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Covered in Some Colours: Use and Meaning of Paint to Asante and Kassena Nankana Ethnicities of Ghana

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Abstract

Cave art stands as a universal artistic heritage, harking to humanity's quest to proliferate reality, as well as live in a colourful ambience. It is logical to reason that, this Palaeolithic evidence of cave painting that occurred over the various continents extended into ancient cultures and subsequent generations the world over. Yet in documenting history of traditional African art, authors hardly delve into the subject of paint. Up to now, far too little attention has been paid to paint and its role in art among traditional Ghanaian ethnicities. This study therefore focused on the two regions of Ashanti (Asante) and Upper East. Using ethnographical, historical and phenomenological methods, 23 respondents were purposively selected and interviewed by snowball. At the end of the study 11 paints and pigments were found as integral to traditional Ghanaian art of ethnicities in these regions. The study revealed unique ways in which these media were sourced and employed as well as the philosophical meanings that underpinned them. The significance of this work is found in its systematic study of paints and pigments, as a contribution to discourse on traditional African art media.

Keywords: African art; traditional Ghanaian art; paint; colour; autochthonous art

INTRODUCTION

Paints and dyes have been proven over the centuries across the world as indispensable art media. Why and how has paint as a medium proven ubiquitous in the universal journey of the visual creative process? The answer lies in its liquefied nature, and a consistency that could be achieved and controlled by the user lending it to extensive mode of application techniques. Though occurring in different forms among different people, in different parts of the world, with different materials and methods, the characteristics are always the same. It is only the consistency that may need to be thinned or thickened. While marking scratching or dry drawing tools are excellent in registering linear effects, they are difficult to use in covering broader areas whereas paint does with gracious ease. A light form of engraving technique is even possible using a stylus, when paint is applied on a hard surface and left to dry. It is also possible to apply using an atomizer or air-brush technique. Needless to say, the medium lends itself to a myriad of application techniques making paints and dyes indispensable in the pursuit of artistic expressions. Palaeolithic humans, having explored earth, vegetables and other colour sources, familiarized themselves early with the techniques discussed above. Thus resourced, they had enough facility to express all the fine works that lined the interior walls of their living quarters.

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The use of paint, as begun among these folks, was not abruptly abandoned. But being a practice among particular people, one could safely surmise that the activity was handed down from one generation to the other, to ancient cultures and subsequently to generations of later civilizations. Though this may not be the development on all other continents, the African story inclines towards this perspective as averred by Picton (n.d), Durden (1974) and Vansina (1984).

Narrowing further to Ghana, one would encounter authors with three different perspectives. In dealing with traditional Ghanaian art, there are authors who do not state whether or not paint and painting originated within the Ghanaian culture. Another school insists that paint and painting are integral to the Ghanaian culture (Asihene, 1978). The third school categorically states that paint and painting do not emanate from the Ghanaian culture, and hence is foreign to it (Antubam, 1963). These positions assume crucial academic concerns since the perspectives under discussion distil across and beyond mere student novices finding their representations among university professorial minds, who in turn impart to students according to their leanings.

The historiography of past centuries immersed in its dominant narratives failed to pay due attention to other micro-histories, equally necessary to establish a more accurate picture of the past. The story is no different in the history of African art. Though authors such as Kasfir (1984), Picton (n.d), Vogel & Ebong (1991), Vansina (1984) and many others of the new art history, have written to portray a more diversified and acceptable view of African art, certain areas still continue to suffer in the dark. One of such areas is the use of paint in traditional African, and for that matter, Ghanaian art. Consequently, this paper sought to study paint in traditional Ghanaian art, with twofold focus on how they were used and the philosophical significance derived by the ethnicities that employed them.

For structural sequence of this paper, we look at literature that concerns the art forms to be tackled within the ethnicities cited earlier. We further look at the methodology employed for the study and the sampling procedure, as well as how data was transcribed and analysed. This is followed by discussion of findings and conclusion.

