TWO WORLDS: THE CONFLICT OF CULTURES IN WEST AFRICA IN RELATION TO THE AIMS AND PRACTICE OF ART EDUCATION IN GHANA

by

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ABSTRACT

The first five chapters of this thesis provide a historical survey, dealing mainly with West Africa, and primarily concerned with the cultural problems that have occurred from the contact between the traditional African and our Western culture. The effect of this contact in the areas of Art and Education are examined in some depth since the central hypothesis of this thesis is that Art Education can help to resolve some of the cultural problems that have resulted through the contact and conflict between the two worlds, African and Western.

The final chapters provide an example of how the purposes and theory of Art Education in the emerging nations of Africa can be put into practice within a specific country—in this case, Ghana. This part of the thesis is a result of two years of experiment and study done by the author within Ghana itself. This deals with the way natural materials in Ghana (at the present moment woefully ignored in the schools) can be put to good use in the Arts and Crafts programme. It also deals with the way methods and techniques in traditional crafts can be used, adapted and applied within this programme. An examination is made of the way other traditional cultural "materials" such as stories, music and designs can be assimilated and used for motivational purposes in the arts and crafts lesson. Much of this material comes from a controlled experiment, lasting ten weeks, which was directed by the author and carried out by his students with Primary and Middle School children at the Cultural Centre, Kumasi, Ghana.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION - STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture Change and Commitment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Africanophile and the Westerniser</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Third Cultural Reality</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. SOME DIMENSIONS OF THE CONFLICT</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnocentric Attitudes</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to Nature</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spiritual World</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of Control</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and Beliefs</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Culture and the Technological Society</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. AFRICAN ART AND WESTERN AESTHETICS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Culture</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Artist and his Work: African and Western</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Universal Need for Expression</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art as a 'Biological Necessity'</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ARTIST</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Attempt to Find a Synthesis</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Contemporary Artists</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Art Forms</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of Education</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. AN EDUCATION FOR AFRICANS</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Economy</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Education and the Introduction of Western Formal Education</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Contribution of Art Education</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. ART EDUCATION IN GHANA: THE PRESENT</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Education and the School System</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Training Colleges and the Art Tutors</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Need for a Reappraisal</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Proposed Aims for Art Education in Ghana</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. THE ART PROGRAMME AND THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) The Natural Materials</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) The Methods</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) The Cultural Materials</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. A PROGRAMME OF RENEWAL AND PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Education as a Means of Creative Synthesis</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Art Tutor and the Syllabus</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A - Arts and Crafts Syllabus for the Four Year Course in Teacher Training Colleges</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B - A Discussion on the Syllabus for Art and Craft in Primary Schools</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Diagram from Art and Crafts Syllabus for Primary Schools 1957</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Diagram from Art and Crafts Syllabus for Primary Schools 1957</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Children Sieving Earth Colours</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Crushing and Drying the Raw Earth Colour</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Red Obtained from the Seeds of the Bixa Orellano</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Yellow Obtained from the Root of the Curcuma Domestica</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The Adinkra Cloth</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Stripping Fibre from the Kenaf Plant</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Constructing with Piassava</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. A Toy Lorry made from Piassava</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. A Primary School Class Working with Clay</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. A Mosaic of Seeds and Beans</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Pouring Coloured Wax into the Paw-paw stems</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Brushes made with Coconut Fibre and Animal Hairs</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. A Mural of a Market Scene</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Middle School Girls making Coiled Pots</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Weaving on a Wooden Frame</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Extracting Fibre by Beating the Sisal Leaf</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Natural Materials and Adhesives being used in a Mosaic</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. A Starch and Earth Colour Monoprint</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Making Cocoyam Prints</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Knives made from Band Metal</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. The Open Firing Method</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Children's Claywork fired by the Open Method</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. A Nigerian Tie and Dye Cloth</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Tying the Cloth with Raffia</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. The Colourful Ritual of an Ashanti Festival</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. A Painted Wall in Northern Ghana</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. A Kokomba Pot</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. A Leather Hat from Northern Ghana</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. A Painting of Ananse by a Primary School Child</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. The Heads of 'Sasabonsam'</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. A Loom designed for School Use</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. A Space Modulator incorporating Natural Materials and Traditional Building Methods</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. A Picture made from Coloured Sawdust and Starch</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Mosaic Effects with Coloured Wood Shavings</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Beans and Seeds Coloured with Market Dyes</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. A Mosaic Design using Piassava Pinned to a Base</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF PLATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signwriting</td>
<td>Frontispiece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House in Northern Ghana</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Blacksmith and his Son</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Leather Worker</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wood Carver</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Basket Maker</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spinner</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Weaver</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Potter</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The incentive to write this thesis was derived from two years teaching experience at an Art College in Ghana, West Africa. In being responsible for the planning and running of an Art Education course for post-graduate students, the author was faced with many problems, but all of these were focused around one central question:

What is the purpose and significance of Art Education for West Africans today?

This thesis is an attempt to answer the above question. I am very much aware that the approach I have taken may appear very indirect in method and generalised in nature but the reason for this is inherent in the question itself. For immediately any examination is made of the significance that art and education have for West Africans, then the whole cultural milieu in which these people live is involved since it is out of this total pattern that the attitudes must grow towards art and education which will influence and determine the form taken by art education itself. Conversely it is through this total pattern that art education may affect and shape the cultural attitudes of a people.

Once the question already posited is examined in its cultural context then two factors become immediately evident: first that there is an extraordinary diversity of cultural structures in West Africa, and secondly that all these structures have one thing in common, - that is, that they are all in some way involved with the relationship of 'traditional patterns' to newly acquired patterns that stem from all manner of external influence and that are predominantly
Western in outlook and disruptive in effect when they come into contact with the way of life of the traditional African. This process of culture contact and the conflict that often results provides a key to answering the above question. Consequently the central hypothesis of this thesis is that Art Education in Africa could help to resolve this conflict and could be a vehicle through which a greater cultural integration or 'synthesis' of these two worlds can be established. In other words, the significance and purpose of Art Education for West Africans can only be sought in relation to this cultural conflict.

Such an approach demands an exploration into the conflict itself and a comparative study of the West African's traditional culture in relation to the influence and effects that have occurred when forms of Western culture have come into contact with these traditional structures. This comparative study will be chiefly concerned with art and education since these are most relevant to the topic of art education in West Africa. The first chapters are not confined to any particular West African country since the conflict itself is common to many and because there are certain aspects of the West African's culture, such as his art, which, from a traditional point of view, appear to have similar functions throughout Africa. However, since the author's own experiences stem from contact with a particular West African country and since it is in the newly independent nations such as Ghana that, paradoxically, this conflict is most evident then this thesis will be more relevant to West Africans than to other parts of the continent where political control is not in the hands
of the African and systems such as Apartheid create conflicts of a different nature.

In later chapters more account has been taken of the cultural differences within West African and the chapter on education is chiefly confined to Ghana, whilst the final chapters which are concerned with putting proposals into practice, demand the realities of a specific cultural setting which in this case will primarily involve the Ashanti region of Ghana. This part of the thesis is a result of two years of exploration and study done by the author within Ghana itself. This deals with the way natural materials in Ghana can be put to good use in the art and crafts programme. It also deals with the way methods and techniques in traditional crafts can be used, adapted and applied within this programme. Examples are given of the way in which other traditional cultural 'materials' such as stories, music and designs can be assimilated and used for motivational purposes in the art lesson. Much of this information comes from an experimental teaching study, lasting for ten weeks, that was directed by the author and carried out by his students with classes of Primary and Middle school children. A one hundred page report was printed concerning these findings and extracts from this report have been incorporated into this part of the thesis. Thus this thesis will move from the general to the particular; for the question originally posited can only be answered through an understanding of the relationship of the two worlds, African and Western, that have constantly and inevitably overlapped throughout West Africa.
Wherever one looks in Africa movement and change are to be found. Old patterns are falling away and, constantly, new patterns are being sought. Patterns of living, patterns of thought and belief, kinship patterns, political and economic patterns: all are in a process of change. Change in so far as it implies growth is necessary within any form of society. For it is man's ability to change, to discover and learn new techniques, skills, symbolic modes of thought and belief which separates him from the animals. Indeed without this ability he would never have made even the first step by fashioning a crude tool from a pebble. In this sense then change is essential and our history is the history of change.

However in the past, change has often been a comparatively slow process. There was probably a span of hundreds of thousands of years between that first crudely chipped pebble and the comparatively sophisticated concept of a bow and arrow, and the present complexity of western cultural patterns is laid upon a framework whose foundation was laid in Greece 3,000 years ago. In this respect Africa is faced with a particular problem because its social and cultural patterns are changing so rapidly. The result is often confusion and uncertainty, for so often the old patterns are lost before the new are firmly established.

The contemporary African often appears to be caught between two poles. The traditional life of his ancestors is irrevocably lost yet the onslaught of Western Culture provides an alternative that is so foreign and often so counter to his
traditional past that he cannot accept it or be accepted by it. The human result of this terrible dichotomy is what Colin Turnbull calls "The lonely African." Turnbull's thesis is that the fault stems from the European who made every attempt to impose his superiority upon the African. However, the European did not stop here; for if the African was his inferior then his traditions and customs must also be inferior. Turnbull suggests that it was the European who came to "preach" who from a cultural point of view did as much harm if not more than those who came to colonize or trade. For whereas the latter only wished to take the African's material possessions the former was determined to possess his soul as well. Thus the African was confronted by the world of the white man, a world that he was assured was far superior to his own traditional background of "savage and evil practices".

As far as possible the African stood aloof, but where the two worlds impinged there was only one thing for him to do, as the European did not respect his honesty, and that was to reply in kind. After all had he not been told that in order to better his chances he should become as much like the Whiteman as possible? So he too when brought into this situation became a liar and a cheat, an adulterer and a thief, a murderer and a worshipper of strange gods whose names were daily taken in vain. Turnbull believes that the harder the African attempts to imitate Western ways the more extreme becomes his plight and that, "the problem, at its most acute in the westernized city, results either in the abandonment of all belief, which is perhaps the most logical solution or else in the adoption of the outer forms of Western belief without any inner conviction." A picture is thus created of the contemporary African as a man astride two worlds. On either side he finds himself on uncertain
ground. The world of his traditional past is no longer acceptable to him although he owes undeniable allegiance to it since it is his heritage. On the other hand the influence of the Western world has made an indelible mark since either voluntarily or involuntarily he has had to make use of its skills, technology, customs and institutions. However, because of his former heritage, because of the fact that he is an African, he is aware that he can never become deeply committed to many of the values inherent in Western cultural patterns. Thus the worlds clash and impinge upon one another and there is no time, no span of thousands of years, in which a new order can evolve from a gradual intermingling of the two.

The Africanophile and the Westerniser

In a report on a 1956 conference of Negro scholars, Hodgkin describes how this conflict between the two worlds was analysed and answered by those present. He sums up the dilemma in the following statement:

But enormous transformations, obviously, have been packed into this short historical period. At the moment I am concerned only with one kind of transformation - the export of European culture, and the process known as assimilation. Whether they have preached assimilation as a theory or not, all the European Colonizing Powers have practised it in some degree. The African elite has been taught in schools organised on the model of British public schools or French 'lycées'. It has sat for its Senior Cambridge or its Baccalaureat. It has been compelled to learn a little Latin and less Greek. It has been taught to reason in the style of Hume and Ayer, or Descartes or Gilson. It wears academic dress and drinks vermouth in cafés. When it succeeds in winning a measure of self-government, its institutions take the form of a parliament on the British model (complete with speaker and mace), or a territorial assembly derived from the
French Conseil - General. When this élite wants to write poetry or do scientific research, or run a business, or make political speeches, or philosophize, it is obliged as a rule to use a European language. Friendship, family relations, love making, can be handled in the vernacular but little else. Naturally, in this situation, the African élite is confronted with the question: How can we be ourselves? How can we make use of European ideas, institutions and techniques, without becoming their prisoner - without ceasing to be African? This is a question which political independence by itself does not solve".

Hodgkin goes on to describe how the conference itself split into two main camps - the Africanophiles and the Westernisers. The Africanophile standpoint was represented by Senghor, a poet of high standing who is now the President of Senegal. He maintained that the African writer must return to his own unique sources, his African environment and his African traditions. In this sense the African received through his culture a sense of unity with his fellow men and his environment which the fragmentary culture of the Western world can no longer achieve. Systems of family organization, religion and art were all inextricably bound together and all were committed to a way of life, a rhythm that provided the African with deep and absorbing human and spiritual relationships. Senghor expresses his longing to return to his roots (in this case his ancestors) in the following poem:

Let me breathe the odour of our dead,
Let me capture and reproduce the living voices
Let me learn to live.
The same sky throbbing with the unseen presences,
The same skies feared by those who have scores to settle with the dead;
And now I see my dear departed ancestors move towards me!
I do not blot out the footsteps of my fathers,
Nor yet those of my father's fathers.
The Westernisers view at the conference is well presented by a quotation that Hodgkin provides from an American Negro writer, Richard Wright:

The ancestor - cult religion with all its manifold poetic richness, that created a sense of self-sufficiency - did not that religion, when the Europeans came in, act as a sort of aid to those guns? Did that religion help people to resist fiercely and hardly and hurl the European out? I question the value of that culture in relationship to our future. I do not condemn it. But how can we use it?5

Wright maintained that the new African elite had no choice but to accept western values and reject much of their past since the 'tools' that they now have to work with must inevitably be Western.

The two views expressed in the Conference have been recorded in some detail here since they throw into relief the essential problem of the African. However, it would be wrong to think it was the problem of all Africans. Many Africans living in the rural areas are still immersed in their traditional culture and they have had little contact with western influences and the growing spread of industrialization. It is the educated African and those who have been drawn to live and work in the cities who have had the most contact with western culture, and for whom the problem is consequently most acute. The picture that has just been drawn of the Conference presents only the two major viewpoints expressed. One is the view of a small group of highly educated French West Africans and the other is that of an American Negro whose own cultural problem is one of attaining equality rather than independence. It is obvious that there must be other viewpoints and that all Africans do not face or react to the
problem in the same way, or to the same degree, or even find similar answers. There is within Africa such a wide variety of cultural patterns and types of colonial influence that it would seem unlikely that there is any one answer since the problem itself must consequently vary from country to country and even from tribe to tribe.

It has already been pointed out that Senghor and Césaire, who are the chief exponents of the return to African roots in a search for the African personality, are French West African. The process of 'assimilation' that many Africans have undergone in French Territories is in some sense the most inflexible and lasting form of colonization in African. Indeed the African is educated to become a Frenchman and owe his allegiance to France rather than his native country, whose culture he is taught to look upon with contempt. Consequently the French West African finds himself completely isolated from his traditional culture and his desire to return becomes of extreme importance, and because of his 'assimilation' into another culture, extremely difficult. Thus the call for an African personality or 'Negritude' is strong and has very real significance to the educated French West African. In British West Africa the colonizing powers have never concerned themselves with so entire a transformation of the African. That there have been changes is unquestionable; but the degree and method was different from those of the French. The British government was, for example, prepared to leave the internal organization of the country in the hands of the chiefs through the process of indirect rule. The British West African has consequently never been so 'committed' as his French counterpart.
and a term such as 'Negritude' does not hold the same significance for him. Indeed the British West African often appears to have trouble finding a commitment.

Although there are differences, all of West Africa has one thing in common. It has had the myth of European racial superiority forced down its throat and political independence has not helped to free the West African, morally, intellectually or materially from this myth. The European legacy is everywhere: it permeates the legal, educational and administrative systems and the change has been so rapid that there has been little time for any form of adaptation. Consequently the West African who is educated into these systems finds himself perpetuating them and he becomes one of the elite, separated from his own people and sometimes making what Otonti Nduka (a Nigerian) calls, "the pathetic and ludicrous attempt to copy every possible cultural trait of the European".  

The Third Cultural Reality

However, although conflict and stress are central components to culture contact in West Africa, in many cases there is some common ground and even where there is little the possible alternatives cannot be simply delineated as either outright acceptance or rejection of Western institutions and values. Malinowsky has described the African world of contact and change as consisting of "three distinct orders of cultural reality: the African, the Western, and that of transition."  

