



Journal of Arts & Humanities

Volume 11, Issue 02, 2022: 24-35

Article Received: 11-01-2022

Accepted: 29-03-2022

Available Online: 30-03-2022

ISSN: 2167-9045 (Print), 2167-9053 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18533/journal.v9i1.1809>

Pseudo Traditional Wood Sculptures in TTU, Ghana: A Study of Four Works by an Artist-Lecturer

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ABSTRACT

This paper focused on the general characteristics of traditional wood sculptures produced in the Takoradi Technical University (TTU) community by an artist-lecturer from the Akan and Yoruba ethnic backgrounds. Through the qualitative research approach, the paper gave an anthropological perspective on the traditional wood sculptures produced in TTU as a primary art form that served as an inspiration for young Ghanaian artists. The population for the study were four (4) wood carved sculptures, namely: two heads are better than one, Africa, the blessed continent, justice and security and transition; and the sculptor who produced the traditional wood sculptures. Data were collected from the Artist-Lecturer using unstructured interview and direct observation with photographs. The data were analysed using visual and interpretive analysis tools. The paper revealed that the four traditional wood sculptures by the artist-lecturer attest that the Akan and Yoruba ethnic groups found in Ghana and Nigeria-West Africa are very religious groups of people with their beliefs and religious practices known to be very spiritual and powerful. It is hoped that other Ghanaian artists from different ethnic backgrounds could share similar traits of their beliefs and religious practice to enrich the arts and culture of Ghana.

Keywords: Akan and Yoruba ethnicity, Artist-lecturer, Ghanaian art, Traditional wood sculptures, Takoradi Technical University.

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1. Introduction

Traditional wood sculptures can be regarded as a practical and vital component of everyday life among the ethnic groups in Ghana, both for monetary and aesthetic worth. For that matter, traditional sculptures in TTU cannot be overlooked. Wood carving has been practised around the globe. Wood survives much less well than the other materials. It is vulnerable to decay, insect damage and fire. It, therefore, forms an important hidden element in the art history of many cultures, including that of Africa. Wood is light, so it is suitable for masks and other sculptures that are intended to be carried to a

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particular destination. Also, it can take fine details. It is easy to use. It has been very often not painted after carving (Sieber and Walker, 1998). Also, it is an indication that Africa is in the forest belt and has its home woods. Furthermore, the tree is believed to have supernatural powers for good deeds. With this background of knowledge, the artist-lecturer believes that the tree has supernatural powers that can be used to bring back the fortunes of Africa.

Traditional wood sculptures are a rapidly emerging art form in Ghana, albeit with certain complications. In the socio-cultural debate, the issues are not new. Dogbe (2001), Osei-Agyemang (1999), Fosu (1993) and Gyekye (1996), among others, have critically addressed various topics in the Regalia for Traditional Religion. African artists conceive form in three dimensions and seem to have no difficulty getting away from the two-dimensional plane. For instance, some sculptors have grasped the round and cylindrical forms of the human body with ease rendition. This practice lies in the technique imposed by the material. The sculptor starts with a section of tree trunk—a round block of wood. The sculptor achieved a cubic form as a basic cylinder. The result is an almost geometric style. Geometric-style abstract sculptures of this type have been produced in their highest artistic form by the Babe ethnic group in Western Sudan (Antubam, 1963; Sarpong, 1974; Cole, 1975; Nwoko, 1977; Chanda, 1993; Mudimbe, 1994).

Bentum (2013; 2014) blends the aesthetic appreciation of tree trunks and branches into sketching, sculpture. He relates a concrete mural of a surface to chromatic painting. The artist examines the symbolism and iconography of Ghana's monoliths. He also discusses the shape and subject of sculpture, including humans, animals, and the supernatural. The artist's most significant contribution is his recommendation that the semiotic principles of contemporary wood sculpture be based on the Ghanaian sculptural tradition (Bentum, 2013). These works of motivating literature, on the other hand, are deafeningly silent on the worth and artistic significance of traditional wood sculptures. Dogbe (2002) expressed his dissatisfaction with sculpture's portrayal as a political commodity. He believes that while Ghanaian sculpture represents national and cultural identity, most Ghanaians find it odd and uninteresting. Micah, Ankrah and Donkor (2015) express cement as an aesthetic medium in the Ghanaian sculptural context that covers the procedures and techniques of using cement as a material to create sculptures.

