10-1-1996

Woodcarving In Aburi: A Change In Tradition

Laura Cochrane

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WOODCARVING IN ABURI: 
A CHANGE IN TRADITION

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to Teddy Quaye, the master carver who had incredible patience with me throughout my apprenticeship. Thank you to Ernestine Oppong for her hospitality and help in both living and carving. Thank you to both of them for their support and friendship and willingness to translate Twi...ayekoo!

Thank you to the Aburi Industrial Center for their acceptance of me as an associate member.

Thank you to Nana Dr. Abayie Boaten I, my advisor, for his interest and help in organizing my scattered ideas. I appreciate his friendly support.

Thank you to Mama Akua and Rev. Papa Okea-Anti, my family in Tutu, for truly opening their hearts and home to a stranger.

Thank you to Kongo Zabana and the Institute for African Studies for their help in computer use and printing and binding.

Thank you to Susan Bowditch and Dr. Olayemi Tinouye for their constant support throughout this semester. I am grateful for their listening ears during difficult times and for their own experiences and studies which often clarified my "cultural confusion."

Thank you to Mom and Dad and Ashley, my family, for their love, prayers, support, letters, and phone calls, which made me, know I was close regardless of distance.
Declaration

The final work as it appears here is the result of my own efforts.

[Signature]
Abstract

In this work, I examined the traditions of the woodcarving trade and the process by which the traditional form of the stool is carved in an apprenticeship position in Aburi, Ghana. I found that in spite of the historical continuity of the way the stool is created, many of the other traditions of the trade have been either modified or eradicated as a result of societal changes in religion, education, social institutions, and the functions of the forms themselves. There are other more subtle causes, which impact the carving, trade and need further study which the time frame of this research period did not allow me to examine. However, one issue raised, dealing with social institutions, is the impact the lifestyle of a woman carver has on her work: the attitudes concerning women's roles in Aburi are under constant metamorphosis and need further research.
Introduction

Tradition is dynamic: although historically based, it changes along with and because of the culture with which it is associated. The tradition of woodcarving in Aburi, Ghana, has likewise undergone changes within recent years which has transformed its character from a trade steeped in secrecy, religion, and taboos to a highly skilled craft anyone with the desire has the option of learning.

Much of the literature available today on the craft of woodcarving in Ghana is outdated in terms of these changes in tradition. The literature available in the history of carving, however, is ample. Rattray, in his *Art and Ashanti* (1927) covers in detail the religious aspects of carving. The sacrifices to the tree from which the objects are carved, the taboos in regard to the handling of tools properly, and the relationship between the carver and the tree are all historical elements, which cannot be separated from the study of carving. These elements, however, are becoming part of the history alone, not the practice.

Sarpong's *Sacred Stools of the Akan* (1971) also explores the religious and historical aspect of carving, particularly the stools. A large portion of Akan legends is devoted to the stool. The golden stool is the symbol of the Ashanti Kingdom, and ancestral veneration is tied into the enshrined and blackened stools of the deceased. Sarpong also makes the connections between symbolism of the stools and traditions. Although dated in terms of lifestyle and practices of the carver, these connections remain valid in understanding the present-day character of the trade.
Labi's *Culture Changes in Akuapem* (1989) updates the literature available among the Akan people. Focusing on Akuapem, a town within close proximity to Aburi, Labi explores some of the changes in education techniques and purposes of the objects created in woodcarving. The outside influences of non-traditional religions, namely Christianity, are also mentioned. In 1989, the time of the study, however, woodcarving in Akuapem remained substantially influenced by rituals and taboos.

These elements in Aburi have now been largely removed. Few rituals remain, and the carvers with whom I spoke see no need to retain the taboos. The removal of the taboos on the connection between women and carving is one of the most visible changes. The importance of tradition is seen, however, in the forms carved and the tools used. Apprenticeship is still the primary source of education in the trade, yet it has also undergone transformations in recent years. My purpose in this study was to come to an understanding of the reasons for these changes in tradition, while in an apprenticeship myself to gain a working knowledge of the mechanic of carving a traditional form, the stool.

The technique of carving, the tools, and the religious symbolism of the forms remain fundamental to the tradition of the woodcarving trade. In my apprenticeship I used tools made by a local blacksmith to create traditional stools the way they have been created since the form originated.