The process of contact, acceptance, rejection and adoption creates a third cultural reality, "that possesses a cultural determinism which is neither African nor European." This
process of transition, of compromise and synthesis, holds out
the promise of resolution and a happy ending whereby a new
dynamic neo-African culture will appear. But this is by no
means the inevitable conclusion to culture contact in West
Africa. Where there is little evidence of any common factor
between Western and African institutions and values and the
conflict appears insoluble, then this may result in the
decay and disintegration of the weaker culture. This is the
danger in many African countries where change is of such a
rapid and radical kind. Radical or structural change demands
radical modification that will alter the whole character
of the social and cultural structure and this leads to anxiety
and stress within the individual. This stress may find
outlets in various forms: common among these are an increase
in witchcraft practices, the occurrence of messianic cults and
a return to native traditions. These are examples of the more
sporadic and extreme attempts to alleviate anxiety; but the
resolutions found in these directions are often very temporary
because they are essentially methods of regression from the
problem of transition rather than attempts to find a resolution.
Political independence in itself does not provide a solution
since the newly independent nations must continue to rely upon
the technical assistance and material goods of the Western
world. Also the problem of culture contact does not end with
the withdrawal of colonial governments, but rather it continues
to be perpetuated within the social and political organization
of the country itself. An educated elite arises that takes
over from their colonial predecessors and uses the same
channels of administration, lives in the same houses, wears
the same dress and practises the same customs and conventions. Consequently the conflict takes on certain internal characteristics, the gulf between educated and uneducated Africans widens, and the problem of finding some kind of cultural integration between the old and the new remains extremely difficult.

It would seem that the only permanent and satisfactory solution will come through the emergence of a third cultural reality rather than regressing to past traditional practices or copying everything Western. The process of transition may be blocked or stimulated according to the attitudes taken by both African and Westerner and to the extent that there is intelligent and considered planning on both sides. This thesis is concerned with the planning of an art programme for a West African country and the hypothesis is that such a programme could help to stimulate the process of transition and cultural synthesis. But before any kind of planning can be effective and applicable there must be some understanding of 'the other fellow's point of view', of the basic differences between the two cultural orders, African and Western. At the same time the mistake must not be made of considering the third cultural reality as purely a mixture of cultural traits from these two orders. This must be the basis; but the mixing process often results in new social and cultural forms that have a dynamic of their own.

In summary, despite the fact that internal and external factors may have created wide differences in outlook and attitude, the problem of 'cultural adaption' is central to all Africans. The emphasis upon and interpretation of this problem
may vary from culture to culture and from one area of Africa to another. At the present moment it is obvious that the question of retaining an identity that has some distinctly African features holds particular significance for the West African.

The overriding concern for an African identity is well summed up in the following two quotations which have the same theme and yet indicate that in at least one British West African country this problem has already spanned a number of decades. The first is a tribute written for Aggrey on his death by a former Governor of the Gold Coast. The second is by Kwame Nkrumah the recently deposed President of Ghana.

At the same time, equally and very keenly he felt that any changes that came to his people must not alter their personality, their spirit, their character as Africans. That was his constant anxiety - how to give them the opportunities for acquiring all the learning, all the knowledge of art and crafts, all the mental poise and character, that centuries of slow progress have given to the civilized nations of the world and yet how to ensure that they retain the spirit of their ancestors and remain African.

We must seek an African view to the problem of Africa. This does not mean that Western techniques and methods are not applicable to Africa. It does mean however, that in Ghana we must look at every problem from the African point of view.
FOOTNOTES


2 Ibid., p. 56.


5 Ibid., p. 280.


8 Ibid.


11 Kwame Nkrumah, Prime Minister's address to the old Legislative Assembly for the last time. Given at Accra, March 5th 1957.
THE BLACKSMITH AND HIS SON
CHAPTER II. SOME DIMENSIONS OF THE CONFLICT

Ethnocentric Attitudes

A picture has been drawn of the African as a man astride two worlds. He is often aware of this and there is the need to find some kind of middle ground where the two will blend and form an impetus for a new dynamic African culture. Yet, how to go about this African cultural renaissance is a problem that appears to have all the characteristics of insolubility. A great deal of this stems from what might be called ethnocentric attitudes on both sides. The European has often felt his culture superior and made little attempt to understand the purposes and values behind the traditional cultural system of the people he set out to exploit and control. Even now, when exploitation and control have in many cases given way to independence and aid, those who come to "help" are seldom sympathetic to the deeper cultural problems of the African. They will instruct him how to operate a piece of machinery or cultivate his land but if he neglects or misuses the machinery or reverts back to traditional ways of cultivating his land then too often the Westerner will throw up his hands in disgust rather than ask himself why this has happened.

The West African on his part is often unable to gain a true understanding of Western culture, not initially through intolerance but because of the position he has had to take in relation to the colonizing powers. His view of the West has in the past been largely determined by the small select groups of administrators and missionaries with which he has come into contact. Due to this, the West African's conception of Western
society is distorted; and moreover it was the values, customs and institutions of this colonial elite with which he identified and accepted in order to gain a parity of status and prestige. Consequently without the advantage of a broader viewpoint and acceptance as an equal, certain aspects of Western culture have been too readily and uncritically accepted and copied by the African.

In this respect a greater understanding of the cultural structure of these two worlds might help to clarify the problem itself. This must involve a close scrutiny of the beliefs, attitudes and institutions inherent in each culture, a concern with how these differ when the two worlds are compared and above all, an attempt to understand why they differ.

Attitudes to Nature

A major distinction in Western and African viewpoints can be seen in their attitude to nature. For the African, nature is often a hostile force with which he must contend. If the rain does not come then his crops will wither and perish, and for other inexplicable reasons his children may die. Because of the inconsistencies and incomprehensible twists and turns of his natural environment the African finds himself helpless and impotent and his only way out is to resort to the protection of the spirits. Hagen suggests that it is this awareness of impotence that is the key casual force shaping personality and social relations within traditional societies.

He the primitive merely takes for granted that the phenomena of the world around him are arbitrary and not amenable to analysis and that they control him unless the spiritual authorities which control them are persuaded to favour him.
Janheinz Jahn suggests that nature to the African is essentially a passive element attributed to the world of KINTU (things). Nature is activated either for or against man through the forces that spring from MUNTU which is a "force endowed with intelligence". All the gods, ancestors and men both living and departed are MUNTU. From Jahn's point of view the African is not impotent, for it is he who in a sense controls nature and imparts the life force that activates KINTU.

Thus for everything that happens in the world, for fertility and drought, for sickness and its cause, for happiness and unhappiness, some muntu or other is responsible, whether living man, departed or orisha. The soothsayer says where the word that produced the evil originated and the medicine men know the counter-word, which is stronger and can prevent the evil or illness.2

In this way the African has developed a method of controlling his environment which is simple in approach yet complex in the relationships this approach demands. The important thing to note is that this method of control is indirect and only achieved through the appeal to and use of spiritual forces.

Such a conception of nature is entirely different to that of Western man. To him nature is a force in itself which operates through natural laws of cause and effect. If the causes and consequently the laws are understood then the effects can be controlled directly and without any reference to spiritual forces. The application of the methods and findings of Science and Technology is Western man's answer to the incomprehensible twists and turns of nature and through the invention of the 'machine' he has learnt to control and make use of his natural environment. Such an approach appears inevitably to lead to a greater reliance on the world of 'things' as they are
revealed through the physical senses, whereas the African is more concerned and aware of the forces that he believes lie behind and activate the things.

The Spiritual World

Nor should the Africans view of nature, which is clearly associated with the spiritual world, be confused with the Christian conception of the physical and spiritual world. Here again there are major differences. For the Christian everything comes from God and this includes the fruits of the earth. To the African this is nonsensical since it is obvious to him that the yam that he eats and the palm wine that he drinks come from the earth. However, the yam would not grow nor the wine flow without man who gives all 'things' life. Thus to the African a God who creates all things and commands all things is a strange God and a very powerful one since he must have created the guns for the Europeans and commanded them to come and to conquer. Perhaps to the African this has been one of the main attractions of Christianity and also the chief reason for its failure since this Christian God did not appear to be so generous with the African as he had been with the European.

To the African the sense of power and omnipotence which is essential to the concept of a Christian God is hard to comprehend. The inevitable result of such a concept is still harder for him to accept. That is the isolation between God and man, who is the mere reflection or shadow of that God. In his traditional Religio-philosophical background the African's concept of a supreme being is one of a being which
interpenetrates all of life. In this sense, God, as Jahn points out, is not the creator but the begetter of man. God is the universal life force and man is part of this force. And through the use of words and ritual he has the power to activate this force in other things. In this respect God is an impersonal force; he is not something to be worshipped—indeed he may not be personified at all. To the African this life force is everywhere and all things are saturated with it. Death does not destroy it for it lives on in the ancestors. Thus the world of the spirits, of the ancestors and the local gods or deities is very real and significant to the African, and it is through a constant intercourse between the physical and spiritual worlds that the life force is maintained and replenished. But the emphasis is always on man and the power he possesses to manipulate the forces around him, whereas the Christian places his emphasis on God the Supreme Being and the power this being has to manipulate man in the sense of demanding obedience, of rewarding the righteous, forgiving the penitent and punishing the wicked. In the following poem Cesaire pays tribute to the African's mystical approach to life which stems from his attitude to nature and the belief in a life force which is "the essence of all things".

Hurrah for those who have invented nothing
For those who have never discovered
For those who have never conquered
But abandon themselves to the essence of all things
Ignorant of surfaces, but seized by the very movement of things
Not caring to conquer, but playing the game of the world
Truly the elder sons of the world
Porous to all the breaths of the world.
Cesaire's poem is revealing, for it throws into relief the opposing directions of the two worlds—one deeply concerned with the spiritual forces revealed through the things of this world, the other becoming increasingly more interested in the things themselves. Through the processes of discovery, invention, and the desire to conquer and subjugate not only peoples but things as well, Western man set out on a course that led to a totally different way of life.

Lacking the scientific knowledge the African resorted to other means of coping with the unpredictable. Beattie points out that in simpler, technologically undeveloped societies, like the African's, magic and religious ritual provides a means of coping with the unpredictable not because such acts are always considered as instrumental in bringing about the desired end but because they are also expressive acts. The value of these acts lies primarily in the fact that they are symbolic: the act of re-presenting something or saying or acting it out provides a means of dealing with and controlling the unpredictable.

We have seen that much ritual and religious behaviour translates uncontrollable natural forces into symbolic entities which, through the performance of ritual, can be manipulated and dealt with. Ritual is a language for saying things which are felt to be true and important, but which are not susceptible of statement in scientific terms. Even if sophisticated modern man is less inclined to attach instrumental efficacy to the symbols which he has created to express his apprehension of the universe and of its ultimate meaning, he still feels the need to express this awareness. And in areas beyond science there is no way of expressing it except symbolically.

It is only a short step from here to an awareness that art provides another essential means of symbolic expression in areas beyond science. However this will be developed further in the next chapter.
Methods of Control

It is often said that the cradle of Western civilisation is to be found in ancient Greece. For it was here that man first began to look for answers to the phenomena of the natural world that were other than primarily supernatural ones. Man began to look around him, to study, observe, classify, ask questions and attempt to reach rational conclusions. In this situation the need soon arises to find methods of testing the validity of these conclusions. Man develops the empirical method and he verifies his deductions through observation and experiment. In ancient Greece the foundations of the scientific method were laid, and history after that is in part the history of the slow and painful development of this method until suddenly in the 19th century it breaks out of its narrow confines and rapidly expands giving rise to the growth of Technology and the Industrial Revolution. The invention of the machine gives rise to a rapid and efficient method of manufacturing goods and nature becomes harnessed to the uses and needs of man. The abundance of machine goods leads to a greater emphasis on commercialism and a moneyed economy. This, coupled with the need for raw materials to feed the machine, leads to exploitation and colonization.

Thus Western culture became involved in what Mumford calls "the devout worship of its own Holy Trinity, Militarism, Mechanism, Money". Throughout the evolution of Western culture man became more aware of himself as a separate entity, an individual existing apart from his natural setting, and eventually with the ability to directly control it and
manipulate it to his own ends. In this sense his history is the history of man freeing himself from his natural environment; yet paradoxically in the end he has become the slave of the methods and machines he had created in order to obtain his freedom. He is in danger of becoming a depersonalised unit in a mechanistic culture. Mumford describes the present phase of Western Technological culture as the New World Culture.

Philosophically speaking, this New World was a product of rationalism, utilitarianism, scientific positivism. Objectivity and causality were the dominating principles of the new ideology; only those aspects of human experience that were external and repeatable, open to the inspection of other men, verifiable either by experiment or strictly controlled induction or deduction, were treated as real. By the same token subjectivity and teleology had no place in this new framework of ideas; whatever was self-developed, inwardly conditioned, non-repeatedly unique or purposeful was excluded as unreal. New World Culture meant organization, standardization, regularity, control applied to every manifestation of life. Purpose, ejected from its more organic and human context, became embodied in the machine and the mechanical collective.

The methods of control and the values that evolve in such a society are often opposed to those in the traditional African Society. Control in the former case involves a series of exterior techniques that relate man to man and man to his environment. Law, money, medicine, politics, warfare, education and agriculture develop as a series of specialized techniques through which man controls his exterior world. The African also has techniques; but his method of control is based on the belief in, and manipulation of, interior forces. One places emphasis on the subjective aspects of human experience,
the other on the objective. The one needs an essentially passive and enclosed society the other a dynamic and expansive one. In the one the objective approach and emphasis on exterior techniques leads to the individualistic abstract and impersonal, in the other the subjective approach and emphasis on interior forces maintains the need for personal and collective relationships. With the African his ability to survive is closely related to his ability to devise a social structure that creates a satisfactory and functional system of interpersonal relationships, whereas the Westerner relies less and less on personal relationships and more and more on the techniques that take their place. Herein lies the reason for the African's emphasis on kinship and the extended family system. Kinship, as Norbech points out,

Is the means by which small, primitive cultures are socially organized and in the absence of money, specialists, policeman, judges, courts of law, social welfare programmes and insurance policies it is one of primitive man's techniques of survival.9

The kinship system and affinal ties were a means of binding an extended group of people together and establishing a set pattern of relationships and responsibilities between the people in the group. Western marriage is now essentially a means of establishing formal relationships between two individuals and the emphasis is on a nuclear family, whereas marriage to the traditional African also performed the function of establishing relationships between groups of people and in this way, in conjunction with the kinship system, it served as a means of social control and security. The introduction of impersonal means of control such as a
centralized government, of cash crops and a subsequent large scale economic organization and the provision of new roles and opportunities, though formal education and industrialization has inevitably led to the straining and disruption of traditional patterns of kinship. Also the kinship system was closely linked to religious beliefs and the clan or lineage was considered as a continuum, the living being the current representatives of the long line of the dead or ancestors who were revered and worshipped as the ultimate seal of authority and wisdom.

The traditional political authority vested in the African chief or headman, was an extension of the kinship system and the role of the chief was often a combination of political and religious authority. Within Western Society secular and religious authority is related to fairly distinct and separate institutions each with its own agents. It was introduced into Africa in this way through the missionary and the colonial administrator. The traditional African was unfamiliar with such a dichotomy and the new concept of a government which was primarily secular and centralized ignored the traditional role of the chief. The process of indirect rule in the British territories of West Africa emphasized only the secular, rather than the sacred, authority of the chief and demanded new responsibilities of him that inevitably led to antagonism between the commoners and their chief and disrupted traditional institutionalized relations that had previously acted as a system of checks and balances between government and governed.

Traditionally the African was primarily concerned with maintaining a level of subsistence, agriculture being the chief
activity. Consequently nearly everyone was involved in farming and hunting and the opportunities for specialized occupations were limited to a few craftsmen and religious functionaries. As opposed to this Western social structure has as its base a moneyed economy that involves a complex network of exchange, which in turn involves a system of division of labour and an increasing emphasis on specialized occupations. Consequently a method of social stratification grew up which relied primarily on criteria of wealth and occupational status. Philip Foster points out that there was a different system of stratification and differentiation in traditional Ghanaian societies and that so far as chiefly office was concerned criteria of 'sex, age and lineage' were important rather than those of wealth or occupation. Consequently the traditional social structure of the African often had an entirely different 'base' and within a community or tribal grouping there was a greater cultural homogeneity but less opportunity for social mobility as compared to that of the West. The introduction of cash crops and the creation of specialized occupations through the increasing emphasis on trade, commerce and administration by the colonial powers in West Africa often ran counter to and was in direct conflict with the basic components of the traditional social structures.