Traditional Ghanaian Art Defined

We look at traditional Ghanaian art as art forms executed by indigenes that lived within the current borders of Ghana from circa 1000 to 1400 AD. Most of these works have continued in their basic forms of production up to now, with only relative changes in adaptation to the times. The definition covers that art which is "... village-based and is made by artists who work mainly for members of their own ethnic group. They have been trained through a relaxed form of traditional teaching - apprenticeship - and make works that serve old functions" (Vogel & Ebong, 1991).

Textiles and the Pigments Applied

The Indigenous textile industry has been sustained by the people of Asante, Ewe and those of the Northern part of Ghana. Oral tradition of most ethnic groups in Ghana reports of the use of the bark of kyenkyen (antiaris toxicaria) as cloth. The bark of the tree is softened and beaten on wood with wooden mallet until a soft thick blanket-like cloth is achieved (Adu-Akwaboa, 1994). This agrees with Cole & Ross (1977), who takes a further look at early dyed Asante kente cloth. Anquandah (2006), registers blue and white for this Asante kente cloth. This blue brings the indigo plant to mind (Schumach & Thonn, 1954). The indigo plant was a widespread plant introduced from Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria to Cameroon as well as Equatorial

Guinea (Lovejoy, 2000). Courtney (1990) reports of the Bogolan fini mud cloth painted by Malian women.

Like the Asante, kente is produced by the Ewe people of Kpetoe and Kpando. The kind of woven cloth that is produced from Northern Ghana is called fugu. In addition to the kente cloth, the Asante produce other varieties such as the kuntunkuni, brisi, kobene, ntiamu or adinkra and nwomu (Adu-Akwaboa, 1994). The story traditionally runs that the King of Gyaman, named Adinkra, annoyed the Asantehene (King of Asante) by making a replica of the Golden Stool of Asante, and for that reason war was declared on him because he was captured wearing the Adinkra cloth. The Asante later forced the war prisoners of the Gyaman to teach them the technique of making this fascinating cloth (Arthur, 2001); (Adu-Akwaboa, 1994).

Sculpture and the Pigment Applied

The traditional sculptor or carver occupied a very important place as regards works that form the repertoire of traditional art forms. In addition to the carving of stools, he carved drums, deity and initiation masks, ancestral figurines, games, linguists' staffs, sword handles and handles for agricultural implements and even domestic utensils. Traditional sculptors stained their sculpture using the indigo dye (the pigment from the indigo plant) (Schumach & Thonn, 1954); (Cole and Ross, 1977:108).

Stool Painting (Blackening)

The Akan stool, is a piece of wood designed as seat used in households before the introduction of European chair designs (Sarpong, 1971). The author averred at the time of writing that "houses have more stools than chairs" (p. 7). However, in current Ghanaian contemporary culture, the stool is gradually getting extinct as a result of major setbacks at the point of production (Antwi & Adi-Dako, 2015). Some five basic stool patterns that serve as models for carvers are the porcupine stool used by the chief's council, the moon stool, which is used by ordinary people of either sex, the draughtboard stool, the amulet stool and the leopard stool (Sarpong, 1971). These are all generally classified under two categories: stools meant for domestic activities and stools meant for rulership and governance. Whilst the reverence of the stool stems from its traditional symbol, the power of the stool lies in the pigment that adorns its appearance coupled by the prayers and libation it receives every Adae - a forty-day period in the Akan traditional calendar. Stools belonging to leaders that have led worthy lives are commemorated by blackening to join the ranks of respectable ancestors and kept at the royal stool house.