The changes and the reasons for the changes are closely interlinked. The gradual disappearance of traditional religion in Aburi is one of the primary reasons for the removal of the spiritual aspect of the trade. Education is also a primary source of change because the traditions are not passed down by the educators. Social institutions such as
marriage and farming have also undergone transformations, which play a role. The purpose in the forms created is a quite visible reminder of tourism and contemporary trading practices.
Methodology

My study of the changing traditions in the woodcarving trade was a combination of participant observation, formal and informal interviews, an apprenticeship, and literary research. After talking with people familiar with the area, I learned that the town of Aburi, north of Accra, is a center for carving. Two weeks before I was to start my field study, I traveled to Aburi to check out the location. At the first woodshop where I stopped to talk with the carvers, I found that one of them was a woman. I had read background information regarding taboos on women and carving, so I decided a study with a woman carver would be a concrete example of a change in tradition.

I returned a week later to confirm the apprenticeship and find a place to live. I decide to live with Ernestine Oppong, the female carver. I also found the master carver, Teddy Quaye, could instruct me in carving stools. I ordered my chisels at this time also, most of which were to be made by the blacksmith in Aburi. I then paid my initial apprentice fee.

During these two weeks, while attending lectures at Legon University, I researched my topic further by reading background literature and talking with Nana Dr. Abayie Boaten I, who has studied the arts in the Akan area.

My apprenticeship began on the eleventh of November 1996. In the next two and a half weeks, I learned the mechanics of carving my stools and developed the endurance necessary for ten-hour days, seven days a week. I also became an associate member of the Aburi Industrial Center (AIC), the carvers' union. During the time spent in the shop with the other carvers, I conducted informal, conversational interviews on their views of traditions and the carving trade in general. I tool notes in the evenings on these interviews
and other daily observations of carving mechanics and practices in a personal work journal. I conducted two formal interviews, with Ernestine Oppong and Teddy Quaye, which I recorded in note form during the interviews. Finally, I took photo documentation of the tools used and the stools I carved, and made sketches of the tools in their various stages of development.

The living element was my most prominent difficulty. Although I had intended to live and work with Oppong to experience at firsthand the lifestyle of a woman carver, I could not work at night reading and recording my notes—because of lack of space and privacy in her compound. I lived there for the first ten days, then moved to a nearby village, Tutu, for the remainder of my apprenticeship in Aburi. This change gave me the opportunity to daily separate myself from and evaluate the day's work and observations.

Another difficulty I had in this study was tracking down a carver who told me had completed a case study on the women carvers in Aburi.

His study would have been potentially valuable to my own. I asked him several times during the course of my study in Aburi for either a copy of his book or an interview, yet could not get him to commit to either. This situation was a regret in my study.
Mechanics

The actual craft of woodcarving is the fundamental part of its traditions. Although much has changed in the trade, much has also stayed the same in its mechanics. From the importance of quality tools to using them to create quality forms, craftsmanship and the aesthetics of the final product are paramount. The tools, the way they are handled, and the process of creating are included in the unchanged traditional mechanics of the craft.

The basic tools of a woodcarver in Aburi include a cutlass, a hoe (fig. 1), a mallet, a range of sizes of both gauges and flat chisels, a v-gauge or design chisel, a spokeshave, and a knife (fig. 2). The mallet is simply made out of available wood by the woodcarver. The other tools are made by a local blacksmith. Teddy Quaye, the master carver to whom I was apprenticed, said carvers rarely use foreign-made tools.

The mallet is used with the chisels and gauges. It is held with one hand to drive the other tool into or across the wood, and gives more power and direction to that tool.

Each tool can be used for several purposes. The cutlass and the hoe are the first tools used in creating an object, respectively cutting a log to size, and cutting off its bark and roughly blocking out a shape. The cutlass can be used for shortening the side of an object, and the hoe is used to create shallow curves, such as the seat of the stool.