A typical example is the problems that have arisen over land tenure. Traditionally land was held on a communal basis and under the jurisdiction of the lineage head or local chief. Often the land was considered as belonging to the ancestors and only held in trust by the living. The individual had no private claim to land or authority to mortgage or sell.
The introduction of cash crops and a Western system or law that related to the private ownership of land resulted in new attitudes to land tenure that conflicted with traditional rights and customs and created tension and disputes between members of family and lineage groups.

It is obvious that the values and attitudes that stem from the traditional social order to be found in pre-colonial times will be very different from those of a society where the kinship system has given way to the larger social groupings of the city and the Nation, where the family no longer holds such authority and control over its individual members and where social techniques have grown and diversified to the point where law, morality, education and economics no longer grow out of the physical and spiritual relationships that occur in the tight-knit and enclosed communities of the traditional Africa.

Values and Beliefs

Values and beliefs connected with the most basic functions of life - the rhythm of birth, maturation and death - will also be different. An example of this is the Westerner's conception of age and death as opposed to that of the traditional African. In African society, age is deeply respected since the longer your experience the deeper will be your knowledge of ritual and custom and the unknown forces which these combat. Thus wisdom is to be found in the Elders and they are never questioned. Jahn points out that the Elders are nearer to wisdom because they are nearer to the ancestors from whence the life force flows in its purest form.\(^\text{11}\) Wisdom and age go hand in hand and unequivocal respect is demanded by them.
This is opposed to the rational and critical approach in Western culture where wisdom is never absolute and previous principles are constantly challenged and the elders are often given little respect since their rational and critical abilities often appear to dull as their age increases. Also the Western family is no longer a rigid hierarchical grouping that places all authority in the hands of the Elders. Death to the African is not an end in itself; for the life force is retained in the spirit of the ancestors and death and life become reciprocal processes since the ancestors live on in the form of their descendants. In opposition to this is the Western conception of death as the destroyer. Death from a material viewpoint must be an end in itself, whilst in the Christian doctrine it is a gateway to the spiritual life. However, it is a one way entrance and there is no possibility of return to the world of the flesh and of one's descendants.

A Nigerian writer, Otonti Nduka describes some of the problems that arise when the Western system of law and morality is imposed upon the traditional African. The Western legal system depends upon the external authority of police, judges and courts and a codified system of law that in many cases evaluates liability according to material damage. On the other hand law for the traditional African was an internal function that arose out of the custom, ritual and immediate needs of the local community; also the African, according to Jahn, was far more inclined to judge from the point of view of loss in life force rather than actual material damage. In the West morality often appears in conjunction with the legal system rather than religion and a sense of right and
wrong is left up to individual apprehension whereas to the
African morality is closely connected with the kinship system
and a mystical view of life that pervades the whole community.

Western morality demands of the individual a higher
degree of rational apprehension of the good, and far
greater reliance on the unaided moral resources of the
individual than did African Society.\textsuperscript{14}

Education

Education to the African was the preparation for a
static way of life where survival and satisfaction of immediate
biological needs were all-important. The transmission of a
set body of custom and ritual was the chief aim of education.
In relation to this it is not surprising that the African
may be puzzled by certain aspects of Western education such as
the encouragement of critical analysis, flexibility, creative
thinking and the introduction of subjects into the curriculum
which may appear to have no immediate functional value in
relation to the satisfaction of basic needs and maintenance of
an established social pattern. Indeed the idea of 'formal
education' which involves special buildings, special times
of instruction, special instructors and a series of specialized
subjects and skills to be taught is completely foreign to the
traditional African for whom education was an automatic and
natural process of becoming a useful member of the community.
Education was the normal process of growing up and inseparable
from the day to day life of the community.\textsuperscript{15}

Economics

Alongside education, economics is the other major force
involved in the conflict and, inevitably in its solution.
After all it was economics that brought the 'white man' to Africa in the first place and it is primarily economic problems that are of central concern to the modern independent African nations. Economics in a traditional African society involved the pooling and sharing of family resources and the obligation of one member of the family to the other.

In such a world in a nuclear family the number of children left as orphans by the death of their father would be large, for death strikes frequently at adults as well as children. Hence the logical family unit is the extended family of several generations, in which all feel responsible for all. In the extreme form of the extended family the economic resources of the family are pooled and available to every member subject to the judgement of the family patriarch constituting a rude but effective sort of social security. Such a thing as an individual business venture is virtually unknown. Every economic act is taken in the name of the family and the associates in economic activity are members of the family.16

The West with its moneyed economy, its commercial ventures and concern with the acquisition of material riches completely disrupts these traditional views. The idea of the individual acquisition of material wealth and possessions which is an essential and apparently unavoidable factor in many Western technological cultures, has proved to be the most destructive force concerned in the disintegration of traditional African societies. And it is certain from a spiritual and social point of view the African's loss is often far greater than his gain. Otonti Nduka sums up the difference between Nigerian and Western culture when he describes the former as leisurely and mystical with a background of personal and comprehensive relationships whereas the latter is dynamic, moneyed and based on individualistic and impersonal relationships.
Values have been lifted from a society where individualistic, impersonal and abstract relationships were the norm and grafted onto one in which more personal comprehensive and socialistic relationships are the norm. It was mistakenly assumed that the values of the one culture were superior to those of the other. There are in both cultures moral as well as other values which are worth preserving.

African Culture and The Technological Society

It would appear from the above quotation and maybe from the content of this chapter that although both cultures develop from conceptions of life that often conflict, they may both have contributions to make to the future development of mankind. Too often the contemporary African appears to overlook the values in his own traditional society in favour not only of Western technological and scientific knowledge but also the Western way of life that is associated with that knowledge. The Western road appears to be one of wealth, comfort and leisure and for many Africans educated in Western ways there can be no greater goals. The above conclusion may appear very naive and superficial to the jaded eyes of the Westerner; yet for many Africans it is obvious and undeniable. The latter's first contacts with the Westerner was with a particular type - a small group of Europeans who came from a particular class of European society and who came to rule and administer - the colonial elite. This became the African's 'reference group', and the manners, dress occupations and type of education demanded by this elite group became the ideal. It was only natural that the African should presume that all Europeans fitted into this ideal. To the African there was nothing more desirable than to become part of this group or at
least achieve some kind of parity with it for it was in this way that social status, prestige and power could be achieved. Such status and prestige came to be associated with not only wealth and material comfort but also an occupational hierarchy and an academic form of education. These were unmistakably the attributes of the colonial elite and so they became the goals of the African who identified with this elite and to a great extent they still hold true for the new Independent African. That they were not the goals of his ancestors does not appear to worry him and often he cannot comprehend or appears blissfully unaware of dangers and despair which are central to the technological society.

In modern Western societies everything is being subjugated to technique. Jacques Ellul says technique is the method by which the machine has become integrated into society for, "it classifies, arranges and rationalizes, it does in the domain of the abstract, what the machine did in the domain of labour. It is efficient and brings efficiency to everything". The result is that men now live in conditions that are less than human. Consider the concentration of our great cities, the slums, the lack of space, of air, of time, the gloomy streets and sallow lights that confuse night and day. Think of our dehumanized factories, our unsatisfied senses, our working women, our estrangement from nature. Life in such an environment has no meaning. Consider our public transportation, in which man is less important than a parcel; our hospitals in which he is only a number. Yet we call this progress. And the noise, that monster boring into us at every hour of the night without respite.

Ellul goes on to point out that Technique is opposed to nature, it creates artificality and divorces man from his natural and organic background. The unquestionable truth in
this statement is supported by the attitudes of many of the Westerners who come to Africa. Their reliance on technique results in confusion and frustration when they find themselves in a society where there is often a marked lack of technique. Some find this situation unbearable and quickly return to the safety of their own technological society. Others "make the best of it" and attempt to create an enclosed environment in which everything, including the African, is made to conform to Western custom and techniques. Still others who manage to subordinate their feelings of frustration and overcome their constant reliance on technique find Africa a stimulating experience, a human experience. And that is one thing which Western man is rapidly loosing his capacity for, - experiences which involve contact with his natural and organic background.

The paradox of Western technology lies in its dual capacities, as the great Provider and the great Destroyer.

It destroys, eliminates or subordinates the natural world, and does not allow this world to restore itself or even to enter into a symbiotic relation with it. The two worlds obey different imperatives, different directions, and different laws which have nothing in common.20

It is disturbing that the very words which Ellul uses to describe the dichotomy between the natural and technological may equally apply to that of the Western and African worlds. Herein lies both the tragedy and the paradox of the relationship between the two worlds. On the one hand man, through technological knowledge, has mastered nature only to find that this knowledge and the methods or techniques upon which it relies has mastered him and thus he is cut off from the very roots of life. On the other, this traditional background
has kept him in close contact with nature and his philosophy is life-affirming rather than life-negating. However, the latter appears set on casting aside these roots in a headlong rush towards the very way of life that Western man has discovered to be stultifying unless some synthesis can be made between the impersonal and mechanical security of his present and the personal, human, and life sustaining attributes of his past.

The tragedy is that the African seems unaware that it is he who has the capacity to carry out this synthesis.
FOOTNOTES


13 Jahn, *op. cit.* pp. 116-117, Jahn gives an example of the 'enormous compensation' paid to the owner of a dead sheep that was entrusted to the care and consequently under the 'life influence' of the village chief.


15 It will become clear at a later point in this thesis that education is the central factor not only in the conflicts of the two worlds but also in so far as there is the possibility of a solution. Consequently a full discussion of education will be left until a later chapter.


17 Nduka, *op. cit.* pp. 94-95.


THE LEATHERWORKER
CHAPTER III. AFRICAN ART AND WESTERN AESTHETICS

Art and Culture

Before examining art in relation to the social, religious and philosophical background of the two worlds it is first necessary to offer some definition of art and suggest that art has a vital role to play in relation to the social and cultural growth of all people. The latter is an important contention here since it underlies the original hypothesis that art education can help the African in his search for an identity through some form of cultural synthesis. In this century there has been an increasing interest in many fields of research into the symbol-making activities of man. Langer, suggests that the symbol-making function reflects a basic need in man which provides the essential distinction between him and his animal origin.

This is the activity of which the beast appears to have no need. And it accounts for just those traits in man which he does not hold in common with other animals - ritual, art, laughter, weeping, speech, superstition and scientific genius. Moreover art provides for a distinct and vital mode of symbol-making. The non-discursive or aesthetic symbol is the means by which man expresses and gives meaning to his own inner feelings.

What discursive symbolism - language in its literal use - does for our awareness of things about us and our relation to them, the arts do for our awareness of subjective reality, feeling and emotion; they give inward experiences form and this makes them conceivable. The only way we can really envisage vital movement, the stirring and growth and passage of emotion, and ultimately the whole direct sense of human life is in artistic terms.

Man expresses and gives meaning to his life through symbols and art can be defined as one of the essential forms of symbolization.
Culture may be defined in similar terms, for it primarily involves the interrelationships that people establish between each other and their environment and the way in which they represent or symbolize these relationships. This comprises their knowledge system - values, beliefs and ideas - and this is made possible through man's ability to symbolize.

All culture (civilization) depends upon the symbol. It was the exercise of the symbolic faculty that brought culture into existence and it is the use of symbols that makes the perpetuation of culture possible. Without the symbol there would be no culture possible. Without the symbol there would be no culture and man would be merely an animal, not a human being.

Symbolic communication in some form is essential to the concept of culture. Language is one important form of communication and so also is art. Art was one of the prime modes of symbolic communication for the African and a means by which he created order and gave meaning to his existence and his relation to others. Conceived in this framework art becomes of vital importance to culture. Western man in the twentieth century appears to have overlooked this idea and it may eventually lead to his undoing.

Symbolic modes have two major functions - the instrumental and the expressive. Ritual, magic and religion often function in both ways. The participants in a magical or religious act may often believe that this is instrumental in achieving the desired end, but also, whether they are conscious of it or not, the expressiveness of the symbolic act in itself is also an end. Man has the innate desire to express himself, to say something; the value being in the act of saying - of expression - in itself. Art as a symbolic act may also involve
these two functions - the instrumental and the expressive - but its intrinsic character is that it is expressive of feeling and in this sense is an end in itself. Western culture is presently oriented to the instrumental function of the symbol, whereas the traditional African used both his language and his art as primarily an expressive means of symbolic communication. In this sense art becomes a vital mode of symbolism at the formative stage of a culture, when new meanings and values are sought that express the new relationships that occur at moments of social and cultural change.

The artistic activity belongs essentially to the formative stages of a civilization, but a civilization is renewed and revitalized by the continuance of the process - by the recurrent injection of new visual images and new expressive shapes into the language and imagination of a race of men. Such is the basic biological and social function of art, and it is a function that is vitally necessary at the formative stages of a new civilization.

Herbert Read goes on to say that the important function of renewal and revitalization within civilization is performed by the artist. Consequently art is one of the active components of a cultural renaissance for it is man's way of creating order out of chaos and of giving meaning and form to those aspects of his reality that are not realized through the rational or the discursive. In The Conduct of Life, Lewis Mumford takes up the same theme, claiming that art is the domain of the personal and human and that "man is never so fully himself as when he is acting a part: when he is transforming the raw materials of life into art." Mumford suggests that it is this capacity to transform the raw materials of life into art that makes man 'human' and it must be added that it is the practice of this capacity which provides the
stuff of culture. If the African is seeking his personality then he must seek it through a cultural revival and this must involve the capacity to convert the jumble and confusion of his immediate experiences into art, for it is only here that he will find what he is searching for. In the traditional context art did have this kind of significance for the African; it was an essential part of his experience and his community, although it might be added that there was an overall rigidity of thinking which confined his experiences, his community, and his arts into what appear to be fairly set patterns.

The Artist and his Work: African and Western

The African artist was as essential to his society as the technician is to that of highly industrialized societies and art was as much a part of everyday life to the African as technique is to Western man. It follows from this that when comparisons are made from the point of view of aesthetics between concepts held by the Westerner and those of the traditional African then differences will be found. Too often in the past African art has been divorced from its cultural background when judged by the (white man) and this clothing of African art in Western aesthetic concepts has often resulted in a picture that is misleading and one which makes it more difficult to reach a true evaluation of African art in so far as the meaning and purpose it may have for the African is concerned. However, Marcel Griaule was one of the first researchers in the field of African art to realize the need for taking into account the fundamental differences between
'the arts of the Negro and White World',

With the one, art is a general rule of life, with the other an exception. In the former we see a whole society imbued with ritual, artistic production which is only one of many everyday activities, in the latter, a world apart working in a self created atmosphere, into which the other half of society penetrates at certain intervals.  

In a similar manner William Fagg talks of the need for the student of African art to become a "man of two worlds". It is significant that this phrase reflects the theme of this thesis, and the problems that it raises involve the contemporary African artist and the public that he works for, as much as it should do the Westerner connected with research. A typical example of the dilemma in which contemporary African artists find themselves is that of the Nigerian Ben Enwonwu. Enwonwu's painting and sculptures constantly show the shift back and forth from one style to the other - from a style reminiscent of the traditional African sculptural forms to one of detailed representationalism which has been the guiding force in so much of Western Art.

Uilli Beier feels that Enonwu does not manage to bridge the gap and that this conflict of styles represents, "... a genuine expression of the ambiguous position of the modern Nigerian artist between two worlds."  

If a cultural synthesis is to be found then it can only be done through an examination and understanding of the elements that must go to make up this synthesis, and if the synthesis rests in part upon a renewal of the Arts then it is the Arts which must now be examined, particularly in relation to the differences inherent in the 'aesthetic' of the two worlds.
For it is out of these differences that the synthesis must be made. At the same time it must be remembered that art and culture are inseparable and when studying the Arts one is directly concerned with the cultural backgrounds of the people producing those Arts. The first chapters were devoted to an examination of the cultural backgrounds of the two worlds and now this must be related to their Arts.

The traditional African never loses contact with nature. His is a subjective view and he is an integral part of nature and of the forces that activate it. His is in no way an objective view whereby nature is separated from man, as in Western culture. The African artist is not concerned with nature as such but the forces which activate nature. He is not concerned with the things or Kintu—the Bantu word used by Jahn—of this world but the forces that are revealed in these things. Birago Diop expresses this beautifully in the following extract from his poem "Breaths":

Listen, more often
To things than to beings;
The fire's voice is heard
Hear the voice of water
Hear in the wind
The bush sob:
It is the ancestor's breath.
The breath of dead ancestors
Who have not left,
Who are not under earth,
Who are not dead.
Those who died have never left,
They are in the women's breast,
They are in the wailing child
and in the kindling fire brand.
The dead are not under earth,
They are in the fire dying down,
They are in the moaning rock,
They are in the crying grass
They are in the forest, they are in the home:
The dead are not dead.⁹

It was through sculpture that the African found a means of communicating with this world of the spirits. The sculpture provided a medium through which the African could appeal to and placate the spirits in order that he could in some measure contain and control the hostile and inexplicable forces that surrounded him. Thus the primary purpose and function of African sculpture was sacred and religious rather than aesthetic.