Except for Dogbe, who believes that while Ghanaian sculpture symbolizes national and cultural identity, the art is unfamiliar to most Ghanaians. They are uninterested in the value of the aesthetic significance of traditional wood sculptures. Furthermore, the characteristics of traditional sculpture such as size, form, unity, internal structure, frontal, verticality, symmetry, texture, distortion, abstraction, exaggeration, non-narratives, materials, body parts, symbols and appreciation) are important to the development of traditional wood sculptures. These characteristics have not received adequate scholarly attention in the broad range of traditional art; the subject is invariably imprecise. These forerunners looked to African art for artistic solutions to their challenges. Unfortunately, these artists from the original birthplaces of such inspiring art forms as Ghana and TTU are not utilizing their art forms to their advantage. As a result, there is a need to research native wood sculptures. This paper, therefore, focused on the general characteristics of traditional wood sculptures produced in the Takoradi Technical University (TTU) community by an Artist-Lecturer from the Akan and Yoruba ethnic backgrounds. In the realisation of the general characteristics of traditional wood sculptures, the study examined the anthropological perspective in appreciation of the four traditional wood sculptures and deliberated on the design principles on the traditional wood sculptures by the by an Artist-Lecturer. The research questions that guided the study were:

RQ1: How can the anthropological perspective in appreciation of the four traditional wood sculptures be examined?

RQ2: What are the design principles on the traditional wood sculptures?

2. Theoretical framework

This research is based on Aesthetic Cognitivism, a movement that began in 2019. This theory attempts to comprehend and investigate the worth of art as a source of pleasure, amusement, or emotional catharsis. "The arts must be treated no less seriously than the sciences as modes of

discovery, invention, and extension of knowledge in the wide sense of advancement of understanding," wrote Nelson Goodman in *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978) (Bordens, 2010).

The theory envisions, plans and implements research into the cognitive importance of the arts to spiritual truths and new spiritual knowledge. This theory is significant since the study believes and responds to the following questions:

Is there an empirically demonstrable connection between art and understanding?

What distinctive cognitive value does engagement with the arts generate?

Under what conditions and in what ways does participation in artistic activities encourage or stimulate spiritual understanding, insight or growth?

If art has to do with understanding, then what of beauty? Is beauty essential to understanding?

If beauty is essential, what advantages, if any, does beautiful art have over non-beautiful art concerning understanding?

3. Methodology

The study employed the qualitative approach using descriptive research design to provide a detailed description of the selected traditional wood sculptures by the artist. The traditional wood sculptures chosen for the study were based on their uniqueness and value to the artist. The study depicted the artist's ethnic interactions with the traditional wood sculptures. The goal was to show how sculptures may inspire artists to create good works of art (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002; Best, 2000). The expect-type of purposive sampling technique was used to obtain the total sample size of four (4) traditional wood sculptures from the Artist-Lecturer from Takoradi-Technical University (TTU), Ghana. The expect-type of purposive sampling was used to deploy the artist-lecturer's expertise on the traits and features of his life experience and art interest for the study (Clark, Foster, Sloan, & Bryman, 2021). The unstructured interview was used for data collection from the artist-lecturer. The face-to-face interview was conducted in two sections: a description of the traditional wood sculptures and the meanings linked with the symbols in the sculptures. Photographs were taken as a visual type of research instrument to support the study whereas permission from the Artist-Lecturer were sought. This visual type allowed the concepts and meanings of the symbols on the sculptures to be visually studied and described.

The study employed visual and interpretive analysis tools under the qualitative research approach. The four traditional wood sculptures were described by analysing the general characteristics of the four works as supported by visual data (photographs) (Ledin & Machin, 2018; Elliot & Timulak, 2021). The general characteristics of the traditional wood sculptures constituted the proportions, distortions, exaggerations, unity of contrast, internal structure, frontal, symmetry, verticality and the non-narrative character of traditional Ghanaian forms. The names of traditional wood sculptures, tools and materials used in the production were described in the study. The tools helped the understanding of the sculptures in their creation and the motivation for the artist. The study used triangulation to collect a range of data to hunt for underlying trends (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