Hearth and Bed Painting

Schneider (1999) alludes to the word in reference to the nature and elements of Paleolithic home setting. MacMorrighan (n.d) tells of Ayaba, the hearth-goddess of the Fon tribe of Benin, West Africa. The author explains that it was wood culled on behalf of her brother Loko—the spirit of trees—that allowed for fires to be kindled within the home and food to be cooked. Jordan (2004) adds that it is also conceivable that Ayaba may have been invoked, along with her brother (Loko), when medicines were prepared over her sacred flame for consumption. Early homes in Ghana had hearths in either enclosed or open kitchens with its structure transforming from simple stones to more permanent clay-moulded props, a clear indication of change from a previously nomadic life to a more sedentary one. Appearing in the traditional Ghanaian kitchen, it changed further, making it more useful and lasting. To prevent the clay from cracking, it was painted daily with red ochre paint. Whether in an open or enclosed kitchen, traditional Akan women delighted themselves in the early morning painting of their

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hearths before setting fire to cook. Faber (1938) reports that "on ceremonious occasions the hearth was draped in red and the Vestal Virgins, the priestesses of the Roman deity of the hearth, wore a head-dress of red woollen threads in the form of a diadem", explaining that red was believed to protect them from evil forces. Probably the Akans covered their hearths in red paint for the same reasons.

Wall Painting

Willet (1994) asserts that the Dogon of the Niger bend do decorate their rectangular houses and tube-like granaries with vertical and rectangular relief works similar to those appearing on their masks. In similar vein, "Ndebele women of South Africa apply painted versions of their beaded initiations attire to the exterior walls of their compound dwellings to maximize the communicative effects of the" (Aronson, 1991: 565-566). The African woman sees her role in the community as essential and indispensable, which therefore must be preserved from one generation to another. In her brilliant work of photographic documentation, Courtney-Clarke (1990) states certain earth pigments sourced and used across Africa by women in wall paintings. She refers to yellow, red, black and ochre soils processed and used on walls. Anaba (1995) documents of mural decorations in Southern Ghana where the art is used to decorate important structures such as palaces, shrines and headquarters of Asafo companies. The author revealed that in the 15th century a mural school was established to offer training to indigenous court artists in Asante. Anquandah (2006) showed that white paint was derived from mollusk shells, sourced from the ocean streams or lagoons for the painting of the upper part of traditional buildings and red ochre was also used for the lower part of the buildings.

Leather Painting

Faber (1938) gives account of some ancient dying processes indicating that clean white Cordovan leather and the scraped hair-side were taken and washed with alum. Then a mixture of madder and wine was heated and poured over the fire in a brass cauldron, but only so far "that one can still dip one's finger in it", after which the leather was immersed in the liquid, moving it to and fro until it assumed a red colour. Finally, the leather was spread on a level slab and smoothed with a boxen roller. Before it was dried, the entire skin was rubbed with fat.

It is well known that the Ancients were masters in the dyeing of leather. Purple, scarlet, golden, and black shoes are colours frequently referred to. Apart from tanning agents, which in themselves contain dye, the materials most frequently used for dyeing leather, were the bark of the lotus tree (diospyros lotos l.) which dyed yellow, madder, scarlet, ivy, and especially bluestone or copper vitriol.

Faber (1938), reporting of Heraclius in similar vein mentions ivy that "… the branches should be tapped with an awl in several places. The juice which is then discharged turns scarlet or blood red when boiled. From this the rose-coloured Parthia-dye is made …for colouring sheep and goat-skins." Also, Parthia skins were dyed red, and were always costly. Typically, the purple shoes of the Roman emperors were of Parthian leather. Manufacturers and merchants trading with this leather were known as parthiearii.