A religious concept provided the theory of which the African carved image is the application. A carved image, for the African, was neither an idol nor an image of God; it was instead, after proper ceremonies, the dwelling of a spirit.¹⁰ Ladislas Segy goes on to point out that in this way, "African sculpture was an 'instrument' by which the African was able to satisfy deeply rooted psychological needs."¹¹ In consequence of this it is not the artist nor the object of art itself which is of primary importance to the African but rather the forces that are revealed and can be activated through the sculpture.

Western man took a different course when he began to explore and observe nature from a more objective standpoint. Gradually he learnt how to control nature directly through understanding its laws and consequently controlling its effects to his advantage. The resulting conception of nature is inclined to the objective and material rather than the subjective and spiritual. The African does not dichotomize the universe into
two distinct and mutually exclusive spheres of the natural and supernatural as does the Westerner. This dichotomy is reflected in Western aesthetics, for once man's relationship to nature changes then so must his art, which is essentially a means of symbolically expressing that relationship, change. Western aesthetics arose through an awareness of the dichotomy between man and nature, the subjective and the objective, the form and its content. To the African there is no dichotomy and so, in a sense there is no aesthetics, indeed, no "art" as understood by Western man. This is not to say that within the history of Western art there are not some points, such as the high Middle Ages, at which there is a closer affinity to African art and the relationship of natural and supernatural, form and content, the artist and the community was not so distinct. However, the aesthetic concepts that originated in Greece and were reinforced and supplemented at the time of the Renaissance provide a direction to Western art and the growth of an aesthetic that is distinctly Western and that has developed from a cultural pattern which in many areas is quite different to that of the African's.

Art to the African is not the copying or creation of things - as it has often been to the European artist - but the disclosure of the forces in things. "The African poet does not express his relation to nature, but places nature (kintu) at his service, rouses it into life, steers and manipulates it". Jahn goes on to point out that Art to the African is never complete unless it is seen in action and only in this sense will it have complete Kuntu. Kuntu is the force, process or act of transformation whereby
the raw materials of life become Art.

For the European the difficulty of the African use of aesthetic standards consists in our inability to separate kuntu from kintu. We always see the 'work' as an object having meaning and rhythm. But the African sees kuntu in action: the poem as recited, the carving in its function as a stimulus in the worship of an orisha, the mask in the movement of the dance, that is, when it is Kuntu. In action kuntu is complete, and here kuntu is art and displays its efficacious value ... the standard of African aesthetics, kuntu and therewith art - is in Africa a force, and the force is accordingly the essential not of the art object (kintu) but of the exercise of art (kuntu). Art in Africa is never a thing but always an attitude or activity.14

Herein lies the fundamental difference between the 'aesthetic' of the two worlds. To the one the creative act results in an object of art, to the other the object of art has little meaning unless it is involved in creative action. One views the object created as an end, whilst the other sees it as a means to an end. To the traditional African an art that can be isolated in a gallery or enclosed behind a glass case is not art it is only a collection of things.

African art or more precisely African sculpture - since this is the major art form that dominates African societies - must therefore be seen as an activity that goes on; it has no end and no beginning, for when one figure wears out or is destroyed by ants then another is carved to take its place. There is no halt in the continuity of the action. The sculpture is an expression of the force and movement that is revealed in man and nature. William Fagg describes this as the 'Dynamism' of African Art which involves a different concept of being where the ultimate reality is energy, not matter, and 'being'
is a process rather than a state. Consequently plastic art is provided with another dimension: besides living in the three dimensions of space it exists in time. It is the existence of his art in time - during the moment of dance or the act oral or otherwise, of the rite - that is the importance of art to the traditional African, and if you enclose art behind a glass case then you take it out of time.

It is this emphasis on "interior forces" that frees African art from a strictly representational framework. The sculpture does not have to look like a figure; it is quite sufficient if it is in some way suggestive of the figure in general. The traditional artist is not concerned with the body as a naturalistic object. Griaule says that it is not a question of appearance but of content. The production of the sculpture is only preparatory, for it is a receptacle to be filled at the moment of 'designation'. It is the act of designation and the rites that follow which provide the content. Thus the sculpture needs only to be the simplest recognizable idea of a human figure or species of animal. This is what, Fagg calls "the minimal germinal concept of body". Indeed, the making of an exact likeness of a living person would not only be meaningless and inartistic as Fagg suggests, but dangerous as well, since the soul of the living person might take this as an opportunity to move to a new abode.

It hardly seems necessary to point out that there is a world of difference here between the approach of the traditional African to his work and that of his Western counterpart. The Western artist is often isolated from his community and concerned with projecting his own individual personality into
his work, whereas the African sculptor is an integral part of his community, working in relation to the needs and purposes of the community. "He regards his work neither as an extension of himself nor as an expression of his personality." Fraser emphasizes that the aims of the primitive artist are essentially those of his group and through a system of patronage he works for institutional ends and supports institutional authority.

The idea that the artist is rebellious, temperamental, and generally antagonistic towards his society is a Western notion that dates no earlier than the Renaissance. The primitive conception of the artist's role is altogether different. The objective and rational tendencies in Western man that eventually led him to gain control over nature have also led him to an awareness of the unique and individual aspects of his personality. Consequently the contemporary Western artist is a highly self-conscious individual who searches for his own individual means of expression, his own personal style. On the other hand the African carver is not self-conscious and is not primarily concerned with developing his own personal means of expression. He works within "a highly formalized, intensely local and very long established style." Consequently the African carver has a 'language of form' that is part of his tradition and which he unconsciously accepts and follows. However, it would be wrong to consider the carver as rigidly bound by style since the variety of styles in African sculpture bear evidence to the freedom of the carver as an individual artist able, within certain limits, to make alterations and innovations. But this does not alter the fact that the carver worked within a highly sophisticated and disciplined tradition.
which was completely counter to the processes that are often associated with the term 'primitive art' by the Westerner.

The intellectual and philosophical tradition of the Westerner and his reliance on the objective and material aspects of nature has confined the greater part of his art to a representational and naturalistic framework. It is only very recently that some forms of Western art have made a break from the representational. Although there are some rare exceptions the African carver has seldom had to work within the narrow confines of naturalistic representation.

There are no academic ties, in the European sense of the term, to realistic or scientific aspects of reality. Instead the component shapes of the body may be repressed, eliminated, stressed or enormously exaggerated in such a manner that a creative synthesis results.21

This is some senses gives it a tremendous advantage over much of Western sculpture which as, Fagg, says is "artistic or poetic only by virtue of its transcension of mere representation." The African sculptor does not labour under this burden and the appeal of his work in so far as it is an arrangement of plastic forms is direct and universal. It is this quality in African sculpture which makes Roger Fry have to admit that "some of these things are great sculpture."22 It is this quality that Fagg equates with the term 'poetic'.

It is poetic in the sense in which poetry is distinguished from mere verse or prose by the conveyance, through form or pattern, of something over and above the specific content of the words used in such a way that its effects are not wholly lost even on a hearer unfamiliar with the language in which it is spoken.23

It is this form or pattern or energy that communicates directly. Another word might be 'rhythm', for in everything the
African does he has an innate sense of rhythm. Senghor describes rhythm as "the architecture of being" and this harks back to the term 'kuntu' which Jahn uses to define the process of action or force which makes art 'live' rather than just 'be'.

Art to the African is life; it is a process as necessary as breathing and the idea of an art that can have a separate existence is meaningless. The idea of the artist as creator would also be confusing to the traditional African since he would never consider the act of carving a figure as an act of creation. Instead he is a craftsman engaged in the technical process of producing a figure that must conform to a set pattern already established. He will expect his son and his son's son - after a period of apprenticeship to do exactly the same thing, and so far as he is concerned that is all there is to it. This leads Schmalenbach to suggest that the African artist copies rather than creates. However, this only presents part of the picture, for the African works in relation to his cultural background and the beliefs inherent in it. And it is this background and the interior forces that operate through and upon the traditional artist that makes his act of reproducing a figure more than just a process of copying.

In these circumstances we can understand that the repetition of a form takes place in another atmosphere than that of our own. It is not a question of another person lazily copying a given model, but another person treading well known paths in order to create a work whose model has already proved its ritual efficacy. This fact becomes clear when the carving of the African still immersed in his traditional background is compared to that of the African who for some reason has become separated from his
beliefs and yet for commercial reasons continues to copy the traditional carvings. The results of the one are still often on the level of "great sculpture" whereas those of the other have degenerated to the point where they are no longer even examples of good craftsmanship. The other factor which arises out of this is that the traditional carver took great pride in his craftsmanship; his work was an act of love and coupled with this was an innate sense of three-dimensional form that may have developed over the centuries and has seldom been equalled anywhere else in the world. Because of this, established patterns are never exactly repeated and there is always allowance for the individual artist to make some variations within the general scheme.

However, this does not alter the fact that Western aesthetics should be applied with extreme caution, if at all, to African sculpture. Western aesthetics refer to and evolve out of the Western cultural background and consequently it can be grossly misleading to use this as a yardstick for evaluating and understanding African sculpture. Immediately the Westerner considers African sculpture in relation to his conceptions of the artist or the object of art itself, or the creative act involve, then he is making separations and using concepts which are foreign to the African. Schmalenbach comes to a similar conclusion:

He (the African) does not carve because of any feeling of a need to express himself, but in order to produce some useful object. The most beautiful work of art may well just be thrown away or destroyed after it has been 'used': a fate which countless masks and figures have suffered. Usefulness is all: everything finds its real fulfilment and its decay within this context.... That is why we
cannot admit here those alternatives which correspond to our modern way of splitting up life into various compartments - sacred or profane or 'purely' aesthetic.\textsuperscript{26}

Schmalenbach throws light upon a most important factor in all African art, - that is, its usefulness. To the African the object of art must be of some 'use'. If it does not fulfill some function, serve some purpose in or to the community, then it is useless and consequently meaningless. Griaule supports this idea when he says, "Up to a point, then, art in these societies is utilitarian; it is a 'crutch' put at the disposal of life."\textsuperscript{27} However, his phrasing suggests that there is a 'point' when the term "utilitarian" will no longer suffice. In the sense that the African carves a figure to help increase or placate a force then he is producing something which is of use to the community: just as the pot is made to hold water so the carving is made to hold a spirit. But this does not describe the total process nor explain the universal and immediate appeal that this sculpture can have upon those who know little about its original meaning and function.

The Universal Need for Expression

In this respect Schmalenbach was wrong and the African does carve because of a need to express and his sculpture can only be completely appreciated through an awareness of its dual function as both an expressive and an instrumental object. Robert Redfield describes these two aspects as the aesthetic and the iconic.\textsuperscript{28} The aesthetic meaning is immediately evident in the object itself whereas the iconic meaning involves an identification on the part of the viewer with the content of
human experience which lies behind the work of art and which the work of art stands for. This chapter has placed emphasis on the instrumental aspects and iconic significance of African sculpture; but at the same time this sculpture has its expressive aspects and purely aesthetic meaning. It is in this sense that it meets the requirements of Herbert Read's definition of art as a "symbolic language universally identical in its function". Read maintains that all art is universal in respect of its constructive aspects, that is in its formal qualities, such as proportion and harmony. It is these qualities, which can affect and move the viewer who may have little or no knowledge of the significance of the sculpture to those who originally carved them. Undoubtedly it was these universal formal aspects that influenced the French artists when, at the beginning of the century, African sculpture was first introduced and exhibited in Europe. Besides its formal qualities many writers suggest that African sculpture has an immediate appeal to the Westerner because the African conveyed the fear and insecurity of the unknown through his sculpture and this is a 'basic emotion' common to all mankind. This is the view that is exemplified by Claude Roy, in his book, The Art of the Savages:

We can easily forget the canons of Greek Sculpture. But can we ever forget that murmuring underground torrent which at any moment of our lives may swirl up around out knees, that secret dread whose cutting edge civilization has succeeded in blunting, but whose threat to us we can never entirely turn away from our hearts, save only by conquering for ourselves the immortality of the Gods.
Art as a 'Biological Necessity'.

However, the true wisdom of the African artist lies in the fact that he does attempt to describe, to analyse, to give reasons for his art. He speaks 'through' his Art and to speak 'about' it would be impossible since it is a natural process done without question. Art is part of life; it becomes an essential activity of living. Indeed it appears to be a biological necessity. It is in this sense that it was used by our earliest ancestors and is practised still in some parts of Africa. Art is not divorced from the process of living as it has become in Western culture where nature is viewed objectively and is something that can be directly controlled through the application of the machine. Art in this situation becomes divorced from life and society and it becomes a specialized area where a special group of things are produced which may mirror certain facets of "the Technological Society" but in no way help to actively shape it. Moholy Nagy was concerned with the inadequacy of this type of art and the need for what he called an art of 'biological necessity' that searches for the new dimensions of an industrial society. Hence the phrase 'design for life' and his idea of designing as an attitude (or activity?) rather than a profession.  In the Germany of the 1920's these ideas briefly took root and the result was the Bauhaus. It is interesting that Nagy's ideas about design appear to have some relation to the African's approach to art. Both are concerned not primarily with, in the one case the object of art, in the other the product designed, but in the attitude of mind that produces it and the relation
it has to life and society. The Bauhaus provided a completely new concept of art training which has unfortunately never been completely fulfilled in the West since the Bauhaus was broken up. Most Western art institutions are concerned with a series of specialized activities and the production or creation of 'things' appears to be all important. It is unfortunate that it is this concept of art training that was imported to Africa and like so many Western 'things' has been accepted too easily and uncritically by the African who, if he were more aware of the deep values in his traditional art, has the opportunity to formulate and carry into practice a philosophy of Art Education that would have in part, quite different directions to those in the West and would be the foundation for the synthesis mentioned at the end of the last chapter.
FOOTNOTES


11 Ibid. p. 4.


28 "Art and Icon", *Aspects of Primitive Art*, p. 17.


THE WOOD CARVER
The Attempt to Find a Synthesis

The problem of finding some kind of synthesis is central to the contemporary African artist. The example of Ben Enwonwu given in the last chapter is by no means an isolated one. Vincent Kofi in his Introduction to *Sculpture in Ghana* says,

If the Ghanaian artist rejects utterly, then it is himself he is rejecting; if he chooses to serve tradition unswervingly, then he chooses not to live in the present. There is a mean and by stressing an understanding of the traditional past and a practical realistic attitude of resolution with regard to outside influences we hope to have indicated a way of lifting the contemporary Ghanaian artist off the horns of his dilemma towards the further development of our art in the present and for the future.¹

Throughout Africa artists are concerned with the finding of this 'mean' yet it is obviously no easy task.

The art to be found in Africa today falls mainly into two categories. There is the traditional art that continues unaltered and a host of copied work that varies in appearance from the sleek and glossy ebony heads to the carvings that are 'very old' but which in fact have been treated through burning or burying the newly carved piece. Opposed to this there is the African artist who has totally rejected his past and is working in a completely Western idiom. His art is again in a sense copied and the results have no more vitality than those of his "traditional" counterpart who is hacking out the original carvings without being motivated by the original inner convictions or purposes. Between camps there are the few who have taken up the struggle and are genuinely attempting
to create an art for themselves that is "neither Eastern nor Western and yet a growth in the presence of both with its roots deeply entrenched in the soil of the indigenous past of Africa." Ulli Beier feels that it is through the African artist and his searching for this 'mean' that the hope must lie for an African identity, - a discovery of the new African personality. In talking of artists in Nigeria he says "Yet at no stage in the history of Nigeria has the artist had a more important function than now. For to define and create the Nigerian personality is to give meaning to independence." Beier obviously believes that the contemporary Nigerian artists can help to 'actively shape' their culture, are indeed the people most capable of doing this.