The data gathered were grouped and classified into common and sub-themes using index cards for analysis, and each item of data was categorized according to its meaning. Lengthy texts were distilled into simple units and phrases to bring out their correlation and make analysis and interpretation easier. To acquire a general picture of what was in the data, the complete collection was read thoroughly. The information acquired was utilized to determine whether the study's objectives and analysis were met. This process was done to ensure that the data was better evaluated, that meaningful interpretations were made, and that the study's conclusions were logical. The data was collected from secondary and primary sources. They were examined, interpreted and synthesized to serve as the foundation for the report (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Cooper & Schindler, 2001). Again, the study sought ethical clearance from the artist before the study commenced. The study ensured the artist's rights to free consent as his voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity were taken into consideration.

The study discusses the general characteristics, including the size, names of the sculptures, tools and materials used in the production of the sculptures, techniques used in their production, and the concepts behind their production "proportions of significance", distortions and exaggerations, unity of contrast, internal structure, frontal, symmetry, verticality, and the non-narrative character of

traditional Ghanaian forms. The study followed these qualities with an appreciation of the sculptures for a better understanding of these characteristics.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Anthropological perspective in appreciation of the four traditional wood sculptures Size

The traditional wood sculptures (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4) measure 30 cm long, 3 cm wide and 22 cm tall. The creation of these works serves a functional purpose. They could be used as decorative pieces. They can be handled and moved easily because of the size of the forms. The sculptor chose the most convenient sizes to carve the sculptures based on the function and purpose of the sculptures, whether visible or not. Although the sculptor is skilled at creating life-size statues, he could not carve large size sculptures with the nature of the wood at his disposal (Pers. Comm. the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

Human Heads

All the traditional relief sculptures (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4) are a form of human heads. These sculptures are predominant in Ghanaian tradition. The human heads are believed to house the totality of the human body (brain) (Chanda, 1993). According to the lecturer-artist, the brain is housed by the head. The brain is seen in many of the traditional Ghanaian sculptures, as works in this study express. It symbolizes the mysteries of the universe (Pers. Comm. the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021). It is believed that the works of the artist-lecturer as a visual interpreter were to express the mysteries of life. It is not surprising that the human heads assume the central position in the sculptures produced.

Description of the Four Traditional Wood Sculptures

It was observed that the sculptures (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4) were carved from the *Entandrophragma cylindricum* (Sapele). They were all not polished, as is the case with many of the traditional sculptures in Ghana. According to the artist-lecturer, these sculptures were not painted because he decided to stay natural to the material and achieve their authenticity (Australia ICOMOS, 2013).

Two heads are better one

Figure 1 (The two heads are better than one) shows two sided-view heads carved together. Each of the side views has three ethnic marks, grading from the smallest to the biggest. There are two marks on each side of the head, close to the neck. One of the marks is in line with the nose line, while the other is in line with the mouth line. Also, there is a front view that has the following features: ten tots on the forehead, two oval eyes, and in between the eyes is a pointed nose, a mouth, and five dots each stretching from the nose line to almost close to the eyes, giving it a triangular shape. Features of the work are seen in the front view of the work. The artist-lecturer disclosed that those dots suggest small closed circles. These dots represent unity, wholeness and infinity. The closed circles or dots are arranged to form an open triangle, which is also an indication of the practice of monotheism by the sculptor (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

Again, there are two side views of faces, each having a nose, a mouth, an eye, a chin, and a forehead. The two side view heads have necks that are elongated to form the face of the front view. It is in the form of a triangle. According to the artist-lecturer, it signifies concepts of the past, present, and future as well as spirit, mind, and body. There is a neck with two projections on each side of the neck. The octopus-like projections have eight tots each on them. Beneath the octopus-like projects is a star-like projection indicating the achievement of altered states of consciousness. It was also seen on the foreheads of the front view part ten projected tots, implying the spirits' tenderness in the afterlife. Two



Figure 1. Two heads are better than one (Source: Field data, 2021)

oval eyes represent the trinity of trinities, a symbol of holiness or spiritual completion in the world. Figure 1 (Two Heads Are Better Than One) at face value, three heads are seen in the figure. The figure is placed at the centre of the base support with borders on each side of the figure. The three faces signify vigilance and protection by the deities supporting the affairs of TTU (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