The flat chisels, used with the mallet, are used for more precisely blocking out shapes and for refining those shapes (fig. 3). By pushing a flat chisel with one hand or using one hand as a mallet, a carver can scrape a surface to dress it with more control and precision (fig. 4). The gauges are used in much the same manner. Smaller gauges are also used to dig out an area in between forms, and all sizes of the gauges are used to scrape and dress the inside of curves.
The design chisel, spokeshave, and knife are used to finish an object. The design chisel, or v-gauge, is used to etch lines for surface design or to clarify a sharp valley in the form. The spokeshave is held with two hands and is pushed away from the carver to smooth a surface by shaving it (fig. 5). The knife is either used to shave a curved or flat surface or to sharpen edges.

Quaye repeated several times during my study that carvers in Aburi follow the "old traditions" in how they carve. The handling of the tools and the techniques in carving are the most vital elements to the creation of a quality product. During my study the other carvers would frequently glance over to check on my work and progress. If I was handling a certain tool in an awkward or incorrect manner, they would correct me immediately. Even the youngest apprentices could spot the incorrect use of a tool. The hoe, for example, was the most difficult tool for me to use. Quaye would often correct me in the use of the hoe on my projects when he saw me repeatedly use it incorrectly.
Figs. 1,2: The basic tools of a woodcarver in Aburi include (l-r) a hoe, a cutlass, a large flat chisel, a v-gauge or design chisel, and a range of sizes of gauges.
Fig. 3: The flat chisels, used with the mallet, can be used for roughly blocking out a shape, such as the middle portion of the stool.
Fig. 4: Scarping a surface with the flat chisel with one hand is a technique used to dress a surface with more precision and control than using a mallet with the tool.
Fig. 5: The spokeshave is held with both hands and pushed away from the carver to smooth a surface by shaving it.
Aesthetics

The aesthetic element is an equally essential and traditional part of the craft. A carver has the final outcome in mind from the time the log is cut to size, and each traditional form has its own prescribed finishing "look," or visual qualities. The traditional form of the stool on which I concentrated my apprenticeship is a prime example of a form having a set of aesthetic requirements for it to be accepted as a "quality" work. The base is curved on the horizontal edges, but the ends of it must be cut at an angle. The seat of the stool must be a smooth, even curve from one end to the other end. The entire stool must be highly polished with three degrees of coarseness of sandpaper (previous to the introduction of sandpaper a rough leaf was used (Rattray 1927)) until no dents or scratches can be seen or felt. (This final step of standing was usually carried by younger boys, not the carvers, because of its consumption of time.)

When I asked for the reasons behind these requirements, the answer was the same from several carvers: that is the way the Golden Stool was designed, so that is the way all stools have been designed. The aesthetic component is not purely design. It is a way to make the stool beautiful, but this definition of beauty stems from a complex visual language. The strict conformity to visual language is a tradition used to convey messages about the forms (Robbins 1989). The formal symbolism of the stool speaks of both male and female qualities, and many other messages depending on the inner symbol of the stool.

The seat, an even, shallow curve, symbolizes a mother's protection and stability (Sarpong 1971). The base is a flat rectangle, a sign of male territorial rule, or sanctity in both God and man (Sarpong 1974). The middle portion of the stool has a variety of
messages, dependent on the symbol chosen. Two examples can be the stools I carved. One is the Gye Nyame Stool (fig. 6). Gye Nyame is the first of the Adinkra symbols, speaking of the omnipotence of God (Glover 1971). The second is the design "Attempting the Impossible" (fig. 7). It consists of four pillars in the middle portion of the stool with a zigzag design moving up the pillars. It is an abstraction of a snake climbing a raffia or palm tree, a very difficult thing for a snake to attempt (Glover 1971). Some designs have specific definitions, but others vary depending on the definition's source (Sarpong 1971).