Thus the contemporary African artist finds himself in a state of suspension and the pull of the two worlds results in unremitting tension. He is told or he is aware that his only salvation is to return, at least in part, to his roots, to rediscover what is African within him. Yet this awareness - this knowledge of his position and resulting attempt to find the mean - involves processes which in themselves are completely foreign to his traditional way of thinking. He finds himself viewing art separately, apart from life, being aware of it himself consciously and of taking an objective view. Consequently his art must begin from a conscious intellectual search for a mode of expression. Once he becomes aware of the dilemma, once he says 'I must go back to my roots' then he admits a separation from his past and is aware of himself as an individual who through conscious intellectual processes has reached a decision about his art. Herein lies the paradox:
for the rational detachment attained by the African to see himself from this standpoint makes it all the more difficult for him to return to roots that rely on a subjective view of man and nature where the artist and his art are inseparable from the life and purposes of the community and where the mode of expression is unconscious and emotive rather than conscious and intellectual. Perhaps it is here that a reason can be found for the two styles of an artist like Enwonwu. He is deeply aware of the need to use his African past and yet at the same time his eyes and ears have been opened to Western art forms and ideas. He sees and thinks as a Westerner; yet at heart he is an African and there appears to be no way to relate the two. So he resorts to two different styles. Beier points out that this disconnection is not only brought about through 'seeing as the West sees' but is also caused by the whole impact of living as the West lives.

The modern African artist has little real connection with tradition. In school and in church he was taught to reject his culture as superstitions or even as evil. His very literacy has created a barrier between him and the guardians of tradition. He belongs to a social class that lives in different houses, wears different clothes, eats different food, practises different professions and believes in different gods.4

This has resulted in the new rising middle class of Nigerians educated in Western ways often showing hostility to traditional art forms. "They are trying to build for themselves a new life and a new society, and anything that reminds them of the old way of life which they are trying to leave behind is therefore suspect."5 Thus the impact of Western culture in the developing countries of West Africa has affected both the artist and his public. The only artists who can be
traditionalists in the true sense of the word are those who have had little or no contact with Western culture. For the majority who have had contact, their art must change just as their way of life and thought must change. But the question is, can the contemporary artist use or return to traditions that come from a past that he can no longer accept and that are founded on a system of spiritual forces in which he no longer believes? How can he as an artist be conscious of himself as a free thinking individual and yet relate himself to traditions that stem from an acceptance of art as a natural phenomena done by members of a group to fulfil community needs? These are the overwhelming problems that face the African artist today.

Unfortunately for many traditional artists, the effect of contact and the resultant change is often disastrous. This seems to occur particularly when the 'sympathetic' Westerner tries to help. This is aptly illustrated by the well known example of the Yoruba carver Bamgboye. As a traditional carver he carved masks and house posts that show the vitality and a feeling for form that is evident in so much of traditional African sculpture. In recognition of his skill British officials appointed him as a teacher of wood carving in a government school and obtained commissions for him from Europeans.

Seldom have good intentions been so frustrated; whether the necessity of passing on his techniques to school pupils rather than through the traditional apprenticeship system brought on self consciousness, or whether the change of patronage, from his own people to Europeans was the only cause, the fact was that all feeling disappeared from his work, it became "slick" and stereotyped and repetitive, and he ceased to carve the masks and house posts which had been his greatest achievement.
The introduction of European academic art that came in a late Nineteenth Century form has had an equally disastrous effect in the schools and training colleges where often 'sympathetic' Westerns encouraged and laid the foundation for a rigid representational 'text book' approach to art that has not changed since. Even now the kind of art training given to African art students is so Westernized and provides such little understanding or feeling for traditions that the result is that the student acquires a reasonable knowledge of technique and method and can paint or sculpt according to the particular style of his European instructor but his art has nothing to say and he himself has found no means of saying anything through his art. There are of course exceptions to this and, in Ghana, Achimota College was an example. As far back as 1927, G. A. Stenes who was then the art master talked of the 'civilizing process' that destroys the indigenous art and of the need for a better appreciation of traditional forms. The following extract from an Inspection Report in 1932 sums up the aims of the College at that time.

Achimota hopes to produce a type of student who is Western in his intellectual attitude towards life, with a respect for science and a capacity for systematic thought but who remains African in sympathy, and desirous of preserving and developing what is deserving of respect in tribal life, custom, rule of law. This African outlook is noticeable in the cultivation of tribal dances as well as in the study of the vernacular languages and the collection and investigation of folk lore.

Later in 1936 A. V. Meyerowitz built up a school of arts and crafts, his primary concern being to relate art teaching to Ghanaian art traditions. It is unfortunate that those excellent beginnings seemed to have faded out. Mr. Kofi
Antubam's fears in respect of the destiny of the Ghana Arts Council can be equally applied to Achimota:

But alas some quiet voice in Ghanaian public life has said 'African societies die young' and the fear of some people in the circle of the Arts in Ghana today is that the seed so admirably sown may well go the way most economic crops have gone in Ghana, perishing in their bud.8

Four Contemporary Artists

It is unfortunate but true that past attempts on the part of the Westerner to encourage the African artist or teach the African art student have proved, in the main, harmful rather than helpful; for they have resulted in a widening of the gap rather than a bridging of it. They have too often increased the temptation for the African to accept uncritically another culture and copy its art forms rather than forge new ones. In this respect the African artist who is making a contribution to finding a 'mean' and of forging new forms is the African who manages to keep his own integrity and whose contact with Western culture has not been so abrupt or complete as to destroy his own inner purposes.

Yemi Bisiri Akedanwaiye, a Yoruba brass caster, is an example of the African artist brought up in his own traditions who has managed to create new forms and a highly individual style of expression yet still keep in complete harmony with his traditional past. He produces brass figures used for ritual purposes in a secret society known as the Ogboni.

Akedanwaiye is of course a different person from all his predecessors. Although he did not go to school, he did get to witness a social revolution taking place in his country. He is the first Eledan to have travelled to
Lagos, to have seen the bright new life of the cities; he is the first to have voted in political elections; the first to have listened to the radio; he lived through the Nigerian struggle for independence. He must be the first Eledan of his line who has seen other ways of life besides the traditional Yoruba way; the first who had the chance to compare, the first who must have doubted the values of his own culture. Yet seeing all, and living a faster and less restricted life than his father, he has remained a fervent Ogboni; and it is the Ogboni cult and his traditional art which have brought him success, even wealth.  

A Ghanaian sculptor, Dr. Ampofo, is another artist who appears to have developed a style of his own within a traditional context. Dr. Ampofo was a medical student in Europe during the war years and it was chiefly during his stay in Scotland and Scandinavia that a deep interest in sculpture arose. On returning to Ghana he has managed to maintain a clinic for the sick and yet continue as a practising sculptor. This unlikely combination has proved highly successful and his sculpture is unmistakably African. His experiences in the West and knowledge of anatomy have helped him to develop a style of his own; yet it is a style which continues within the great tradition of African sculpture. Works, such as 'Call to Nation Hood', 'Skygod' and 'Puberty' are all figurative, yet they are not in the tradition of Western representational art. The forms and proportions are changed and distorted, yet create a sense of harmony simplicity and solidity. There is an emotive quality about his best work that imbues it with the same vitality that is the essence of African traditional sculpture.

Uche Okeke is a Nigerian artist who as a boy went to an English speaking school and later trained in an art school modelled along the same lines as the Slade School. In the
introduction to a recent collection of drawings Ulli Beier comments:

Rightly many young artists in Nigeria are now seeking inspiration in ancient traditions. The times are gone when it was considered African to compose market scenes, lagoons and palm trees and women carrying water pots on their heads. An artist like Uche Okeke has no time for this superficial approach. He states that the young African must study and understand his traditional art, and folklore 'in order to come to terms with himself.' For him, it is no matter of copying traditional Igbo masks or designs, but of understanding the deeper meaning of Igbo culture and art. He has gained security and certainty in his life from his understanding that Igbo culture was not a 'primitive' or 'savage' society but an organic and human system. Thus Okeke has attempted to use not only traditional figures of Igbo folklore but also to submerge himself in the fantastic and fear-provoking aura that surrounds and is part of this folklore.

Wilfredo Lam is an Afro-Cuban working in the West Indies whom Jahn describes as "the first great artist of neo-African painting". Lam is knowledgeable in the techniques and approaches to be found in contemporary Western painting and he uses this knowledge as a framework into which he weaves elements of fantasy and magic that stem from his past traditions. . . . here is an artist stimulated by Picasso, who encloses within the frame of Western classicism the attributes of the magic and poetry of the tropics. Painting in the West Indies, Lam thrives in an environment closely analagous to that of the primitive African, and the result is an art which combines in a single style the traditions of two wholly different worlds.

From the examples given it can be seen that some African artists are managing to bridge the gap. It may be only a very
small, tentative beginning but the search for new 'roots' has begun. There are some who like Akedanwaiye work directly out of their traditional background and for traditional purposes and yet are developing new forms and a highly individual style of expression. Perhaps in some cases the traditional artist has found more scope to experiment due to social and political changes that have weakened tribal custom and allowed him to work in an atmosphere that has provided more personal freedom to develop an individual style. However it does not seem that the real answer lies here. Fagg points out that it is wrong to think that many of the traditional artists working for strictly tribal purposes did not have an individual style. He describes his surprise at finding distinct individual styles amongst the traditional carvers in Nigeria, the Congo and Dahomey. Besides this fact the number of traditional artists who can still work for tribal purposes or for a secret society such as the Ogboni that Akedanwaiye works for are becoming fewer every year. The question must be asked as to what would happen to Akedanwaiye and his work if the traditional demand for his brass figures, and consequently the traditional reasons for doing it, died out?

The artists in which the real hope for the future lies are those who no longer create in the context of traditional purposes or for tribal needs and yet continue to create an art that has its sources in traditional forms. Artists like Dr. Ampofo, Okeke and Lam appear to be doing this. They have found sources of motivation for their work other than the tribal religions of their ancestors. Maybe in some the
desire to find new forms that springs from a search within themselves for a new identity has proved sufficient motivation in itself. Another main spring that is apparent in some contemporary sculptors like Dr. Ampofo is the desire to shape, - to produce a rhythmical combination of plastic forms that have an inner vitality of their own. Others like Okeke have deliberately and consciously gone back to the rich sources of traditional folklore and designs in order to apply the knowledge they have gained from a Western training towards furthering their own traditional heritage. An artist such as Lam has taken up the challenge of Western art and instead of allowing it to use him he has used it by bringing a new magic and vitality to the Western forms he uses, - a magic and vitality that is African.

Such artists have accepted the methods, materials, ways of life and thought that Western culture has brought to their country. They are consciously aware of themselves as artists and as individuals that must find a personal mode of expression. They have had to find motivations and reasons for producing art, and sources of demand for their work different to those of the traditional artist. This means that they have been forced to think and act and create from a standpoint that is very similar to the Western artist, yet their example has shown that this does not mean they have to be Western artists. The new position in which they find themselves does not automatically exclude them from using African traditions. It may exclude them from the original motivation and purpose of traditional art but it does not exclude them from the forms this art took or its vitality and felt emotional quality. Thus it would seem
possible that the modern African artist can still draw upon certain aspects of his traditional past and in so doing help to 'actively shape' his culture by creating new images that have meaning for the new African.

New Art Forms

However, the search for the 'mean' is no easy one; the problems are enormous and the artists willing and able to take up this challenge appear to be very few. Added to this is the danger of the contemporary African artist becoming isolated from his community and of his producing an art which is not part of that community. Art can only survive if it holds within it the capacity to be a formative agent and if it is a vital part of the community. It must mean something to the 'people'; it must be something they are constantly rubbing shoulders with, something which they recognize and accept as a valuable part of their lives - indeed as a necessity - and this of course was exactly the function of art to the traditional African.

The evidence of new art forms that fulfil the above purposes in the developing countries of West Africa is again small and yet there are signs; beginnings which if carefully fostered could provide the means by which the artist can continue to play a vital role in his culture and communicate directly with the people. There is, for example, the sign writer whose work is evident throughout West Africa. The lorries and mammy wagons must all have their lettered inscriptions which may vary from a single word such as 'Liberty' to a statement, - often aggressive in tone - such as "mind your own business". Because of this a distinct style of
lettering has developed which is full of decorative and flamboyant elements. But the signwriter does not confine himself to lorries and wagons; he has the other function of painting bar and shop signs. The results often have a quality entirely of their own in which there is none of the slickness and sophistication of the Western commercial artist. It would seem that a new and original form of mural painting could develop from these signs which are always painted directly on the wall. What does the African painter need of canvasses when his environment is one of sunlight and open air? In many African tribes there is a tradition of wall and house painting and decoration, and coupled with the emergence of the painted sign these would seem to indicate the possible development of a wealth of wall and mural painting with a distinctly African flavour.

Ulli Beier has described the growth of a new secular form of sculpture in Nigeria that is moulded in cement and is very popular amongst the new rising middle class. The sculptural forms and method are basically an extension of the African mud sculpture that was motivated by religious purposes. Thus a new sculptural form has arisen that is in demand by the community and which still embodies the power and simplicity of traditional sculptural forms.

There is some evidence of art forms emerging in some African countries which continues to be part of the daily life of the people; yet this evidence is very small and may easily be lost amidst the deluge of Western commercialism and cheap factory-made goods. One other positive factor is the continuance of so many of the traditional craft forms even
where there is an abundant supply of Western goods to take their place. The potter and weaver can still be seen even in the more industrialized urban centres of West Africa. Herscovitts points out that this can be attributed to the 'additive' way in which many Africans often accept and use foreign cultural elements.

Even where selectivity in the acceptance of cultural elements from outside is recognized, analysis of the contemporary African scene too often fails to grasp the fact that selection is additive and not necessarily substitutive . . . . In time they may come to displace the African-made products, but despite the severe competition of European machine-made goods, African weavers, smiths and potters are still active. 13

The Role of Education

On studying the positive signs it might appear that the possibility of an African "Cultural Renaissance" is just around the corner and the future is bright. Unfortunately this is not true; for although the signs are there, they are, as yet, very small and it might be a truer picture to see the handful of genuine artists and craftsmen left as fighting a losing battle against the negative aspects that grow in size and strength as the influence of Western materialism and technology continues to overwhelm the old culture and provide nothing substantial in its place. Jahn is hopeful: he believes that this neo-African culture is at hand; yet others like Turnbull are not nearly so optimistic:

The last strongholds of self respect, of morality, of belief and faith, are threatened by the cheapest and most tawdry offerings that Western technology can devise: a soul can be bought for a piece of printed cloth or for a packet of cigarettes. It would be ironical indeed if the
ultimate act of destruction, so carefully if unconsciously prepared for by the colonial powers should come from the Africans themselves, through an ignorance of the immensity of their own heritage.¹⁶

The last phrase is of particular significance. What can a few isolated artists do? What chance is there for the craftsmen or for the growth of new art forms if Africans themselves are ignorant of their own heritage, if it is something they feel lies disgraced and should be quietly and quickly forgotten? How can a new culture emerge if the roots for it must be sought in the preceding traditions of an older culture which many Africans now consider as inferior? How can an 'identity' be sought if the African derides that part of himself which must serve as the foundation for that identity? It would seem that this is the time to consider another factor which as yet has been omitted from this comparison of the two worlds and which may prove to be the key to finding a satisfactory answer to the above problems. The 'key' is, of course, education, for is not the very purpose of education to combat ignorance, and could not an African education reinstate the African's heritage and help to remove the very feelings of inferiority which a previous colonial system of education helped to foster?

In concluding it seems almost unnecessary to point out that if the contemporary African artist has been influenced by Western art forms then the opposite is also true. The irony is that Western art has been influenced by the traditional forms that the new class of Africans often despise, whereas the African in his turn has been influenced by a very representational, story-telling form of nineteenth-century European art,
made available in the form of religious pictures and text book illustrations - which the majority of contemporary Western artists would look on with contempt. In this respect although the conception of art is an entirely different one there are starting similarities between the form the art takes when a comparison is made between traditional art and the modern art of the West.

In 1939, in a talk on "Negro Art", Roger Fry said:

He (the Negro artist) has the same sort of control of expressive elements of plastic form as the musician has of the relation of notes. Much modern sculpture shows a heroic attempt to penetrate to this basic understanding of plastic form, but for the most part it has failed to create anything but more or less interesting decorative arrangements, and until life emerges from them, unmistakably and authentically as, it does so manifestly here, we must judge that they have not found the right clue.  

Since then it would seem that some Western sculptors have managed to find the clue and notable among these is Henry Moore:

For me a work must have a vitality of its own. I do not mean a reflection of the vitality of life, of movement, physical action, frisking, dancing figures and so on, but that a work can have in it a pent-up energy, an intense life of its own, independent of the object it may represent.