Africa the blessed continent

Figure 2 (Africa, the blessed continent) has four borderlines, and the figure is placed at the centre of the support. The actual figure is in the form of an Africa map. According to the sculptor, it is a female head with a covered hairdo. On the hairdo are four draperies indicating how old, rich, and wise Africa has been. On the biggest of the draperies are ten tots following the direction of the drapery. These features are an indication that Africa has a brighter future if it can manage its resources properly. There is a long projection on the forehead of work that flows to join the hairdo on the left-hand side. Again, it projects to the right by joining the pointed nose. This statement to the artist-lecturer signifies unity. The artist-lecturer says that, "if Africans unite, they can take over the world in terms of economic, social, politics, traditions, agriculture, and human development as well".



Figure 2. Africa the blessed continent (Source: Field data, 2021)

The figure is in the profile view or better yet, the side view. The sculptor believes this is why Africa should be forward-looking if only the development of the continent is its prime concern. The figure has an earring in the form of a triangle. The ear is an indication that Africa must listen more to its members for its development. The triangle contains a profound meaning, which symbolizes strength. The symbol triangle unites all the deities of Africa for the culmination of mind, body, and soul (trinity) for change. This statement is in line with Mathematician Allotey's comment, which he made in a press statement on the development of the world without mathematics. Again, the artist-lecturer stated that:

Development is a triangle, and the uppercase delta means "change" or "the change" in mathematics. Anyone who refuses to change does not develop. Africa is a continent of providence surrounded by rays of light and glory meant to represent divine providence, whereby the ears of the deities listen to humanity.

The figure has an eye. The eye is probably the most significant symbolic sensory organ of the human parts. The eye of the work represents clairvoyance, omniscience, intelligence, light, vigilance, morals, conscience, truth, honesty, and a gateway into the soul of Africa where other continents may trade (Mudimbe, 1994). In line with Sarpong's (1974) argument, the artist-lecturer supports that the eye is a means of judgement. Also, it is authority for good, evil, protection, wisdom, knowledge, secrecy and mystery. In support of Sarpong's assessment, Africa could be a haven if it manages its affairs very well and could be a curse as well if it does otherwise (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021). The eye of figure 2 is closed, which is an indication that, with all the blessings bequeathed to Africa in terms of resources, Africa is still poor. The statement suggests bad governance by African leaders. All the blessings have turned to curses. Africa as the blessed continent has a nose. The nose is the organ through which air enters the body, allowing one to breathe and perceive smells. It analyses the air that inspires and informs us about the pleasant or hostile character of an environment. We can feel and perceive beings and situations by smelling (Cole, 1975).

Symbolically, the nose in Figure 2 represents power (the ability and inability to take the lead in personal or social life). It has an intuition (have business sense, smell a problem from afar, realise that an affair smells bad). It represents personality (the one sample image itself), pride, sexuality, curiosity, inspiration, and spirituality (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021). Nose, smell: As in the case of the ears, the nose cannot close. In the animal world, the smell is a crucial sense. Smells warn of the presence of danger. By smell, they are set to be recognized; they discover the identity and belonging to the other (body odour, flavour, etc.), detect the situation of the dam, recognize the good and bad foods, and receive sexual messages (pheromones) (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021). The sculptor is of the view that Africa is in danger as far as economic stability is concerned.

Africa the blessed continent equally has a mouth. The mouth is that part of the body that helps humans to speak and be a voice to the soul. Teeth, tongue and other such things come together to form the mouth. The mouth as used in the sculpture represents communication, backbiting, unable to express one's feelings and emotions. The artist-lecturer affirms that this, behaviour does not encourage development and must cease completely.

According to the Artist-Lecturer:

The chin of Africa the Blessed continent is an expression of many things. Examples are resolving, sternness, obstinacy and character. Africans can take the blows of life, such as hardships, insecurity, economic instability, frustrations and dejections, on the chin suggests toughness.

The artist-lecturer believed that despite all the difficulties Africans are facing, there is still hope. This hope is realised if Africa's member states can have the willpower, stubbornness, bullishness, bravado, determination, and pride to accept the mistakes and work towards achieving the best conditions for their members. The work shows a lone figure in an open space. The woman figure looks and faces away from the camera. Her posture creates a sense of disconnectedness, just as Africa is disconnected from the rest of the world in developmental spheres. The colour brown, somewhat melancholy, creates a sense of isolation and boredom. Together with the title, the artist-lecturer senses the woman's loneliness, with her only company being her reflection in the background.

