.1.3 Pictograms of animals.

The snake and fish symbol



Plate 9: The snake and the fish.

Source: researchers field work at fete

The snake and the fish as shown in plate 9, is a motif commonly found on most of the canoes in Winneba, Senya and Fete respectively. At Senya, the researcher was informed by Segu a canoe owner that, the symbol has been an inheritance.

According to the informant, the fishermen are supposed to be observant, cautious, and vigilant and believe that the snake was found to have possessed all these qualities after it has been read by the forefathers from the book of Genesis 3:1, which partly refers to the snake as the cautious of all the animals God created. The snake has since been their inspiration and hope for bountiful or abundant harvest.

The snake and the bird without wings symbol



Plate 10: the snake and the bird without wings.

Source: The researcher's field work.

At the Winneba beach, the same symbol witnessed at Senya beach by the researcher was described differently. The researcher was made aware that the snake is rather chasing after a bird and not a fish. This bird is without wings because the snake succeeded in consuming its wings and was attacking the eyes but the bird turned to fight back to protect itself.

The fisher folks affirmed that the snake and the bird without wings have a biblical rooting and interpretation. The eye of every living creature is of importance. In the Bible, God said the Israelites were the apple of his eye and that anybody who touches them touches the God's Himself and dealt with the enemies.

Based on this belief, the users of the snake and the bird without wings as a symbol; asserts that anybody who tries to attack either the owner of the canoe or the crew members will be destroyed by God.

The bull symbol



Plate 11: The head of a bull.

Source: researchers field work at Fete beach.

The bullock is widely known for its strength and energy. According to the informant of Fete, the bull used to be their chief means of transporting heavy goods from one destination to another. The owner the head of a bull as shown in (plate 11) as his symbol which would inspire the crew members to work harder towards bountiful harvest. The sight of the head of a bull suggests the potency and strength of the canoe and its crew members.

4.1.4. Pictograms of human organ

The Heart Symbol



Plate: 13a: the heart which is a sign of love

Plate 13b: the heart.

Source: Researcher's field work

The source of life for all living creature is the heart. The heart helps in circulation of blood in the body system. Its malfunction will either cause ailment or death. This canoe is the source of life and livelihood to the family members of the one who owns this canoe. Like the heart of living creatures, the canoe provides food (source of life) for the family, the community and the nation as a whole; hence the heart symbol (plate 13) on the canoe.

4.2. Canoe Inscriptions and abbreviations on religious and social themes (celestial bodies such as stars and moon and portrait of Jesus)

The inscriptions on the canoes are either carved out or painted. The paints are mostly primary colours (red, yellow and blue) and a few of them in the secondary's (green, purple/violet/mauve and orange). Majority of these canoe inscriptions are meant to praise God and also speaks of the owners relationship with a metaphysical power. Some of these are slogans, proverbs, numbers and abbreviations.

The inscriptions on the canoes have various functions. It may express the owner's religious beliefs, character and practices. It can also show the important role the owner of the canoe plays in the community.

Again, there are other inscriptions that talk about the trust and belief which some fishermen have in the Supreme Being. Examples of such inscriptions are shown in plates 14 and 15. There were other religious inscriptions such as "*NYAME YE ODOMFO*" (God is gracious), "*NYAME NA ODZE MA*" (God gives), "*NYAME NA OSE*" (God says), "*BOAFO NYE NYAME*" (God is

the helper), “*OGYEFO NYE NYAME*” (God is the savior). Others are as following: “THANK YOU JESUS”, “WONDERFUL JESUS”, “THROUGH JESUS CHRIST”, and “EMMANUEL”.

- In most cases, those who own the canoes have confidence in God’s Supremacy and, His willingness to provide for their needs and also listen to their cry for help.
- The inscription offers them hope for the future.
- They find consolation in the names even when they are oppressed.
- The owners again believe that all the powers of these earth subjects to the Almighty God so by praising Him; both the owner and his fishermen will get what they want.

4.2.1. Sample Religious Inscriptions and portrait of Jesus



Plate 14a: Jesus, the bread of life. Plate 14b: NyameBeyeSource: Researcher’s field work

The celestial bodies are believed to care and protect every inhabitant of the earth. The fisher folks believe that when they have symbols of these celestial bodies and humans at gunwales of

their canoes, they are protected by the creator. As such they normally paint and or carve the images of Jesus, angels and other spiritual beings at the gunwales of their canoes.