The phrases that Moore uses about the quality he wants in his work - e.g. 'pent-up energy and an intense life of its own' - are phrases that describes the essential quality inherent in all African sculpture.

The trends to abstraction and distortion found in both traditional African art and modern Western art were most effectively illustrated in an Exhibition that was arranged by the Institute of Contemporary Art, London, in 1948 and
significantly entitled "40,000 years of Modern Art". In the Introduction to the catalogue of the Exhibition Herbert Read pointed out that like conditions produce like effects and that there are similarities between the conditions of modern life and those of Primitive man:

To define these conditions would be a vain exercise of dogmatism, for they are archetypal, and buried deep in the unconscious. But generally they can be described as a vague sense of insecurity, a cosmic anguish (Angst, as the Existentialists call it), feelings and intuitions that demand expression in abstract or unnaturalistic forms.19

However if there are similarities in respect of this feeling of insecurity there are differences in the sources of the insecurity. The fears of the 'primitive' stemmed from the 'hostile forces' apparent in his natural environment whereas Western man is concerned with the threats that have originated out of the very "machinery" he has used in order to control his natural environment. The 'intense life' that many Western artists attempt to create in their work is a rebuttal against the artificiality and preponderance of intellectual activity that has accompanied the 'age of technique'.

The greater part of the chapter has been concerned with the conflict of the two worlds, but there is obviously a need to build bridges and perhaps it is the artist who has the tools most needed for their construction. A close cultural contact can be of mutual understanding and mutual benefit to both worlds and maybe it is as imperative for Western man to find some kind of synthesis that involves an awareness of what is lacking in his own culture and yet is very evident in that of the traditional African's as it is for the African
to seek a blending of the old and the new if he is to have a culture which he can truly call his own. In the lecture of 1939, already quoted from, Fry is very aware of the contribution that Negro art can offer to the West. What he calls 'sensibility' is obviously closely connected to the vitality and 'intense life' to be found in the sculptures themselves.

Can we conceive of a possible education which would leave such a sensibility as that shown by these sculptors intact, and yet achieve the clear logical organisation of the Greek mind, or on the other hand is there some fatal antithesis between the two modes of apprehending the outside world? If the former be possible we might, I think, look forward to a purer or more expressive visual art than any that has ever existed in the past, and in any case, if we find how to use it the contribution of Africa to the spiritual inheritance may turn out to be of the greatest importance as complementary to the preponderantly intellectual spiritual activity of our civilization.20

This would seem to be a masterful summing up of the situation. It is clear that if there is a 'fatal antithesis' then it could prove disastrous for both worlds. Herein lies the real challenge to the contemporary African artist who must inevitably be involved with this problem. If he can find a synthesis, then new avenues of expression may be opened up and new insights provided that from a cultural point of view would be of enormous value to all concerned. Fry points also to the wider dimensions of the challenge when he asks, "can we conceive of an education . . . ." A rephrasing of this question as it applies to the topic of this thesis provides the starting point for the next chapter.

Can we conceive of an education that would leave much of the cultural heritage of the African intact and yet achieve
the technical knowledge and organization of the Western world? If this question is to be answered then there has to be an examination into the education of the two worlds.
FOOTNOTES


5 Beier, *op. cit.*, p. 5.


19 40,000 Years of Modern Art, (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1950), no pagination.

THE BASKET MAKER
CHAPTER V. AN EDUCATION FOR AFRICANS

Education and Economy

In a previous chapter it was suggested that the two major factors which have caused rapid cultural changes and created inevitable disruptions to traditional social structures are economics and education. Before proceeding to a study of the latter it is important to note that these two factors are inextricably linked together in Africa where Western systems of economics and education arrived 'hand in hand'. From a personal point of view the African was very aware of this close connection and it became immediately evident to him that if he were to share in the white man's wealth and his superior social status, then the essential pre-requisite was to adopt his system of formal education. Education and 'getting a salary' or a better salary became synonymous, and this encouraged the spread of formal education. It also led to the unfortunate tendency of the African to evaluate education only in so far as it led to material gain. Kimble expresses concern in respect of the African's attitude towards money which provides a system of wealth that is 'impersonal' to the African and bears no relationship to traditional attitudes to wealth which were based on personal and family relations. Wealth in this sense was the shared responsibility of all concerned. A cash income introduced a foreign element that could not be incorporated into the traditional structures, and the African has not had time to evolve values centred around a system of individual morality and responsibility that would keep in check attitudes towards wealth which, from Western experience, appear destructive both to the individual and the society.
In a land lacking of chivalry (African folk tales are more often tales of cunning than of rescue and sacrifice) and producing no St. Francis of Assisi, no Florence Nightingale and no Albert Schweitzer, it may prove difficult to stop 'the root of all evil' from undermining the social structure. Already there are evidences that it is weakening it. To name only a few: the "dash" or commission, demanded for almost any service rendered, from the award of a multi-million dollar road contract to the giving of a bed-pan in a hospital ward: the propping up of ailing enterprises, both personal and corporate, with improperly acquired funds; the unethical use of hospital supplies and other species of Whiteman's magic (which may be one reason why even "le grand docteur" of Lamberene always carries his keys with him); and the reluctance of many African college graduates to take jobs that do not pay well, or promise to pay well very soon. May be none of these things greatly matters, as some of the new intelligentsia contend; maybe the foundations of African society are too strong to be undermined by a little selfishness and a little corruption. But if they are, they must surely be very strong - stronger than any that have gone before, whether in ancient Greece or medieval Ghana.  

At the national level, the relationship of economics and education is obviously of great importance and the concern of all the governments of the newly independent African nations. Large financial resources are needed to develop these educational systems - particularly at the secondary level - in order that the needs can be met of an expanding economy that is based on further industrialization and the supply of more Africans trained in more specialized areas. The 1961 Conference of African states at Addis Ababa placed financial assistance first on their list of priorities for education: "Such financial assistance is needed now and will be needed for many years to come until the results of this investment in education have lifted the economic development of these states to levels of self support."

Viewed in this way education is the primary factor in the expanding economy of the developing nations in Africa; and yet, at the same time, educational policies become very confined unless the economic system provides increased opportunities for those who have received some form of education. Consequently the two are inseparably bound together and the contemporary African considers education as the means of economic advancement at both the individual and national levels. Thus in a link between education and economy has helped create a social structure that equates prestige and social status with level of income, which in turn is equated with level of education. The attitudes, beliefs and values that will arise in this situation will be familiar to the Westerner but entirely alien to those brought up on the traditional African system of economy and education. In this respect, although this chapter will be devoted to the study of education, it must not be forgotten that the other factor that has been principal in the conflict of the two worlds (and will also be principal in its solution) is an economic one and that these two are closely interconnected.

Traditional Education and the Introduction of Western Formal Education.

Education to the traditional African is a natural and automatic process of growing up within the community, and there is little or no evidence to be found of any type of formal schooling. Education is a fairly rapid process of the child's initiation into society. He becomes part of a closely knit family unit that is in itself encompassed in the set patterns of ritual and custom of the immediate community, the
village and the clan. These social structures were essentially static and stable elements in an uncertain world where no link had been established between natural causes and their effects, and nature often appeared to be a hostile and uncontrollable force. In this situation the function of education is to maintain the status quo and transmit the set patterns already established. Philip Foster points out that education in this context acts as a homogenising force and is undifferentiated from the social structure as a whole, whereas the formal education introduced by the Europeans performed a differentiating process that constituted a totally new 'dimension of social structure'.

The pre-eminent function of the informal pattern of indigenous education was the transmission of an essentially common culture and the maintenance of social cohesion. Education performed a homogenising and conservative function while the alternative function of educational institutions in creating a criterion of social differentiation was non-existent or minimal.3

The political and social organization within traditional societies depended primarily upon sex, age and lineage. These immutable factors determined the individual's role within the society.

... in this context, one of the principal functions of Western educational institutions was not only to create new criteria of status but to allow individuals to bypass traditional modes of social mobility and substitute legitimation by achievement for legitimation through reconstruction of the genealogical past.4

Western education inevitably disrupted this system for it provided new opportunities and new roles and new methods of obtaining social status that did not rely upon predetermined
elements which are outside of the individual's control.
Robin Horton makes the following comment on Fortes' study
of Tale society which illustrates a status system common to
many traditional social structures:

In this system there are few possibilities of
achieving status: one just fits more or less well into
the roles ascribed by society as appropriate to the
current phase of one's life cycle. All movement from role
to role is determined by factors outside the individual's
control, such as increase in age and death of a parent.5

It was inevitable that the introduction of a school
system in West Africa broke down many traditional barriers;
yet the form which it took during the colonial era has created
a whole new set of unforeseen barriers. 'Achievement' is equated
with the certificate received at the end, and the ideal certifi­
cate is a degree. The passing of examinations becomes of
tantamount importance, for this is the way in to positions
of prestige and economic gain. In the colonial era this meant
clerical positions with the government or with commerce. A
clerical position or some minor administrative post meant a
cash return and the opportunity to identify more closely with
the colonial elite who acted as the African's 'reference group'.6
Otonti Nduka sums up the early educational objectives in
Nigeria in the following words: "If the primary aim of the
missionaries was to produce devout Christians, that of the
Government was to produce serviceable subordinates". It
would seem the government had far more success in recruiting
clers than the missionaries did Christians. The immediate
example of material power and prestige in the form of the
local District Commissioner proved far more persuasive than
any vision of the spiritual riches in the life hereafter.
Identification with the colonial elite meant not only social status in the form of a salary but also a particular, specialized form of occupation. Status in this sense came to imply a 'white collar job' and the man who took up these new occupations began to disassociate himself from his fellow men, and in a very real sense 'the pen became far mightier than the cutlass'.

Not only did the African become aware of a hierarchy of occupations but also he became aware that it was a certain kind of education that granted him access into that hierarchy. Foster makes the point that, in Ghana, academic education was vocational education, for it was the type of education introduced by the Europeans and it provided entry into government positions. Consequently it was this type of education, which had a theoretical and literary bias in both material and content, that the African demanded. It would appear that the introduction of formal education in Africa during the colonial period has been responsible for much of the social, economic and political charge on that continent—particularly in the last half century. It was an institution that was alien to the traditional social structure and conflicted with the purposes of indigenous forms of education that were informal and undifferentiated.

The possible conflicts between this informal education and school-centred education became apparent. Formal schooling may mean a new scale of values, leading to disrespect for old ways, affinity for urban life, and postponement of marriage. Rifts between mother and daughter and father and son were almost sure to arise. Increased social and economic independence of girl's conflicts with the traditional restrictive roles. The son's new knowledge and skills may not be appreciated by a father who lives in a more restrictive world, for the degree of receptivity varies greatly among family and cultural groups.
Moreover, the growth of an educated elite led inevitably to conflict with the traditional chiefs whose authority gradually diminished until its final demise which came, ironically, at the moment of Independence. Formal education became the principal opponent of traditional authority and social structure for it provided the African with an opportunity to break out of the enclosed and static world of his past. It created a form of social mobility based on occupation and income and it provided the impetus for Nationalist movements and the subsequent attainment of Independence. On the other hand, because of certain fixed relationships between education, income, occupation and social status, which occurred principally during the colonial era, the contemporary African regards his education only as a means to rather restricted ends. There is the unfortunate tendency to regard the 'end' of education as the attainment of certain paper qualifications which automatically provide the holder with an entrance into the elite group of educated Africans who stand apart (and often aloof) from the indigenous population. Within this group there is a rigid occupational hierarchy which is directly related to income. Thus education and income largely determine social status. In this situation there is a very real danger of education becoming a mechanical and routine procedure artificial in content and unrelated to the community at large. The school is relegated to the position of a clearing house for second-hand goods where an abundance of factual information, that may or may not have any meaning or significance for Africans, is handed over to an unsuspecting and often uncritical 'customer' whose interest lies not in the value of the goods
themselves but the elevated position and prestige that accompanies the mere possession of them. Paradoxically it was the Europeans in the developing countries of West Africa who often were the first to realize the dangers of the above system and made attempts to remedy the situation. In West Africa the Phelps Stokes Report is probably the best example of such an attempt. This report attacked colonial policies that either disregarded the African's traditions entirely and provided only subordinate positions for the educated African, or regarded the African and his society as inferior and barred him from any form of education that might give him any kind of equal footing with his white superiors. However, there is a third policy that attempts,

to combine the best elements of primitive life with the adaptable elements of civilization, good statesmanship demands the adoption of the third policy, which requires that the colonies and the people shall be ruled and developed according to the best experience of both primitive and civilized society.

The report consequently condemned the wholesale and unthinking transfer of Western education to African societies and advocated an education that was to be based on African needs and experience. It suggested that emphasis should be placed on a more practical education that provided agricultural and industrial training and retained the best qualities of indigenous life and incorporated them into a new cultural pattern. Thus the schools were to act as a bridge upon which traditional and Western patterns could meet and intermingle. Because of this belief in 'African schools related to African needs' both the Phelps Stokes Report and the later 1925 memorandum of the Advisory Committee advocated a policy of
what is now popularly termed 'Africanization'. However, it was the Africans themselves who opposed this policy when attempts were first made by Europeans - during the colonial period in West Africa - to Africanize the curriculum and the exam system and place emphasis on agriculture in rural schools and trade training in urban areas.

Foster points out that the African (in Ghana) at that time had very good reasons for rejecting this; for it was interpreted as an attempt to keep the African subservient to the European elite group whereas his aim was access into this group and equal status with his 'masters'. Foster also makes the point that Independence has not altered this attitude and that the new African elite still identify themselves (unconsciously perhaps) with their colonial fore-runners, and their desire to avoid sudden educational change causes them to pay lip service only to the idea of Africanization.

A peculiar ambivalence characterizes educational development in the post-1951, Gold Coast and Ghana. At one level, political leadership has stressed the necessity for an educational system which would reflect 'African nature and substance' while at the same time there has been some reluctance to allow either the structure or content of the educational programme to deviate very markedly from that prevailing in England. The European 'image' does not disappear with the achievement of Independence, and such radical changes in educational structure and content as have been broached since 1951 normally reflect immediate political goals.

Foster offers a penetrating analysis of education in Ghana and the historical reasons for its present form. It appears that Ghanaian schools are predominantly copies of their Western counterparts and that Africanization and the consequent concept of the school as a cultural meeting place
has had little or no effect. In this respect what is true of Ghanaian education can be applied to education throughout most of West Africa, particularly in French West Africa where the Colonial policy was one of assimilation and the African was to become a Frenchman through contact with French institutions and an education completely divorced from the indigenous background.

However the fact that the African has so often rejected the idea of Africanization does not necessarily mean that this is wrong or unsuitable for Africans; rather it may reflect upon the dubious system of values that many educated Africans have acquired through being divorced from their cultural heritage. Moreover, change is the keynote in Africa today and attitudes to Africanization are changing, for what was once rejected outright by Africans has now become the major educational concern of both politicians and educators throughout West Africa. Whereas formerly the call for African schools related to African needs was voiced by Europeans it is now being voiced by Africans; and although this may still be at the stage of 'lip service' there are already indications - the rewriting of textbooks and introduction of African history into the curriculum--that this will gradually be put into practice. Indeed it has to be put into practice if a Neo-African culture is to be sought and the 'African personality' realised. It is evident that education has been a vehicle of social change in Africa and there is no reason why it will not continue to be so. Education must now reorientate itself to African cultural patterns in order that a relationship results that is constructive rather than destructive in intent.
African educators now appear aware of this and they view education not only from an economic standpoint and the need to develop an educational structure that will meet the demands of industrialization in a developing country, but also from a genuine concern about the content of education. Lewis stresses the importance of a close examination of all studies presently taught:

We need to examine the purpose of the studies which, it is assumed, should be taught. The admission of any subject matter to the curriculum should be made dependent on the way and on the extent to which it puts the learner in possession of his cultural inheritance, enables him to enter into, and contribute to contemporary life and qualifies him for contributing to the future.\(^\text{11}\)

Similarly a major concern of the delegates at the 1961 Conference of African States was educational content and the following recommendation was made:

That, as the present content of education in Africa is not in line with either existing African conditions, the postulate of political independence, the dominant features of an essentially technological age, or the imperatives of a balanced economic development involving rapid industrialization, but is based on a non-African background, allowing no room for the African child's intelligence, powers of observation and creative imagination, to develop freely and help him find his bearings in the world - African educational authorities should revise and reform the content of education in the areas of curricula text books and methods so as to take account of African environment, child development, cultural inheritance and the demands of technological progress and economic development, especially industrialization.\(^\text{12}\)

When judged from this viewpoint the Phelps Stokes Report appears to be a document far in advance of its time and its recommendations have been re-echoed again and again. The Addis Ababa Conference being no exception. If the Report
had a failing it was not in its recommendations but in the lack of consideration of the problems of putting these recommendations into practice. It was not explained how 'the best elements of primitive life' were to be sorted out from the rest and how these would then be incorporated with 'the adaptable elements of civilization'. In this connection Margaret Read's criticism of the 1925 Memorandum applies equally well to the Phelps Stokes Report when she stated that the Memorandum; "implied that all that was needed was an intellectual and ethical sieve whereby - some means not specified - the best could be filtered out."13 Viewed in this light a redirection or reshaping of educational content must first involve study and research into the different aspects of the traditional structures. Read stated in 1950 that the answer is in inter-cultural investigation where parallel studies must be made of English and indigenous cultural traditions. Such research in traditional cultural patterns, particularly at an inter-cultural level, is of first importance if the African is to remain aware "of the immensity of his own heritage". All such research might contribute either directly or indirectly to the re-orientation of African education in terms of material and content. From this might also develop a new concept of the school as not so much a bridge or clearing house but a generating house providing a foundation and impetus for ideas and actions essential to the development of an African cultural renaissance.