Transition

Figure 3 is known as the transition. Transition is also a human head carved from *Entandrophragma cylindricum* (Sapele), as indicated in Figures 1 and 2. The transition has all the features of Figures 1 and 2 respectively. Careful observation showed some slight differences which are as follows:

1. Form of the transition

Most Ghanaian traditional sculptures are seen with simple regular forms, in the form of spheres, cones and cylinders, such as the "Akuaba" (Figure 3), for example, like a discus, the neck as a cylinder, the torso as a barrel and the upper arms also as cylinders. These minor forms are joined together simply to create the total form required without much detail. This reason is not that the artist-lecturer could not produce realist work. These forms were made according to the links the artistic-lecturer had with society. According to the Artist-Lecturer, "there was no need for major deviations except for minor individual flairs, which could not be controlled".

2. Unity of Contrast (Angularity and Rounded Forms)

By psychological impression, the sculptor, like a typical Ghanaian craftsman, has a fondness for angular and rounded forms, which can be seen in most of his works and are pleasant forms by all standards. This statement tells how the sculptor is being influenced by something supernatural (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021). The reasoning of the artist-lecturer is comparable to Sarpong's (1974), who verifies that spiritual forces can impact the artist's judgment in a culture, particularly among craftsmen. The coming together of opposites: rounded and angular forms communicate a satisfying pattern of plastic language, and it is not always what is expected. Intuitively, this statement was recognized by the sculptor. It was integrated into his traditional relief sculptures.

An emphasis on this point, the crisp representations and breaks in the "transition" depicted in Figure 3, is aimed to put the sculpture into a beautiful balance. Also, the "Akuaba" (Figure 3) which represents fertility, appears rounded with mostly oval shapes, the renderings and sharp cuts in the wood, as well as the treatment of the short hands at right angles to the neck, express satisfaction that can only be achieved through the union of contrasting forms. The sculptor's instinctive knowledge allows him to blend angularity and roundness in his work unconsciously. In his book "Ghana's Heritage of Culture" (Antubam, 1963), Kofi Antubam discusses the relationship between round and angular forms and beauty (male and female). According to Antubam, the human figure was comprised of ovals



Figure 3. Transition (Source: Field data, 2021)



and rounded forms as perceived by the Akan. A figure without these forms is not lovely in the opinion of the Akan.

3. Internal Structure

From the position of the sculpture, one is led to believe that it has an internal structure. These ostensibly interior systems appear to be worlds apart from the physical supports or armatures that maintain a sculpted sculpture in place. The support that one sees from the outside of the sculpture is the inside framework (Chanda, 2008). This statement points to the fact the existence of an interior structure or force is accountable for the surface conformation. The stiff neck, head, as well as outstretched right arm in this same figure, elicit a feeling or a sense of tension, despite the generally rounded forms and feminist emotion.

It is as though some inner mechanisms are holding the neck and, in particular, the outstretched arm in place. The artist-lecturer achieves this sense of internal structure in the "Akuaba" figure through his carving technique. The keyword in this strategy is "precision." The mouth of the work is opened as implying the passage of time and a commitment to procreation. To represent what happens in the afterlife, the figure has all four eyes closed. The circular opening on top of the closed right eye denotes danger (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021). All humans whose organic activities are carried on in regular pulsations have a sense of rhythm. Therefore, Africans may have it the most. A sculptor's tool is brought to cadences as a "motor-habit" (Chanda, 2008). The artist-lecturer worked with volume and mass to represent the human shape. In most cases, he only came close; a few were equal to, if not strong then, the human figure (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

Justice and Security

The sculpture is in the form of a head with an oval shape. All the features, such as the eyes, ears, and mouth, have oval characteristics. The work has protruding and open eyes that signify vigilance and can see from the front, sides, back and far away. According to the artist-lecturer, the sculpture can be used to serve in the cosmological realms.