METHODOLOGY

We adopted flexible or qualitative research design for this study. The reason being that it allows a kind of freedom in data collection procedure that is absent in other designs, and for the fact that the unit of research is qualitatively measurable yielding "unquantifiable facts" (Berg, 2007:8). Our target populations were Ashanti and Upper East regions of Ghana and 23 people were specifically accessed from Ahwiaa, Ntonso, Asokwa, Ayigya and Sirigu

communities of these two regions. They were selected on the basis of their historical connection with traditional colour medium being the unit of research. In dealing with the 23 respondents, we adopted three main sampling methods: purposive, expert and snowball. Direct participant observation, personal observation, informal interviews and focus group discussions were employed successfully. Also, we subjected the data to qualitative analysis, which is dialectical (Jorgensen, 1989) by transcribing and coding them under thematic categories. We followed Geertz's (1973) skill of foundational "thick description", reasonably to facilitate interpretation. Additionally, we made use of constant comparison method and content analysis. Thus, all three stages stressed by Patton (1987), in data analysis were explored: data organization, data reduction through summarization and categorization, and finally, the identification and linking of patterns that arose in the data.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Traditional Period

The stone-age man probably inhabited Ghana about half a million years ago, and archaeologically, knowledge of agriculture and pottery is set about 2000-1500 B.C. (Cole and Ross, 1977:4). Defining this period and demonstrating an appreciation of the practices of these times in relation to modern era enhances the understanding of the culture and arts, upon which this paper is hinged. The present discussion therefore considers as its focus, the conscious attempt to define the period of history that demarcates the boundary of the traditional era and the inception of colonization.

Maté (1966) avers that the movement of the ancestors to this country started about the middle of the thirteenth century and continued up to the early part of the sixteenth century at the latest. He details that the people who came in were the Akan, Moshii-Dagomba, Ga-Adangbe and Ewe. The Akan did not come in one body to this country but arrived in three sections – the Guan, Fante and Twi people respectively. The Fante were the second wave of Akan to enter the country from Techiman, near the source of the Tano river, where they had made their home to occupy the coastal stretch of land from Cape Three Points to Cape coast. This occupation of the coast took place about A.D. 1400. It is believed that the Twi-speaking people were the last Akan section to enter the country in about A.D.1550. The earliest groups among these people to form themselves into states were the Adansi, Akwamu and Denkyira. Later, the Asante set up a state which became the most powerful kingdom in the country and remained so until 1901 when they were vanquished by the British (Boahen, 2003).

Anquandah (1982) also affirms that the period A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1400 seemed to have witnessed the emergence of the earliest towns and principalities with centralised political authority and social institutions in the Akan areas of Asebu, Ahanta, Fetu, Elmina, Abrem, Kommenda, Adanse, Twifo, Bono Manso and Begho. Typical Akan regalia associated with statehood such as the wooden stools, drums, ivory trumpets and military array were on display when Diego d'Azambuja – the Portuguese captain who built the Elmina castle arrived. It is evident, therefore, that the Edina monarchy and policy associated with the stool were first established prior to the European advent. At Bono Manso, two main periods of town development have been distinguished. The first period, spanning the thirteenth century and the second period spanning the fifteenth century. The foregoing offer some idea of the period, probably, to have the most collection of autochthonous art forms within the Ghanaian culture.

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Textiles at Ntonso/Asokwa

Application of pigment is done by the two processes of dyeing and printing. The cloth is dyed to obtain a specific background colour over which printing is done. For a kuntunkuni dye, for instance, the cotton cloth is submerged into the boiling dye and removed to be dried. Dyeing and drying continues till the desired intensity of russet brown is acquired. Following the dyeing is the printing which is done using the stamps - adwini nnua. After the background colour is done and dried, the cloth is spread taut on a padded ground or table by pegging the ends. The stamp is dipped into the print medium and applied directly to the stretched cloth. In earlier designs of Adinkra, Asihene (1978) avers that horizontal bands of silk yarns arranged in repeat pattern of yellow, red, black, green, blue and red are done prior to printing to heighten the design. This nwɔmu design, which is one of the traditional designs, is gradually phasing out of production for the obvious reason of time.