The owners of these canoes (plates 14a and 14b) are born Christians and believe Jesus is the only provider and can support them of their needs. According to them, they have always prayed to God to help them own canoes and their wishes were granted after the death of their father. The researcher also observed the symbol of stars which is a representation of hope for a brighter future.

4.2.2. Other religious inscriptions are shown below



Plate 15a. **Born Again**

Plate 15b. *Egya Fa Kye Hen* (Father Forgive Us)

Source: Researcher's field work

4.3. Inscriptions on good moral

These inscriptions are coined from statements on life in general and with statements directed to the public as a whole. Such inscriptions include: “*abotar*”,(patience), “*gyeakrobo*”(except bullet), “*kae me*”(remember me), “*kae lot ne yer no*”(remember Lots’ Wife) , “*and aa-dema*”? (is that so?) “*otanfonnye*”(the enemy is awful), “*do good*”, “*good wife*”, and “*talk true*”. These inscriptions inspire the owners of the canoes and the general public to be aware of what is around them and not to pay evil with evil. The public is made to know that we would be rewarded according to our deeds so we should practice good morals and to be satisfied with what we have.

4.3.1 Sample inscriptions on good moral





Plate 16a Good Wife and a star.

Source: Fete beach.

The above canoe was a gift from a husband to a wife. This is to educate the public that we all shall be rewarded according to our deeds and also wives should be of good cheers for in future they will be rewarded. The design of the star is to announce to the public that the woman is the number one and shines among all other women.

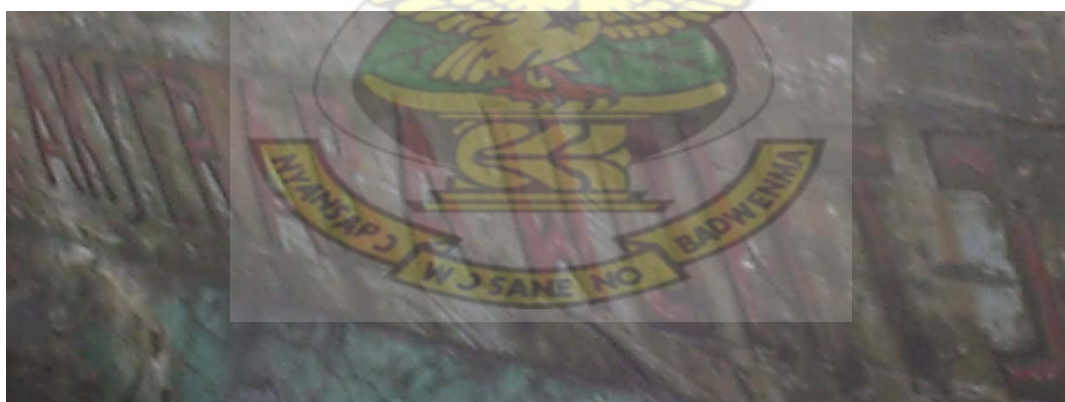


Plate 16b: Akyereba Wonto

(A Sister Cannot Be Purchased)

Source: Researcher's field research

This inscription is used as a medium to discourage wicked behavior such as hatred among siblings and workers. The fishermen believe that they are all one family and from same ancestry

therefore they should cultivate the habit of caring for each other just as they would for themselves. This is unlike other commodities, because a sister or sibling cannot be bought from the market (Plate 16b).

4.4. Socio-Cultural functions of the designs and the inscriptions

The designs and inscriptions on the canoes are seen as representing the life and culture of the people of the Effutu Traditional Area. The symbols and inscriptions seem to be the vivid picture of the peoples, historical and contemporary life. Some of the inscriptions are “SEBE” (Amulets), “AKYERABA WONTO”, “OGUAA AKOTO” and “AKROBO” (Bullet), the stool and the sword or cutlass, the snake and the bird, the arrow and the heart.

4.4.1. The stool

The stool speaks of the mythology past of a group of people. The stool itself embodies tremendous meaning in Akan culture as well as the people of the Effutu Municipality. All chiefs and queen mothers in the community sit on stools. During their Akwanbo and Aboakyer festivals the stool rooms are cleaned to pacify their ancestors and the gods. Socially, the stool represents the soul of the people. This therefore means that if the stool is captured in a war, the entire society would be taken captive or destroyed. The stool symbols therefore serves as a unifier for the indigenes and the fishermen alike.