Furthermore, the sculpture has big, open ears that fit the structure very well. This statement reflects the union of opposites, as point-up and point-down ovals have their meanings. The oval shape of the ears represents listening, and the open ears represent the positive and negative aspects of all hearing (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

Also, the eyes have demarcations that bring out the eyes. These demarcations extend from the top to the bottom of the eyes, forming the nose, which is flat. The flatness of the nose is an indication of a typical African figure that smells nothing (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

Additionally, Figure 4 has a design shaped in the form of a circle or round. The circle is unique in geometry with equidistant points. The reason is that the circle cannot be drawn without lifting and repositioning the tools such as chisels and gouges. The circle is a leadership symbol found in Ghana and Nigeria, symbolizing the perfect meditative state of balance. The roundness symbolizes God's rule over the universe and everything in the circle. Moreover, it symbolizes 'God reaching towards humans and humans reaching towards God' (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

Likewise, the sculpture has the mouth open with two teeth in the upper gum. It has another two teeth in the lower gum. The upper ones are in between the lower ones. The sculptor believes they are signs of danger to mankind if one wrongs the deity they represent, the deity of the river TTU. This statement is in line with Collier and Thomas (1988), who opines that African art with an open mouth is an indication of jeopardy that is about to happen to its users. According to the sculptor, Figure 4 represents the fairness and justness to all manner of people in the traditional militia (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

5. Design principles on the traditional wood sculptures



Figure 4. Justice and security (Source: Field data, 2021)

The sculptures in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 are some of the finest heads produced by the artist. The traditional relief sculptures are important examples of the artist-lecturer's work at TTU. The figures are conceptual. The sizes of the four planks of wood used in the production (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4) are the same. The woods are rectangular, measuring 30cm (L) by 22cm (B) by 3cm (H). The sculptor adopted the subtractive method of carving all the sculptures. They are splendid figures of significance and authority. The significance of African proportion stated by Frank Willet is seen in these sculptures. When comparing the heads of Figures 1 and 3 to their bodies, the heads are not proportionately the same. The morphological forms of the heads, the face, the eyes, the mouth, and the nose are all sculpturally well rendered. The ovals and flat-shaped faces are characteristics that seem to dominate Akan sculptures (Sieber & Walker, 1998). The heads are held in position by long necks, as seen in figures 1 and 3, which are serrated, another general characteristic of Akan figures. In the middle part of Figure 3, the torso seems to be shoulder-less.

The sculptures are vigorous and concerned with their concrete essence, making no concessions to natural human anatomy or meaningless details. Their impressions are of solidity, stability, and weight. They look simple, possess calmness and remoteness, which are characteristic of typical Akan traditional figures. The sculptures possess some firmness in their forms, which are characteristics of any good sculpture. As the overall figure appears magnificent, there are few or no naturalistic details. The figures are dignified, domineering and graceful. Frontally, African the blessed continent (Figure 2) is in the profile section breaks the calm symmetry of the composition. However, Figures 1, 3, and 4 are in frontal positions, which their lines of symmetries are not disturbed. In all the figures except Figure 2, if the sculptures are divided into two halves by an imaginary line from the top through to the bottom, all elements on one side are repeated on the other side. Verticality is stressed by the whole posture in the first place. All the features on the sculptures, namely the heads, the necks in Figures 1, the torso in Figure 3, stand vertical in positions. In Figure 3, horizontal lines counter-balanced the verticality of the figure. The horizontal and vertical elements satisfy universal expectations.

The interplay of these lines gives a great sense of fulfilment, which easily outshine the abrupt contrasts. There are diagonally positioned forms that go to contrast the universal expectations. The heads are all in diagonal positions except in Figure 2. The diagonal positions are emphasized by the shapes of women as shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3. Figure 2 is superbly balanced even in the profile, reminding us that asymmetrical design has a balance. Figure 2 depicts pyramidal composition. A vertical line felt to be running from the head to the base stabilizes this pyramidal shape. The figures have weights, and the force of gravity acting upon them makes them stable. The centre of gravity is from the apex to the bases, which are firmly fixed to the background. They attract onlookers with their majestic attraction. They are seen as absolutely unmovable, but within the Figures, there is tremendous movement. Despite the weights expressed in the figures, the lineal directional forces revealed in the profile (Figure 2) create a tremendous movement in the figure. This lineal directional force depicted suggests a release of the gravitational pull in the figure. Graphically, the four dimensionality or exponential curvature is expressed as in this repetition of lines in the profile view of the figure. The figure in these lines is delicately and confidently poised for "lift-off". The movement of the eyes in figures 1 and 4 from the base to the top, the unusual concave curvatures of the backs of the figures, suddenly join the flat, diagonally positioned heads to create movement in the heads.