The Asante people of Ntonso and Asokwa have a well-grounded colour range of three categories with their symbolism. These are black – tuntum, white – fitaa/fufuo, and red – kokɔɔ. Tuntum designates all dark shades, from lighter shades including all ranges of blue to total blackness. It is associated with night, death, loss, ancestors, history chthonic creatures and demons. It does not connote defilement and profanation as Hagan (1970: 9) indicates. Fitaa or Fufuo stands for all pale white, grey and cream colours and are associated with innocence, peace, coolness, purity, virtue, victory, virtuosity, happiness, God and other deified spirits including that of the ancestors. Kokɔɔ refers to all shades of browns, reds and yellows. Red is in association with grief, anger, heat, blood, danger and crisis. This interpretation agrees with that of Antubam (1963).

Paints and pigments are applied to these cloths for the three fold purposes of beauty, documentation and communication. It is obvious that the traditional artist envisions a beautiful product in working on his Adinkra piece. He considers the colour in the background as against what is to be used for stamping. The work has to be visually appealing to his patron(s) as well as to communicate a message.

Secondly, the material nature of the cloth, dyes and the Adinkra designs rendered assumes a documentary status eligible for future contextual referencing and learning, conceptually akin to Arthur's (2001) metaphorical treatment of traditional Adinkra cloth where he evaluates it among others as a system of writing. Finally, wearers of the cloth used it to communicate their thoughts or philosophies on occasions of social gatherings. If one appeared in a function wearing an Adinkra cloth of aya – (fern) designs, the wearer meant to say he is not afraid of anyone.

Sculpture staining/painting at Ahwiaa

The black or red produced from the root bark is directly applied to the sculpture with a fibrous twig beaten at one end or with a clean rag. This results in a stain of red or black on the wood. If the artist incorporated any incision designs on the art work, these would be filled with white clay before the red or black is finally applied. The processed soot and red ochre are likewise applied with beaten twig or rag. The white paint is easily applied with a smaller end of a beaten twig or directly with the hand. In recent times, additives such as polyvinyl acetate commonly known as white glue is introduced into some of the pigments to increase adhesion to the wooden surface. In another process, after the soot is applied, a grey like effect is registered. The piece is then exposed to fire to heat up the surface without burning. After the surface is well heated, the soft part of banana or plantain stem stump is scooped by hand and applied parsimoniously all over the hot surface resulting in sizzling sounds. A variegated antique effect

is achieved on drying. Green colour is also coldly extracted from turkey berries (Solanum Torvum), known in Twi as kwau-nsusua.

Paint or colour is applied to sculpture by artists at Ahwiaa for preservation and beautification. The artists at Ahwiaa could be studied under two groups of carvers and shop owners. Finishing of sculpture pieces and figurines by way of pigment application is usually carried out by the shop keepers who deal directly with customers.

Apart from rendering it presentable to the society, colouring of sculptures is done to categorize works according to cultural norms and values. For example, all ancestral figures together with all other pieces associated with the ancestors must appear black in accordance with the cultural appreciation that age darkens. Thus, soot collected from the traditional kitchen is literally referred to as 'aged smoke' – apupuna wisie, hence the concept of darkness is associated with the historical and aged. Further to this, most sculpture pieces are finished black to withstand the dirt accumulation that might be encountered over several years through handling. Most sculptures are finished with indigo dye, a common fabric pigment effectively used across West Africa as reported by Schumach and Thonn (1945).

Stool Painting in Ashanti

On the fateful day of blackening, which is also a day of mourning, all the chiefs, sub-chiefs and elders are to be present. The stools are brought out of their abode under the supervision of the Nkonwasuafoɔ, the designated office in charge of royal stools, and assembled in the palace hall from that of the earliest departed ancestor to the most recent. First, libation of alcohol is offered the ancestors to praise them for their gallantry and thoughtful provision for posterity; their blessings are invoked on the day's ceremony. This prayer is offered to the predecessors by pouring on all the stools from the eldest to the youngest. Next, eggs are broken into a calabash mixed with the spider web, soot and sheep's blood. This mixture is applied to smear the whole surface of the stool to be blackened. Larbi (1993) indicates the inclusion of gun powder without mentioning spider's web. After this process of smearing the mixture with the hand all over the stool, the stool becomes a sacred object, known as Akonwa Tuntum (Black Stool). This stool, however, is a sacred religious object with taboos and prohibitions, and it is revered by the elders of the state. On posing the question whether human blood may ever be part of the mixture for blackening? The response given was that under no circumstance should that happen. However, Perbi's (2011) comment that "Slaves did suffer a number of disabilities. The first was the possibility of being sacrificed in accordance with traditional customs and religious beliefs" suggests that, the idea of human blood in blackening of stools cannot be entirely ruled out.