4.4.2. The sword or the cutlass

The symbol of the sword or the cutlass defines one's ability to fight and capture. It is also the symbol of authority and protection. Canoes with the design of the sword on them means the owner of the canoe is a royal or a great warrior. These people are highly appreciated in the community.

4.4.3. The heart

The symbol of the heart shows the love and patience of their rulers. The rulers are often likened to a hen with its chickens. The hen cares for its offspring with care and love so even if it steps on her babies she does that with care. The people believe that only their rulers can protect them.

4.4.4. The bullet

The researcher observed a canoe with the inscription "KROBO" and under it is a caption "GYE AKROBO". The owner of the boat believes that with the gun nothing can attack him both spiritually and physically. He also said the "Whites" were able to rule the blacks with the aid of the gun and bullets. The bullet has since helped them to fight over their opponents so with this inscription on his canoe it means nothing can stop anyone who purposes himself to achieve something from getting what he wants. The symbols therefore represent security and focus.

4.4.5. Charms (Amulets, Talismans or Mascots)

These are repositories of spiritual powers; magic spell or things worn to avert evil or attract supernatural guardianship. According to Conway (1972), those items worn to attract

supernatural guardianship are called talismans or mascots. He added that a talisman works in a positive way, attracting the casual forces necessary to create whatever effects its owner desires. But an amulet on the other hand, has the more negative function of neutralizing certain causes before they can promote an undesired effect.

All the above assertions boil up to the fact that the people in the Effutu municipality, Senya and Fete believe in the use artifacts for protection against evil forces and to evoke good omen. The charms therefore symbolize security for the natives and the fishermen.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The researcher observed that canoes are not only meant for travelling and fishing but also it serves as an artwork in Africa. The canoes were adorned with designs and inscriptions tightly intertwined with other aspects of the culture including religion, politics, social activities and economics. The study revealed that these inscriptions and designs are concerned with the life and culture of the people. The fisher folks believe that the designs and inscriptions on the canoes are a representation of their life and culture. That is, the paintings are a vivid picture of the life of the people, past and present.

It also came to light from the analysis that certain designs on the canoes represent the history of the Akan culture in general. An example is the stool and the cutlass which represent the chieftaincy institution of the community. The symbol of the stool on the canoes represents the stool as a common household object and explains that the canoe is a family property and that has come to stay.

Again, it was observed that most of the inscriptions are proverbs since in Akan culture; one's ability to use words well represents his/her intelligence and wit.

5.2 Conclusions

It is believed that the designs and inscriptions on the canoe is not only meant for decoration but as a representation of establishing relationship between the individual and his community, their families, their religion, the rest of the world and being recognized as a canoe owner.

The designs and inscription also identifies the owner as a real person who has triumph in life, who has enemies around him and is going through other problems in life; and expresses the owner as a dealer in the community and a dealer in beliefs and advice.

Looking at the relationship between the canoe designs and inscriptions and the culture of Effutu municipality, it is apparent that the canoe themselves become symbols and often times the canoe owner's family become associated with the name of the canoe and making the inscription almost like a family crest or slogan.

5.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that the fisheries associations encourage the canoe owners to keep proper records of their heritage since observation revealed that they lack indebts philosophies attached to the designs and inscriptions of their legacy and project.

Ghana tourist board should promote canoe decoration competition as a part of their annual regatta organized during festivals along the coast. The award could be given based on the canoe decoration with the best philosophical and socio-cultural significance and educate the public on their cultural values, such a promotion will enable the public to understand and appreciate the values enshrined in canoe decoration.

Finally, it is recommended that further research should be carried out on canoe decoration among the other fishing communities since more is involved in the designs and inscriptions than mere decoration.

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APPENDIX A

Canoe Designs



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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Why are the canoes decorated?
2. What do all of the symbols mean?

3. Why are the canoes given names?
4. Why did you choose the name that you did?
5. What do the names mean?
6. Tell me about the philosophies attached to the canoe designs and inscriptions?
7. What motivated you to put the symbols and the inscriptions on your canoe?
8. What can you say about the social functions of the designs and inscriptions?
9. Can you tell me more about the cultural functions of the designs and the inscriptions?
10. What type of wood is your canoe made of?
11. What materials did you use in carving the canoe?
12. Why did you choose this type of design on your canoe?
13. Can you please tell me the difference between the designs and inscriptions on the old and new canoes?
14. What philosophy do you attach to the designs and inscriptions?
15. What are its social functions?
16. What are the cultural functions of the designs and inscriptions?