The aesthetic element of the carved form is highly traditional and rooted in history, along with the mechanics of carving. "Aesthetics" in this context does not necessarily mean the strictly visual, but the meaning of the visual. Robbins affirms, "the significance of the work, therefore, derives not merely from its tangible form or its aesthetic merit, but equally from the concepts and beliefs it embodies" (1989 p. 11). The aesthetic quality of carving is thus simply a vessel for a host of messages and statutes from the carver's culture.
In addition to positive female qualities symbolized in the protective curve of the seat, and the sign of male territorial power in the rectangular base, the middle portion of the stool contains messages, which vary from stool to stool, depending on the symbol carved. Two examples are (l-r) the Gye Nyame and the “Attempting the Impossible” Stools.
A Change in Traditions

There is a paradox in the contemporary trade of woodcarving in the retainment of the aesthetic quality and the disappearance of the customs these forms represent. A change in traditions is evident in the woodcarving community in Aburi, from the disappearance of the spiritual elements and taboos to the system of training new carvers. The reasons for these changes are the changes in Ghanaian culture itself. Traditions change to conform to the current trends in the culture. In Aburi in particular, there are four main sources for these new developments in tradition. Religion, always a vital element in Aburi, has switched in predominance from traditional religion to Christianity. This affects the spiritual element of carving, once at the core of the trade. New attitudes and developments in education and the social institutions of marriage and farming have also had a profound impact on the social atmosphere of Aburi in general, which in turn affects the woodcarving community. The purpose in forms has also changed: due to both tourism and trading practices, it affects the product and the demand.
Religion

As in many communities in Ghana, traditional religion in Aburi is decreasing in importance. Other religions, predominantly Christianity, appear to have more influence today in Aburi. Once steeped in spiritual practices, woodcarving has thus been transformed into a craft with little ritual. The trade continues to have a tie with traditional religion, but this connection's impact is reduced considerably compared with the history of the trade. The historical element of woodcarving is, in fact, more ritual and spirituality than the actual craft. Rattray records a prayer said by a carver to the spirit of the tree:

"Me re be twa wo m'asen wo, gye'kesua yi di…mma dadie ntwa me mma me nyare." (I am coming to cut you down and carve you, receive this egg and eat…do not let the iron cut me, do not let me suffer in health.) 1927 p.6).

At the time of Labi's study of religion and art in Akuapem, Christian influence was seen, but the polytheism of the Akuapem traditional religion added Christian beliefs to their faith, not as a substitution for it. Festivals and sacred days were celebrated and had religious meaning (1989).

The contemporary woodcarving community in Aburi ranges from ambivalence to any religion to evangelical Christianity. There is no known carver in the community where I worked who follows and believes in traditional religion. Religion continues to affect the trade and its carvers, however, whether in traditional practices or Christianity. Once a year on a festival day, the carvers present Schnapps and a sheep to the shrine in Aburi in return for the use of the land. The land was once a cemetery, but it was condemned because of the construction of New Road, the main thoroughfare connecting the towns in that area to Accra and Mampong. The carvers begged the elders of Aburi for
the land. The request was granted, and in return the carvers present their sacrifices to the shrine each year. The sacrifices, however, are performed because of the respect they have for the elders.

Those who believe in traditional religions often view the contemporary woodcarving industry with suspicion. Villagers who pass by the shops often stop to reprimand the carvers for doing useless work. Quaye and others view these villagers as "uneducated": Quaye said the villagers think the carvers are creating idols, so they are afraid of involving themselves in the carving work. As a result of the carver's lack of belief in the traditional religion, these reprimands and fears are largely ignored and even laughed about.

Respect for the ancestors, however, is a strong element in carving. My induction into the Aburi Industrial Center as an associate member involved pouring Schnapps as libation to the ancestors. I asked one of the carvers for a translation of the libation. He replied that they were words of respect for the ancestors, an accepted and essential part of not only the carving trade but also life in general.

Religion plays an important part of a carver's career even when it is evangelical Christianity. One of the leaders of the AIC asked me if I am a Christian directly after the libation ceremony, and informed me he walks door-to-door witnessing his faith. Oppong also is Christian, which is a large part of her motivation to carve. She affirms that the Bible says one should work before eating. She does not tolerate laziness in herself or others, which is one of her motivations to carve: because she has the talent and the ability in carving, she uses them.
Christianity is not the only religious influence. Carvers work seven days a week. Sundays are not seen as a day of rest, and Christmas is not a holiday off work. This is a combined result of Muslim influence and an ambivalence to any religion. Also, economic survival has relegated all considerations of religion to a lower priority.