Apart from the great need to preserve this royal and religious object by reason of its continual existence to receive offering and homage from the state, the black stool is painted this way to assume habitation of the spirit of the departed. It is imperative to indicate that the most used stool of the ancestor while living on earth is the one blackened. The items involved in the mixture; spider web, eggs, soot and gunpowder are believed to possess some preservative abilities that prevent the wood from decay. This traditional approach to conservation has been scientifically confirmed (Larbi, 1993). As a royal and religious object these stools (ancestors) are marked to occasionally receive ceremonial food and drinks during the Adae and other festivals. During such times the Nkonwasoafoɔ would offer marshed yam and eggs, alcohol and blood to the ancestors. Sprinkling blood and alcohol continually on a stool will eventually darken anyway. It is better therefore to blacken them than leaving them in their natural state.

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Black is usually associated with night, death, loss and ancestors. Nana Frimpong, a respondent, explains that, since black remains the colour of mourning, it is appropriate for the living to commemorate the dead with this colour in order to reflect their state of mourning and sadness at the departure of the ancestors. He further alludes to the fear ascribed to things black, saying the living must venerate the royal ancestors with deep respect and the stools are made black to invoke this feeling.

Hearth and Bed Painting at Ayigya

Among the people of Asante the building of the hearth is a feminine role, and so is the painting of it. In the morning, the woman of the house clears the hearth of all ashes, charred coal and any pieces of wood. She then proceeds to paint – kwa using the plantain rag lying wet in the paint and start rubbing it all over the hearth. The rag is dipped again into the paint when it feels dryer in her hand and brought back rubbing over the hearth. The hearth may be constructed in several different designs. There are those designed on little platforms in the corner of the kitchen floor. Others are designed to have a kind of shelve at the back. Sometimes this projection may rise to about half the interior wall height. During painting, platforms, back-shelves and wall projections are all painted. When the surface is dried, the varnish prepared from the left over fufu is mashed and applied – kuta as varnish using a fresh plantain rag for the painting, resulting in a shiny patina on the surface.

Unlike hearths, the construction of beds is a masculine role. Deemed as heavy duty assignment, the role could parallel the construction of the house itself which is the lot for men. Painting the bed is approached the same way as that of hearths, which is also feminine role. The only difference is that after painting the bed, which may be located in one corner of the room, one goes ahead to paint the whole floor also. Beds are not varnished, and painting does not have to be done daily but weekly. Painting of hearths and beds in traditional homes are done primarily for maintenance. It is reasonable that hearths that are daily exposed to fire are painted daily and beds are painted weekly because their surfaces relatively go undisturbed.

Traditional Ghanaian core values upheld the woman as an effective wife, mother and home manager. In order to honourably deploy these characteristics, the woman of the house creatively seeks out and initiates skilful actions that will make her the delight of her husband, the joy of her children and the happiness of the wider extended family and strangers. By engaging in such initiatives including these paintings, she distinguishes herself as a valuable and resourceful woman of worth. Using Maame Akosua Manu's words, one of the respondents, Ɛnyɛ ɔbaa biaa ne ɔyɛbaa, which literally means "Not every woman is a real woman".