Avenues of research - in terms of traditional culture and its relationship and contribution to newly emerging cultural patterns - that have direct application to African
education are numerous and have only just begun to be explored. Art education and its significance in relation to this inter-cultural problem is the topic of this thesis; but it must be stressed that this is only one aspect of the educational spectrum, and although its importance may be considerable in relationship to other subjects and the general 'atmosphere' of the school, a re-evaluation of subject matter, material and educational method must go on at all levels if new 'cultural roots' are to be established. For example, research must be conducted into the relationship of Western educational method and psychology to the African scene. Traditional attitudes to children in respect of discipline, child rearing and 'expected behaviour' must be explored. In many traditional societies the child was not expected to ask questions of his elders and might be 'severely beaten' if he persisted. What effect does this have upon the relationship of pupil and teacher in African schools? Burns discusses the effect of the lack of constructional toys in the traditional environment and the subsequent need to emphasize "representational and constructional tasks in the general education of African children". Adolescence provides another area in need of research. Margaret Mead was the first to point out that adolescence may not be a universal phenomena and that Samoan children do not go through an adolescent period. Answers must be sought as to how true this is of other African societies, particularly in relation to effect of urbanization, occupation and income, and the result this has on family structure and the relationship of parent to child. There is a vast area of perceptual, conceptual and maturational differences between
African and Western children that must be explored if African education is to serve African needs.

The purpose and methods of traditional education make for another fruitful area of study. Traditionally, the learning process relied primarily on the capacity to imitate and consideration must be given as to what effect this has upon learning processes in formal schools. What is the place of rote and drill methods in African schools and to what extent does 'the desire to imitate' carry over into the schools and create a passive and uncritical approach to subject matter.

Musgrove suggests that it is this capacity for imitation that makes the African child 'supremely educable' which in some senses may be true, yet he fails to connect this with his later criticism of the passivity of African students and their dependence on the teacher. Identification with parent and family is another important factor in traditional education which becomes, "a joint enterprise in which parents are as eager to lead as children are to follow". Questions must be asked as to how such a spirit can be engendered in the schools and how new loyalties may be developed between both parent and child in their relation to the teacher and the school.

Co-operation was another essential of traditional education and the child learnt through active participation in the community. Fortes in his 'classic' study of Social and Psychological Aspects of Education in Tale Land remarks that in Tale society:

Every child is expected to be eager to know and to do as much as its social space and psycho-physical development permits. Hence, though it is clearly recognised that knowledge, skill, and capacity for social adjustment grow cumulatively, the Tallensi have no technique of isolating
a skill or observance from the total reality and training a child in it according to a syllabus, as, for instance, we train children in dancing, the multiplication tables or the catechism. Tale educational method does not include drill as a fundamental technique. It works through the situation which is a bit of social reality shared by adult and child alike.18

This association of education with community and social needs and learning by actively doing has been a major concern of Western education. Dewey would applaud Fortes picture of the little girl, who, in accompanying her mother to the well with a tiny pot to carry water makes a real contribution to a real need of the household. Maybe this is very pertinent for education in Africa today which appears to suffer from too much attention to theoretical content and affords little opportunity for practical activities and tasks that relate to community needs.

Consideration must also be made of the subject matter of the curriculum and the conceptual patterns African children may bring to bear on the subject matter due to a different orientation towards it. Musgrove, in his article entitled "Education and the Culture Concept", emphasizes the need for the teacher to take into account the differences in the social inheritance of the English and the African child. The teacher must be aware of this and alter his approach to the teaching of a particular subject according to the conceptual needs of his pupils. Musgrove provides an example of this in connection with the concept of 'forces'. In an English school the teacher needs only to illustrate truths, such as the theory of gravitation, whereas in Africa he must prove them:
Like all pre-Newtonian scientists since the time of Aristotle, my pupils want the earth's movements and suspension explained in terms of physical agencies - if only air pressure - pushing and supporting. They want the proofs and evidence which Descartes demanded of Newton, but which no English school boy would think of demanding.

There is a great deal to be done in reconsidering the subject matter itself and approaches taken in the teaching of that subject matter to African children. This is obviously a pressing need when a secondary school boy who has carefully drawn diagrams of electrical circuits in his physics notebook has no idea of how to carry this into practice even to the extent of joining two wires together; or when it is possible, "for an African to graduate with a B.A. knowing practically nothing about the intricate political and social structure of his race . . . ."

The Contribution of Art Education

It has already been indicated that African educators are, themselves, aware of the urgent need to revise and reform the content of education and that this must be done in relation to African needs. These cluster around two poles: the one involves the economic, technological and industrial needs of a developing country: the other concerns the wider cultural needs of a people in danger of being isolated from their past, living a rootless existence in an alien world.

It is with this latter cluster of needs that the purpose and significance of art education is chiefly identified. In other words, the most important function and real justification for an art programme in African Schools lies in the contribution it can make to a continued awareness of the heritage of the past
and a creative foundation to a new and vital modern African culture. If one of the aims of education in Africa is to ensure a cultural continuity, then art provides a link in the sense that tradition values, beliefs and attitudes were expressed in and through Art. The traditional African 'spoke' through his art and it is an understanding and appreciation of this art, its meaning, function and forms, that can provide the contemporary African with a 'continued awareness of the heritage of his past'. Also if the African school is to be 'a generating house of new ideas and actions' then the art programme must be a significant part of the school curriculum since it is through his art that man creates meaning and order out of the 'raw materials of life'. Viewed as a creative and symbol making process, art provides man with the means of interpreting this world. If the African is to interpret his world and create a new and meaningful cultural pattern then it is this creative and symbol making process which must be encouraged in the schools in order that new ideas and actions may emerge. Again, inter-cultural understanding is essential in Africa where the two worlds have met 'face to face', it is essential if the conflict is to be resolved. In the sense that art is concerned with universal values and can communicate with people over vast spans of time and across political and social barriers, then it becomes an important medium of inter-cultural understanding. It would appear, from previous chapters, that those who principally hold the keys to a cultural Renaissance are the artist and the education; and this has great significance in so far as the place and purpose of art education is concerned.

An art programme that is planned in accordance with the
above principles has an essential and dynamic part to play in the curriculum of African schools. It could make a unique contribution both to putting 'the learner in possession of his cultural inheritance' and also enabling him to 'enter into and contribute to contemporary life', and to the future.

At present art education occupies a neglected and peripheral position on the curriculum and is often overlooked by principals and educators since they are uncertain of its purpose and unaware of the role it could play in relation to the needs of a nation in transition. It is imperative that those concerned with revising the curriculum include art education in their future plans. If its true value and function is not recognised then there will be little chance of education achieving those aims which relate to the wider cultural needs of the contemporary African.

However, such a concept of art education does not only affect its future place in the schools but also provides a basis for evaluating the type of art programme and art teaching that is already in existence. If this is done then it becomes immediately apparent that - with a few isolated exceptions - current art programmes in African schools bear no relation to the function and purposes suggested here and that if educators were to take these programmes as a guide for future plans (and unfortunately this is what they are doing in many cases) then they would have every justification for relegating art education to the bottom of the heap.

Art teaching in African schools presently suffers as much from a lack of any purpose as it does from misconceptions about its aims and purposes. Teaching is usually of a very
uninspired kind and it relies on imported ideas, imported subject matter, and imported materials and equipment. Unfortunately art teaching was introduced into West Africa at the turn of the Century - a time when it was at a very low ebb in Europe. Mechanical procedures and exercises in copying and exact reproduction became the norm, and the accepted ends of the art lesson. The pupil who could make the best copy was the best artist and unfortunately this attitude to school art 'stuck' and is still the accepted procedure in the schools today. The art lesson is devoted to repetitive and uninteresting exercises that create boredom and apathy in the students.

Lewis sums up the situation when he says that

despite brilliant work done by isolated individuals in music and in the visual arts, much of what passes for art instruction is but imitative repetition of the most uninspired practice still current in Britain. Local arts and crafts in so far as they are introduced into the classroom, with brave exceptions, are treated without understanding of the nature of their roots in indigenous life. Furthermore there is a museum complex about much that is attempted.

Hence, when traditional art forms are introduced into the art lesson they are treated as evidence of a dead culture and students' reaction to a piece of African sculpture is often one of uneasy amusement. Little use is made of the African environment either in terms of material or subject matter and there is an unnecessary reliance on imported materials and equipment. A more extensive examination of these problems will be made later when examples can be provided from the current practice of art education in Ghana.

In conclusion it would seem that this is the moment to
refer back to the original question posited in the Introduction to this thesis:

What is the purpose and significance of Art Education for Africans today?

The answers suggested here can be summed up in the following three statements:

1. Art Education can provide a medium for appreciation, understanding and retention of the African's traditional heritage.

2. Art Education can provide an avenue for creative expression where, in symbolic terms, the 'two worlds' can be reformed, remoulded, recreated in terms of a viable modern African culture. A corollary to this is that the creative flexible mind is the one that has the best chance of adapting itself to the new demands of a rapidly changing environment.

3. Art Education can provide a means of inter-cultural understanding in the sense that art is concerned with universal values and experiences common to all cultures.

The central aims of African art education must grow out of an awareness of the above if it is to fulfil its true functions in the schools. Yet it cannot be over-emphasized here that the above three statements do not necessarily provide a definitive ideology for art education in African schools; but they are the most significant and in the context of this thesis will be used as a basis for further consideration in the remaining chapters. In this respect it is now necessary to illustrate how the above ideas could be put into practice within a specific cultural setting which, in this case, will be that of Ghana.
FOOTNOTES


7 Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 33.


10 Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 186.


18. Ibid., p. 27.


THE SPINNER
CHAPTER VI. ART EDUCATION IN GHANA: THE PRESENT

Art Education and the School System

The intention in the remaining chapters is to give a brief overall picture of the educational system in Ghana, to describe some of the approaches taken in art education within the schools and to suggest ways in which the approach to art education suggested in the previous chapter can be put into practice in Ghana. Finally, these ideas must be considered in relation to their effect upon teacher training and the Art and Craft syllabus in the schools.

In Ghana, the first six years of education are undertaken in the primary school. This is followed by a further four years at the middle school which performs the dual function of acting as a feeder institution for the secondary school and also of offering a terminal course for those who are not suitable to continue into the secondary schools. There are hopes that eventually secondary school candidates will be selected from the final years of the primary school, in which case the middle school will have a very similar function to that of the British Secondary Modern School. The present middle school already does perform this function to the extent that it provides an alternative terminal course to that of the secondary schools. Also a few secondary school candidates are already being selected directly from the primary school.

Access into the secondary schools is of first importance to the students; and consequently both primary and middle school curriculums have been directed towards the requirements of the Common Entrance examinations. This means that academic courses are predominant, and there is a constant pressure on the
student to pass examinations and direct his attention to those subjects which are of primary importance in these examinations. There are a variety of secondary schools which in theory (except for private ones) all enjoy the same parity of esteem; yet in practice there is a definite hierarchy with government and assisted secondary schools at the top. The latter most closely resemble the British Grammar schools. Within these schools academic courses are taken which lead to the general school certificate. A good standing in the G.C.E. provides access into the university either directly, or indirectly through the sixth form.

It is apparent that the educational system within Ghana is geared towards academic courses and the passing of examinations. Foster points out that there are very good reasons for this, since this was the type of education that provided the Ghanaian with the economic and occupational opportunities provided by the colonial elite. Unfortunately such a system does not appear to encourage or provide much scope for an art programme. In Ghana it is often hard to find evidence of any kind of art programme in many of the schools.

The schools themselves vary in construction and distribution. Generally speaking the South as opposed to the North, and urban as opposed to rural areas provide more schools with more equipment and facilities. Within the larger urban areas the school buildings may be permanent cement block structures although many are based on the more traditional building methods where laterite is packed on a wooden frame or used in blocks to form the walls over which a thin cover
of cement is added. In the North many primary schools are comprised of no more than a number of upright poles around and on top of which has been attached the woven matting made from the Guinea corn. Money for materials and equipment is extremely limited and in some school rooms there will only be the barest essentials: stools, tables, a blackboard and a desk.

In the past, funds for the art materials were supposed to be made available by the local Education authorities or by subscription from the school children:

Under these conditions some schools were able to make use of the opportunity to the best of their ability; some, and these form the majority, were unable to conduct art and crafts lessons for certain reasons. The Ministry of Education has now assumed responsibility for providing the materials for art as part of the new scheme to supply textbooks free to schools.1

However, the materials often do not appear to get to the schools and because no allowance is made for 'crafts' in some senses the schools are often worse off than they were before. Also the allowance for art and crafts for primary schools suggested in the Ministry of Education syllabus appears extremely limited when considered as the year's supply of materials for 40 - 50 pupils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQUIPMENT PER PRIMARY CLASS PER YEAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Newsprint - 1 ream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) 4 tins of powder paint at 4/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Grey/brown mounting paper 1/6th ream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Cartridge paper - 1/6th ream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Brushes - 2 dozen 12s &amp; 2 dozen 6s One third cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The 4 dozen to be shared between 3 classes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In some cases any allowance meant for arts and crafts is conveniently forgotten and used by the head teacher or principal for what are considered to be more important needs. This is particularly so in respect of the secondary schools. Time allotted for art and crafts in the primary and middle schools varies. In the first four classes of primary school two periods of 25 minutes for art and one period of 55 minutes for what is termed 'Handwork' is suggested. In later classes and in the middle school this time allotment is cut down to 30 minutes for art and 50 minutes for handwork. Unfortunately these suggested time allocations are seldom used for art and crafts since there are no materials available, the children appear disinterested, and the teachers are uncertain as to how to teach art and crafts:

Many teachers openly confess that they are incompetent to teach art and crafts; some assert that they are not convinced of its value and therefore use the allocated periods for other purposes they consider more valuable to the children; others say that they do not get the right encouragement from their Head teachers. The teachers' inability to conduct art and crafts lessons, even in primary schools where no specialists are required, may be due to various causes. This lack of confidence in themselves may be primarily due to the nature of the art education course the teachers had during their training college courses. It is probable that some never had any art education at all. I am aware that almost all the training colleges do some art, a lot of which involves the making of visual aids, but these activities are different from art education. Art Education courses in training colleges ought to equip the teacher with ability to conduct, with some measure of confidence, art and crafts lessons in primary and middle schools.
The Training Colleges and the Art Tutors.