The designs on the sculptures are rendered to represent rhythm as well as convey the nuances of the virtues imbued in traditional African figures. There is a manifestation of rounded forms all over the figures. These are not strange because, in the Akan concept of beauty, the oval shapes express beauty and gracefulness, qualities that must not escape African Art. There are some sensuous qualities of the force that add some spiritual touch to the works. There is some sensation of effect one gets at a glance. An emotion can only be fully felt by critically examining the figures. With the stiffness of the heads, there is a feeling of readiness; the whole comportment of the sculptures seems to suggest some superiority, which is typical of African sculptures. Despite the relatively round forms, which give a feminist feeling, the stiff heads suggest a masculine stance, which portrays an inner tension. It is as if some inner structures were holding the heads into positions. The verticality, symmetry, and frontal qualities make the pieces assume some sense of uprightness. There are also feelings of lightness in the figure because of the rhythmic movements in the sculptures.

5.1 Frontal

In Ghanaian Akan sculpture, the general position is frontal. Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 were created with the concept of frontal in mind. These figures were created to depict spirit beings and to serve as abodes for essential spirits. The position is confronting and conversing with the world that the traditional Ghanaian man aspires to contact is the front. This position allows the worshipper to focus and put his ideas, thoughts, and beliefs into better focus when meditating (Baars, 2002). As a result, the frontal quality of all of the works by artist-lecturer pervades. This reason is that the figures are approached as human beings as a matter of social etiquette. They need the reverence of those who use them as though they are approaching the real spirits they harbour (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

5.2 Verticality

Verticality is a visually appealing approach to communicate strength. When one stands tall, one is above those who are seated. The person's stance alone exudes strength and respect. The most traditional sculptures (whether made of wood, metal, or clay) are hung vertically. The artist-lecturer considered the vertical medial axis (Chanda, 2008). The goal within his work depicts humanitarian effects, which he achieved by vertically standing all four figures. The vertical nature of the sculptures has a significant meaning in terms of demonstrating the vitality of life. These characteristics imply respect, authority, and stability. The sculptures have a sense of majesty and verticality. However, there are notable signs of horizontality. It implies that the artist does not produce work devoid of vertical (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

5.3 Symmetry

Another prominent aspect in Figures 1, 3, and 4 is the element of symmetry. In his traditional relief sculptures, the artist-lecturer has always made an intuitive attempt to attain equilibrium, according to him. This bilateral symmetrical characteristic was a subliminal plea from the sculptor to connect the human and animal figures. For instance, if one looks at the sculptures, the right side has the same form, elements, and proportion as the left, as seen in Figures 1, 3, and 4. When an imaginary line is drawn perpendicular through the sculpture, whatever is visible on the left side is a mirror reflection of the right side. This technique makes the figures more stable, balanced, and expressive of security and survival. Though there are some exceptional cases of asymmetry, such as the one shown in Figure 2, the traditional sculpture is symmetrical.

5.4 Texture

The texture is not used for texture sake in the traditional sculptures made by the artist-lecturer in wood. The artist understands the scarifications, incisions, and representations indicating bear heads and hairstyles found on the statues. Figure 2 depicts the understanding of how an elderly woman in society is treated with her haircut. Textures on the sculptures indicate and distinguish one minor form from another; they have enhanced and aided to break up the monotony in the works by providing variety (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

According to Sarpong (1974), in a traditional community, recognized art forms are separate from those that result from the type of tool utilized. In the case of Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4, the artist purposefully left the surfaces smooth after using the flat tools since they all reflect tranquility, which has given the sculptures shine and life.

5.5 Non-narrative

Some traditional sculptures in Ghana and particularly at TTU, try to convey much of their value and meaning in society. Unless the artist provides information, it is impossible to deduce the meaning or applications of traditional sculptures, such as Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 in the study. A casual spectator may have no idea about the sculptures. This reason explains why early collectors dismissed African sculpture as a work of art (Sieber & Walker, 1998). The artist believes that the sculptures are best appreciated when the sculptor who produced them is there (Per. Comm. with the Artist-Lecturer, June 16, 2021).