Wall Painting at Sirigu

Mural Painting in Sirigu, has been practiced by women apparently since the ethnic group immigrated to the area as a means of, among other roles of women, building a hospitable homestead that deploys all the support and care that family members and strangers may expect. Doubtless, these paintings do more than meets the eyes. As confirmed on the field it expresses the values, beliefs, concerns, interests and ambitions of the women folks who engage in them. Avae (1990) holds the view that murals reflect the characteristics of the communities within which they are found. In the same vein Adams (1993) writes of the murals of the women of Canton Boo of Western Cote d'Ivoire, linking beautiful murals with high managerial skills and home management. The findings of the study reveal that the decorative murals of Sirigu have evolved in adaptation to cultural make and expression. The period of painting provides not only a time of respite from farm work, but also that of merrymaking, sharing and good neighbourliness, all being qualities necessary for effective community living. While the

execution and process of the work themselves echoes the indispensable essence of womanhood.

Red, white and black are the colours found in Sirigu mural painting. Similarly, the Akan people down south are limited to the same palette; red white and black – kokɔɔ fufuo/fitaa and tuntum. No symbolic significance was attributed to these colours on the field. This leads one to conclude that the people of Sirigu do not give any symbolic meanings to these three colours. Though this conclusion concords with Wemegah (2009), but runs contrary to Anaba (1995), who found among the people of Sirigu that white stood for purity, happiness and faultlessness; black represented death, gloom, wickedness and uncertainty; and red represented danger and importance.

We observed that plastering, painting and varnishing combine to beautify and preserve the building. The Sirigu murals beautify the home and the society and gives presence and identity to the woman/women of the house. Also, it provides an expressive seal of hospitality, home management and effective womanhood to strangers, friends and family.

Leather Painting at Sirigu

Leather craft is commonly practiced among the northern and upper regions of Ghana. Some of the animals whose hide are used for such goods are goat, sheep and cattle. The other animals are bush cow, python and crocodile. In Sirigu, two main colours of black and red were discovered applicable to leather. Between these colours, two other tones of reddish and dark browns are obtainable. The black colour is obtained by placing ferrous metals into lime juice or pito (a local drink made from millet) for about a week or two, after which a black liquid results. Karandafi (sorghum bicolor) which yields the red colour, is simply prepared by boiling the stalk of this plant in water to extract it.

The pigment is creatively applied to the dried leather according to the design conceived by the artist using the hand, twig or a pointed metal scriber. In using the tool with a sharper point, a deeper colour registration is obtained on the leather surface due to the abrasions in the process. Alternatively, the whole leather is immersed in a bath to assume a red or black colour. Intensity of the colour depends upon the concentration of the colour bath, the structure of the leather, and the length of time the leather remains in it. A shade between the two colours mentioned which is brown, could be obtained by immersing the leather in the red bath, and then the black for shorter moments. Unlike the Asante, the Sirigu people do not recognise any symbolism of their colours. The colour is mainly applied to leather for the purpose of design to enhance the aesthetic value of the final product.

CONCLUSION

The study explored the use of paint and pigments within two ethnicities in Ghana from a traditional perspective. The essence of the study lies in re-looking at the manner paint and its manifested works weave into the historical and philosophical narrative among other art forms of traditional African (Ghanaian) art. The assertion that both painting and sculpture are autochthonous to the Ghanaian culture is not alien to Ghanaian historical facts. In fact literature agree that the two forms of art were concurrently practiced during the traditional era (Asihene, 1978). These art forms as witnessed today were originated by the people as they sought to enrich their individual lives and better the livelihood of the community. For this reason, the works created as well as the philosophies that uphold them have been crafted to develop the individual and sustain the community to which they belong. The rule that all

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individual endeavours must inure to the immediate and ultimate benefit of the community was strictly adhered to.

The important contribution of traditional art to the foundational development of aesthetic concepts and experiences cannot be overlooked, as it offered particular opportunities including the building of earlier distinctive features of aesthetic practice and visual representation in processing art as in its making and experiencing; these are rich concepts that were built upon as evident in later institutional manifestations.

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