This collective nature of traditional religion and outside influence and economics affects not only the lifestyle of the carver but also the significance of the carved objects themselves. One aspect of African sculpture is the visual language representing ancient institutions and spirituality. This language, understood by a community, is a tie to history and a traditional way of life (Robbins 1989). The disappearance of this way of life reduces the significance of the object representing it. A carving representing and housing a spirit will not be sacred to a person who does not believe in that spirit.
Education

Apprenticeship has been and continues to be the primary source of education in the woodcarving trade. Its method is an often-utilized tradition: to work alongside a master carver and observe his techniques while receiving experience and step-by-step instruction at the same time. Although the method remains the same, the nature of the method has undergone transformations in Aburi. These changes affect the quality, speed, and efficiency of the craft as well as the type of apprentice.

Apprenticeship was once a secretive initiation into the spiritual society of woodcarvers. Older men knowledgeable in the craft would induct younger men into both the mechanical and spiritual practices intertwined in carving. This initiation would take place at night, away from the village, to safeguard the secrets. The rituals, taboos, and other practices would be carefully passed down for the next generation of carvers to carry on in secret (Rattray 1927). This old method has been modified for contemporary use in Aburi. The secretive nature is extinct, yet the concept of an older generation training a younger one in the practices of the trade remains. Because the secretive nature is gone, the training has been opened up to the public workshop. This enables the carver to work longer hours during the day, not just at night, which increases production of the quantity of the products. The quality is also improved because the carving is now a profession. Previously, the need for secrecy fostered carving at night while farming was accomplished during the day. A concentration on the craft as a profession has improved the skill of the carver and hence the quality of the work produced.

Labi's study of Akuapem found little connection between a carver's training and the teaching of taboos and rituals. As a result, the adherence to these rites and taboos had
been lessened (1989). The same phenomenon is occurring in Aburi to a greater degree: because the rituals are not taught, they are not followed. One reason is the lack of carvers following and closely adhering to traditional religion. Quaye could think of only one carver still following the "old ways" in the area, in Mampong, but he is older and does not have the strength to carve professionally anymore. Because the carvers do not see the need in the preservation or the practice of the rituals, they do not introduce them to their apprentices. Thus, the apprentices do not follow them themselves and the rituals no longer exist in practice.

Education is a tool by which a practice is preserved. Apprenticeship in woodcarving today in Aburi trains carvers in the technique of woodcarving, not the spirituality or rituals of the craft. Aspects of culture deemed unnecessary are changed because people do not care about them. Aspects, which are viewed as essential to the trade, are modified because the carvers work to preserve them through education (Labi 1989).
Social Institutions as They Affect Women Carvers

The attitudes of a people on their community's social institutions often define their society and the statutes they follow. Marriage and farming are two such social institutions on which a change in attitudes has modified the way of life and social laws in Aburi. The way of life of a carver and the trade's taboos have also been affected, most visibly in the connection between women and carving.

The institutions of marriage and farming in Ghanaian society are changing along with new attitudes and perceptions of a woman's role in both marriage and community life. Being a "good wife and mother" was once considered the epitome of womanhood in Akan culture:

The unwifely woman is a disgrace to her sex and resented. A good wife is obedient to her husband, faithful, hard-working, helpful, and not quarrelsome...She sees to it that all he wants is forthcoming without his having to ask first, as for example, clean clothes, hot water for baths, and food. Motherhood is the principal, if not the ultimate end of marriage.... Motherliness requires a woman to provide, by way of preparation, adequate food and shelter for her own children (Sarpong 1974 p. 69).

Farming, likewise, was another duty of a woman, essential to providing daily sustenance for her family. While both men and women farmed, the woman collected the provisions for the meal each day. Farming today is equally as important to sustenance and survival: approximately one-third of the population of Aburi, both men and women, farm.

These traditional attitudes concerning women affected to carving trade primarily in its taboos. A taboo is, "a rule of behavior which is associated with a belief that
infraction will result in an inevitable change in the ritual status of the person who fails to keep the rule" (Sarpong 1974 p.52). Sex differentiation in woodcarving was governed by taboos. A woman could not carve or touch a carver's tools, and could not look at or touch anything associated with the trade while menstruating (Labi 1989). The reason given for this taboo and others is based on respect for the ancestors: the taboos have existed for generations, and the ancestors would want an adherence to them (Sarpong 1974). While it is true the taboos existed for immeasurable time, the origin of them is rooted in logical cultural explanations. One such explanation given by Quaye is the forefathers' warning to girls to stay away from carving or they will be infertile, while the true reason for this threat was the necessity for girls to farm and support their families.