5.6 Proportions

The artist feels that the sculptures are best comprehended when the sculptor who produced them is there. The size of the sculptures is determined by the functional significance attached to them. Thus, the significance of the parts concerning others is determined by their conceptual significance and not their anatomical significance.

5.7 Distortions, Abstractions and Exaggeration

The forms of sculptures created in traditional Ghanaian art are utilized to represent values, ideas, visions, ideals, and even social commentary. The artist deformed the traditional relief sculptures in the instance at hand. The distortions, according to the artist-lecturer, were employed to fill his human forms. This thought provides the quality that gives them life and an abundance of potential to speak eloquently. Although traditional sculptures are depicted in realism, traditional Ghanaian artists usually are inspired by nature from living creatures.

According to Nwoko (1977), a man's physique can be distorted to show his emotional reaction to his surroundings. A manifestation is usually an action that speaks, such as distorting his hands, legs, face, and eyes to the point where, if a photograph of this man were taken at this point, he would reject it as not being a true representation of himself. The traditional artist uses this technique of distortion by rearranging portions of the body to give life to his figurative shapes. This method is recognized as distortion in traditional art. The artist-lecturer agreed with Nwoko, claiming that the heads were his main inspiration. As a result, the artist twists, exaggerations and distortions the works, when read in context with the rest of the form, communicate the intended expression.

For this reason, the goal of the artist-lecturer is to use distortion in producing an expressive form of immobile items like wood as well as to give his work life and movement. This appropriate liveliness and activity in his form of art can be attributed to the ability to balance by giving the exact proportions to the extent that he makes his figurative form emanate an aura of confidence and therefore establish his existence as valid. Figure 1 shows an Akan sculpture that has been twisted and enlivened with accurate gestures of knowledge. According to the artist-lecturer, "two heads are better than one" represents unity, combing thoughts together to reach a meaningful conclusion, and evolution. The miniature figure has a lovely sinuosity of expression. The expression of the work goes much beyond the usual straight verticality of African figural sculpture.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

This paper focused on the general characteristics of traditional wood sculptures produced in the Takoradi Technical University (TTU) community by an artist-lecturer from the Akan and Yoruba ethnic backgrounds. It was revealed that the anthropological perspective of the Artist-Lecturer had a major influence on his four traditional wood sculptures. The artist-lecturer depicted his cultural beliefs and practices from the elegance of Akan and Yoruba traditions into the traditional relief wood carvings that were easily comprehended by the study. The four traditional wood sculptures by the artist-lecturer attest that the Akan and Yoruba ethnic groups found in Ghana and Nigeria-West Africa are very religious groups of people with their beliefs and religious practices known to be very spiritual and powerful. It was impossible to comprehend and appreciate the works without first learning about the artist, his background, the set of rules concerning his customs and traditions. The forms, as well as overall aspects of the sculptures, reflected originality and personality. Understanding these sculptures does not necessitate becoming a sculptor. From the anthropological point of view, traditional art can be fully appreciated when one understands and appreciates things from the perspective of the artist's culture in which the works are created. It is hoped that other Ghanaian artists from different ethnic backgrounds could share similar traits of their beliefs and religious practice to enrich the arts and culture of Ghana.

The study also found the rationale of design principles in the traditional wood sculptures used by the Artist-Lecturer as an attractive and effective guideline for creating his wood sculptures. These design principles of frontal, verticality, symmetry, texture, non-narrative, proportions, distortions, abstractions and exaggeration were the Artist-Lecturer's accumulated knowledge and experience used for the creation of the four traditional wood sculptures. It was observed that the four traditional wood

sculptures had geometric forms of shapes, dots, lines, and textures. These geometric shapes gave each work a point of focus and attraction. Design principles must be considered when developing traditional wood sculptures to show visual interest and movement. Furthermore, since the philosophical statements on these traditional wood sculptures were silent, it would be novel for Ghanaian artists or art scholars to explore the philosophy through the cultural lenses of Akan and Yoruba traditions by the Artist-Lecturer for scholarly purposes.

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