Today changing attitudes about women have relaxed and removed these taboos. There are four female carvers among the carving community in Aburi, and female apprentices are welcomed. After my induction ceremony into the AIC, the chairman and the vice-chairman asked me to bring more women to learn in Aburi because, "men cause problems," they joked. This acceptance of women extends into the attitudes of male carvers toward their female counterparts. Oppong said the men are happy to see women carve, and congratulate her on her work, encouraging her to continue.

Oppong's very lifestyle represents a change in the accepted roles of women in Aburi. Separated from her husband, she lives in a compound with several other women and children. She works as a carver in the woodshop, and several times a week wakes up early to go farm before working a full day. The children in her compound prepare her meals and do the housekeeping to enable her to work elsewhere. She hopes to open her own shop someday, and works toward that goal.
Her lifestyle belies the idea of static tradition in social life. It is, however, based on the Ghanaian traditional concept of community. Her farming and living situation are both community-oriented and codependent on other people. Interdependence in traditional societies is essential. People honor obligations to each other to make their society work and to maintain social order (Nukunya 1992). The group dynamic is more important than individualized goals.

Social change is a result of traditional elements and the factors of change: the traditional institutions themselves direct the change (Nukunya 1992). Oppong's lifestyle and the fact that she is a woman carver is an indication of adaptation in tradition. These adaptations result from changing attitudes toward social institutions, yet these attitudes come from that same society rooted in varying degrees of tradition. Villagers who walked by the shop alternated between asking if I was a man to berating the carvers for creating useless objects when farming is the only worthwhile and productive work. Conversely, Quaye would comment to Oppong, "You are a woman, yet you are strong like a man," after she farmed in the morning then worked a full day carving. The old traditions are gradually transforming themselves into attitudes of acceptance.
Function in Forms

While these reasons have changed the trade of woodcarving and the lifestyle of the carvers, a change in the purpose of the forms has had the greatest effect on the objects created themselves. Tourism and contemporary trading practices have taken their effect on Aburi's economic activity and the type of carved form itself. The forms carved are no longer restricted to ritual or everyday use, but for decoration and souvenirs.

The separation of the form and its traditional meaning in spirituality and ritual is an irony when creating forms as stools, steeped in, and once carved because of, ritual. During the first week of my apprenticeship, two carvers were completing an order of fifty miniature Gye Nyame stools with candleholders on the curved seats. These stools on commission for a local trader were not going to be used for ritual or ancestral veneration, but decoration. The views of function in woodcarving have changed considerably due to trading practices and tourism. If form has followed function, then the creation of objects without meaning have followed new developments in economic activity: today, the object of a professional carver is to market the craft as well as manufacture a quality object.

In Akuapem, Labi concludes, "There will therefore be continuity in the beliefs, practices, and the use of traditional art works because they fulfill the age-old functions and needs of the society (1989 p. 246). In Aburi, the needs of the society have changed from carvings needed for ritual and everyday use to carving sold for profit to primarily traders and tourists. This breaks the continuity in the use of traditional artworks because the artworks themselves are altered to meet different purposes. Carvings were once intended to be just one part of a whole, and element in a ceremony, yet now they are separated from ceremony (Olaniyan 1982)."
The clientele of the Aburi woodcarving community is a combination of traders and individual buyers, both local and foreign. Traders travel either locally or around West Africa, buying and selling crafts. The AIC was formed to promote the export of carving to increase economic well-being of the people, but their efforts proved ineffective and they stopped bulk exporting. Now, individual traders, not the carvers themselves, deal in importing and exporting the goods manufactured in Aburi.

The individual buyers are either local people or foreigners, usually tourists. A person of foreign skin color, particularly Caucasian, attracts immediate attention in Aburi because of the potential and probable income from tourism. The combined effect of the Aburi Botanical Gardens and the carving center along New Road make tourism a substantial economic factor. The attitudes toward tourists vary, but tourists and money are synonymous, a positive concept to the carvers. When asked how they feel about tourists, the carvers generally dislike them because of their lack of education in Ghanaian customs and their actions, such as taking pictures without dashing or talking to the carvers, but appreciate the income generated by them.

The traders and tourists not only stimulate economic activity but also serve as outside influences for new forms and ideas. Traders in particular bring traditional forms from across West Africa that are adopted into a carver's collection of forms. During my study, I recognized a Bambara antelope design from Mali and another Malian form, a cup for nobility, among the objects created by the older, more experienced carvers.

Not only are the traditional forms being used for decoration, but also non-traditional forms such as reliefs are now being produced. These reliefs make use of
Ghanaian proverbs and style, but are decorative in intent: they have no other function but to hang on a wall. They are the large majority of objects made in Aburi because of the demand for decorative pieces. The demand for wooden carved objects for everyday use has lessened because of the availability of new materials such as plastic and aluminum.

Tourism and trade have had a positive economic impact on the Aburi woodcarving community. It has also brought new ideas and forms to the carving industry. It has, however, stripped many of the forms such as stools of their meaning and original ceremonial intent.
Conclusion

The dynamic nature of tradition is shown in the woodcarving trade in Aburi. The tools, the techniques, and the aesthetic value judgments are largely reliant on the trade's same features throughout its history. The ritual and spiritual elements, however, once just as fundamental to the trade, have been almost removed today in Aburi. This is a result of changes in the culture itself. Modifications to the trade affect the community's attitudes towards it and its role in the culture which changed it, in a cyclical relationship.

The causal elements of the changes are found in religion, education, social institutions, and functions of the forms carved. These elements are at the core of Aburi: they encompass daily life, community beliefs, group dynamics, and individual actions. In essence, Aburi as a community with a changing culture itself, has changed the woodcarving system.

The changes in traditions in connection with religion have deeply impacted the trade. Once inseparably tied to carving, traditional spirituality is now relegated to a disappearing set of customs. In its place is a heightened professional consciousness: the carver is more concerned with producing and marketing a quality product than venerating the spirit of the tree from which he carves his product. Non-traditional spirituality, such as Christianity, does exist among the carvers, but has more of an impact on the lifestyle of the carver than the actual trade itself. A result of this change is that the objects carved are no longer sacred for those who do not believe in the spirits for whom they were sacred.
Education within the trade continues to rely on apprenticeship as its primary tool for training new carvers. Apprenticeships vary considerably from their historical counterparts, and are now open to anyone—man, woman, or child—who had the dedication and the desire to learn. Education has had its greatest effect on the changing traditions by not teaching new carvers in the practice of rituals. The older generation who saw the importance of passing on these rituals is now disappearing, and the present-day master carvers see little need in continuing customs which have no meaning for them.

The social institutions of marriage and farming have had their greatest impact on the taboos on the connection between women and carving. Because views on women's roles are changing, the women can be carvers with no taboos restricting them. As carvers, their lifestyle changes. Because their lifestyle is changed, their roles in these social institutions inevitably change regardless of attitudes governing women's roles in their community.

The function of the forms themselves is a reflection on a culture which patronizes them. A carver no longer carves objects for ritual and everyday use only, but for the tourist trade and other individuals looking for decorative pieces for their homes. The change in function of the forms has affected their meaning: sacred objects do not serve as candleholders in a decorative sense. It has also affected the carving community's economic status and interests. Trade and tourism have taken the place of commissions to priests to produce objects for use in traditional worship. A change in clientele inevitably changes the type of demand.

Ghanaian culture is community, not individual, based. A change in one aspect of community is therefore likely to affect another aspect. Aburi's cultural institutions - its
way of life - are undergoing transformation. As a result, woodcarving, one of the major economic industries in Aburi, is also changing in character. It remains a traditional craft form, yet many of its traditional customs are being outmoded because of the culture which surrounds it. There are many other more subtle influences on the trade than the four outlined in this research. A further study would include these influences: they are more telling of reciprocal connections between the culture and the trade because they are not as evident. Juxtaposing an apprenticeship in traditional forms while examining the changes in tradition has shown that the combined effect of continuity and transformation in the woodcarving trade in Aburi is not clear-cut and its full impact has not completed in its course.
References


Informants