In respect of teacher training colleges and the schools a distinction must be drawn between the art teacher and the art tutor. The art tutor is the term given to the teacher on the staff of a training college who is responsible for the art education courses. The art teachers are those within the school system who have some qualification to teach children art. The teacher training colleges draw most of their students from the final year of the middle school after the secondary school students have already been selected out in the second year. The training college provides a four year course leading to what is known as Certificate A, which qualifies the holder to teach in either primary or middle schools. There are also shorter two year post-secondary courses for students who have already taken their G.C.E. subjects at the secondary schools. The training colleges are, of course, closely linked to the needs of the primary and middle schools; consequently the position of the art programme in the schools is reflected in the training colleges and vice versa. In a few colleges there may be no art programme at all and no art tutor to teach art and crafts, whilst in others where there is an art programme its scope is limited by the same factors that operate in the schools. This becomes a vicious circle where training college students find little opportunity or interest in art teaching since there appears to be little need for it in the schools; and on the other hand there is little evidence of art education in the schools because the teachers have not received an adequate knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, art and crafts in
the training colleges. When art tutors and teachers are asked why this sad state of affairs has arisen the following answers are the ones that constantly recur in their replies:

1. Because of lack of materials and equipment.
2. Because of the fact that art is not a subject required for final examinations. (In the training colleges there are certain subjects that are externally examined at the end of the course and it is this external examination that decides whether the candidate passes or fails the course. Art is not a subject that is externally examined.)
3. Because of apathy and disinterest on the part of students and administration.
4. Because other subjects must take precedence in relation to the needs of a developing country where industrial and technical skills are in demand.
5. Because of unsuitable and insufficient training in the teaching of art and crafts at the teacher training level.
6. Because of the use of syllabuses for art and crafts in schools and training colleges that are out of date and unsuitable in the light of present African needs and experience.

There is no doubt that any teacher attempting to set up an art programme in a Ghanaian school is faced with tremendous difficulties; but many of these are no different to those faced by teachers the world over. Problems concerning insufficient materials and equipment, teacher training in art and crafts and old and outmoded syllabuses have a familiar ring and
are problems that crop up in most discussions on art education. The concern as to what values and aims the art programme has in relation to the school curriculum within the setting of a technological society is central to the Western art educationalist and is echoed in number 4 of the above answers given by Ghanaian art tutors and teachers. How can any art programme succeed if it does not have a 'raison d'être,' a philosophy and aims that justify its existence and provide the teacher with a purpose or 'cause' for teaching art in the schools? It will be evident later that both syllabuses and teacher training in respect of art and crafts are in urgent need of reappraisal; yet this cannot and will not occur unless the simple question of 'Why teach art?' is not first considered. Many Ghanaian art teachers and tutors appear unaware that the key to their problems lies in an evaluation and restatement of the aims of art education in relation to the cultural needs of Ghana 1967. They often confuse the issue with facts that are not entirely relevant. The fact that there is little or no money provided for art materials and equipment is a burden but it can often be overcome by using local materials which involve no cost. This is particularly true of Ghana and those parts of Africa where there is a rich and varied supply of natural materials suitable for art and crafts. There are, for example, the clays and the earth colours, the weaving materials and vegetable dyes, many of which have been used for centuries by the traditional craftsmen and women and yet seldom find their way into the schools. It is disappointing to find on entering an art room in training college that weaving is confined to a set exercise using strips of coloured paper woven on a paper base and
that the small woven dishes have cardboard bases on which is stamped a Dryad Kit number. Yet in the market the women will be carrying their wares upon their heads in baskets of different shapes and sizes woven from the fibres and woody plants indigenous to the particular locality. The use of natural materials that are abundant in the different regions of Ghana is not only necessary from the point of view of cost and lack of imported materials but also for relating the art programme to the experiences and environment of the Ghanaian. Not only does such an approach help to make the art programme meaningful and interesting to the student but it also provides an avenue whereby he may keep in contact with part of his traditional heritage. Because of this, an extensive survey of materials indigenous to Ghana and methods of using these in the schools will be attempted in the next chapter. When the Ghanaian teachers complain of the apathy and disinterest of the students to the art lesson they often mistakenly think that this springs from art not being an externally examined subject,—the secondary schools are the exception to this,—whereas in fact it is primarily a question of the present content of the art lesson. No student can be expected to be interested when confronted with only imported materials, foreign techniques and methods and monotonous and mechanical procedures. No Ghanaian student, no student anywhere for that matter, can be expected to be anything but apathetic when asked to weave with paper strips or work with an imported craft kit or laboriously paint in an alphabet drawn out on graph paper according to set instructions. Art in primary and middle schools is chiefly comprised of a subject called 'pattern
making'. Although the present syllabus suggests that too much pattern work is done 'whilst picture making is neglected' a large proportion of the outlined syllabus is devoted to pattern making. It would appear that pattern work is popular because it provides an endless series of mechanical procedures which involve little effort on the part of the teacher but at the same time keep the children busy. (Fig. 1 and 2). Here, for example, is the suggested outline for pattern work for Term I of primary class I:

a. Strip pattern, plain-painted in two colours on paper folded into four strips.

b. Strip pattern as above but add texture in two alternate strips.

c. Writing pattern in folded squares. Paper folded into 12 squares. One letter fills two squares. Two or three colours.

In so far as pattern enters into the training college syllabus it has recently been criticized in a memorandum made by a group of art tutors in the Ashanti region:

PATTERNS: What is needed is a new approach and a more generalized course in basic design which call for exploration and initiative on the part of the tutor and the student. It was pointed out that when patterns are dissected and analyzed they become too stereotyped and artificial, resulting in repetition which becomes a bore to both tutor and student.6

In the training colleges a subject which often seems to become associated with the art programme is that of 'apparatus making'. The art tutor is often expected to teach this subject and in some cases students are given the idea that this provides the chief function of art and crafts. Apparatus making involves the construction of models, posters,
**DIAGRAM XI (a)**

**PAPER FOLDING FOR PATTERN WORK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folding for line pattern</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folding of paper to get stripes running down or across to guide Primary Class 1 and 2 in painting and doing line pattern. The folding here is done according to the size of drawing paper usually used by the children 15 x 10. The width of the shapes produced can be increased or decreased according to the size of paper.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagram</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Class 1</td>
<td>Primary Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fold into two</td>
<td>Fold into four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fold into two</td>
<td>Fold into four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folded lines with brush and paint these spaces with different colours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folded lines with brush and paint using different lines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DIAGRAM XI (b)**

**FOLDING PAPER INTO BIG SQUARES (12 BIG SQUARES ACCORDING TO THE SIZE OF PAPER USED)**

- **Figure 1**
- **Diagram from Art and Crafts Syllabus for Primary Schools 1957**

- **Figure 2**
- **Diagram from Art and Crafts Syllabus for Primary Schools 1957**
diagrams and charts to be used as teaching aids. Students training to be teachers naturally see more purpose in being able to produce diagrams and models than in doing the kind of 'art and craft exercises' described above. A visitor asking to see the craftwork done in the training college will almost inevitably be shown a collection of books and albums that have been bound by the students during the art lesson. Bookbinding appears to be a central feature of the crafts and there is often little or no evidence of pottery, modelling, weaving or carving—all of which are traditional crafts in Ghana. Presumably bookbinding qualifies for such an important place in the art programme because it involves a series of mechanical steps and it was a feature of the early nineteenth century form of art education that was imported into Ghana and has never been questioned or reconsidered in the light of African needs and experience. Also bookbinding, like apparatus making, can serve some immediate 'use' within the school as is illustrated by the following story taken from an article entitled, "The Problem of the Art Tutor":

The head of an institution once asked an art tutor, 'When are you going to stop those experiments on clay and do some bookbinding? Or is it not in your syllabus?' He knew very well that the syllabus included bookbinding as one of the crafts in all four art classes at the training college. Was he trying to tease or was he, as I suspect, trying to force the tutor to turn to bookcraft so that his old books might be repaired—to make the art students do something 'useful'.

This also points to the problem of apathy and disinterest that is apparent on the part of principals and administration as well as the students themselves. This is often a much harder problem to combat since misunderstanding and disinterest
from these sources makes the art teacher's task of providing an interesting and stimulating programme for his students a far more difficult one. Another incident taken from the article quoted above serves to illustrate this:

One day an art tutor told me this story about the head of his institution. He said that one day when students in the fourth year were free, he asked them if they would come with him to find some clay, process it and do some experiments, so that when they went back to teach they would find it easy to work with clay. The students agreed and gathered at the college gate while he went to inform the Senior Housemaster. When he returned to the gate the students had gone back. He told me that he went to them and asked them why they had left. They replied that they were waiting by the gate when the principal came up and asked where they were going. The principal listened to their explanation and then said, "Go back to your cubicles or classrooms and do something better. Don't you know your final examination is just around the corner?" Should he just give up and decide, regretfully, to ignore the incident and return to his house? If he returned to his house without explaining the situation, without trying to make the principal understand his own belief in the value of what he had been about to do with these students, then he lacked self-confidence and confidence in his profession. Surely he should try and persuade the head of the institution, and the other masters, that his cause is worthwhile and important. Sometimes it is good to be stubborn, to refuse to give up,—especially when we believe our cause to be worthwhile.8

Obviously it is the art tutor who takes the latter approach who has the best chance of convincing the disinterested or hostile principal or Education Officer in the worthiness of his cause; but the first prerogative is that the art tutor himself 'believe his cause to be worthwhile.' This implies that the art tutor must be convinced in his own mind that art education has a purpose and function to fulfill within the educational framework of a newly emerging nation such as
Ghana. It is chiefly because so many Ghanaian art tutors and teachers are uncertain of the 'worthiness of their cause' or mistaken about its purpose and function that results in the above picture of Ghanaian art education being a rather gloomy and depressing one.

The above quotation also provides a typical example of a training college principal using the final examination as a measure for judging the relative value of subjects on the curriculum. Art is not a subject for final examinations for either the middle school leaving certificate or the Certificate A in the training colleges. This generates the attitude that art is a subject not worth studying and the conclusion many art tutors and teachers come to is that all would be solved by making art an examination subject. The fallacy in this argument is, of course, the assumption that the end of education lies in the passing or failing of examinations. To most 'educated' Ghanaians it would be sheer foolishness to think otherwise since it is very evident that the passing of examinations automatically provides the successful candidate with more money and prestige. In Western society there are other ways of gaining these ends; but in Ghana this is virtually the only way. However, no art programme at the school level that is conceived as 'an avenue for creative expression' can be fitted into the narrow confines of an examinable subject. This is well illustrated in Ghana itself where, in the secondary schools, the sterility and unimaginativeness of "G.C.E.Art" can be seen at its worst. Nor can such an art programme be justified on the grounds of the possible vocational opportunities and ensuing financial reward that it may bring.
The Need for a Reappraisal

Consequently the problem is not only one of believing in the 'worthiness of a cause' but it also needs to be a 'revised' cause that must inevitably cut across existing attitudes to art education. Although there are some art tutors and teachers who talk of the need to reconsider, the majority continue to evaluate the art programme in relation to set attitudes towards education that were established in the Colonial era and still appear to hold true. Until there is a general willingness and desire for change then these attitudes will continue to remain inflexible and there will be little opportunity for new causes to flourish or for a more vital and meaningful pattern of art education to appear in Ghana. As a result the remaining chapters are concerned with hypothesis to the extent that they suggest an approach to Ghanaian art education that is not currently in practice and rest upon aims that do not appear to underly existing art programmes. But although the subsequent proposals stem from an idealistic conception of the future of African art education they are not necessarily impractical and concerned only with an educational Utopia. Change is an essential characteristic of the newly developing African nations, and although education may appear to be an area in which change is slowed and sometimes opposed by the educated African himself there are already signs of what one might call a 'new wave' in educational attitudes. This is exemplified by the 1961 Addis Ababa Conference and the numerous discussions on what the content of education should be in relation to present needs. Considerations
of this kind will eventually shape the future course of art education and within Ghana the voices of change can already be heard although in reality the changes, as yet, may not be seen. An example of these 'voices' is the previously mentioned memorandum discussing the need for a new Art College Syllabus that was composed by a group of Ashanti Art Tutors in 1964. Mr. Boateng reported that at a meeting held to consider the present syllabus,

We all agreed that in response to modern forces and new conditions in our fast developing country, Art Education has in recent years taken on deeper meaning and broader purposes, and is in fact moving from a peripheral to a central position in education. Never has the necessity for art in the education of our students-in-training been greater, and I think the appearance of a new syllabus could hardly have been more timely.9

Although in reality there is still no new syllabus, and the National Teachers Training Council to whom the Memorandum was sent has made no effort to take any action, it is at least heartening that some teachers are talking about 'deeper meaning and broader purposes.'

Another reason for believing that the proposals made here may have some practical value in the future is that they were arrived at through research done in Ghana whilst working with groups of Ghanaian children. The writer was working in conjunction with students taking a post-graduate teacher training course in 1965-66. Consequently many of the ideas about materials and methods have been tested and found successful in practice and a large part of the ensuing text is comprised of extracts from notes and reports made during this research.
Some Proposed Aims for Art Education in Ghana

It is apparent that African education has reached a stage where evaluation is being made of present systems and new directions are being sought. The future direction for African art education suggested here is based upon aims that were arrived at in the last chapter. In relation to Ghana the method of achieving these aims can be summarized as follows:

1. An appreciation, understanding and retention of Ghana's traditional heritage can be achieved through:
   - The application and use of Ghanaian materials and methods to art and crafts in the schools. 
     e.g. (A) The natural materials that can be found in the immediate environment and used to draw, paint, model, weave with, etc.
     (B) The methods—skills and techniques—used by local craftsmen in producing both their tools and the finished craftwork.
     (C) The cultural materials available through the traditional sources of stories, designs, music, dance, etc.

2. The creative ability to express, interpret, resolve the conflict of the 'two worlds' and the individual's relation to it can be encouraged through:
   - The adaptation of the above materials and methods in relation to experiences derived from contact with Western cultural patterns and the requirements of a newly emerging cultural pattern that
must encompass all the new elements and experiences that occur through changes in the social, economic and political structures and the introduction of factors such as urbanization and industrialization. This implies that a creative approach must be encouraged where freedom is allowed and stimulation given to the child in order that he can express himself and his relationship to the two worlds.

3. Intercultural understanding will naturally occur within the practice of an art programme constructed upon the framework outlined above.
FOOTNOTES


9 Boateng, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
THE WEAVER
(a) The Natural Materials

Paper

There is often a shortage of paper in the school and supplies for the art room may be non-existent. If there is any money available, then large sheets of plain newsprint are the most suitable and economic paper for primary and middle schools. Cartridge and coloured papers are useful but usually very expensive or unobtainable since they have to be imported. "But it is far better to have daily work done by the young children on cheap newspaper than, for reasons of economy, to give out one sheet of cartridge per term and to expect a masterpiece."¹ Stanfield suggests that ordinary printed newspaper can be used and young children are not bothered by the print. In his book, *Art for African Schools*, there are some excellent illustrations of bold and imaginative work done on old newspapers by African school children. He also suggests that cement-bag paper provides a strong durable paper suitable for larger frieze painting and mounting pictures. The bags contain several layers of paper which should be carefully separated and cut to size.

"When the weather is fit take your class into the school compound and let them draw on the ground."² Stanfield describes how ordinary market trays can be used as receptacles for mud and sand which the children can use in the classroom for modelling and drawing. Another possibility is to allow the children to paint and draw directly on the walls and floor of the schoolroom. Larger murals can be tackled in this way or
each child can be allotted a particular space on wall or floor. If earth colours are used then these can easily be washed off and the space used over again.

**Earth Colours**

The colours can be easily obtained from runnels in the ground where rain water has drained, or by digging, or exploring railway cuttings and building sites. There are two ways of refining the raw earth colour. Water can be added to the raw earth colour and then it can be sieved (Fig. 3). The other method involves drying the earth colour before it is subjected to crushing, grinding and sieving to turn it into a powder. Water and/or starch can then be added. These colours are opaque and provide an excellent range of WHITES, GREYS, YELLOWS, BROWNS and REDS (Fig. 4).

BLACK: A good black may be obtained from charcoal and this can be added to the range of earth colours to provide darker tones. Grind and sieve the charcoal into powder form and then mix with water to the right consistency. Cassava starch can be added to make the colour fast.

**Colours Obtained from Plants and Vegetable Roots etc.**

RED: can be obtained from the seeds of the Bixa Orellano. The plant is bushy with large leaves. The seed pods are hairy and a rich brownish red in colour. Fresh seeds can be used directly on paper to give the colour or they can be crushed and a little water added and the colour squeezed through cloth. It must be kept in a sealed bottle. (Fig. 5).

YELLOW: can be obtained from the root of Curcuma Domestica. The root, light yellow in colour and often juicy, is obtained in the local markets where it is largely sold for its medicinal
FIGURE 3
CHILDREN SIEVING EARTH COLOURS

FIGURE 4
CRUSHING AND DRYING THE RAW EARTH COLOUR
value. The root can be applied directly on paper as a crayon or crushed and squeezed through cloth or chopped and boiled with a little water (Fig. 6).

BLUE: A permanent blue can be obtained by mixing together washing blue and cassava starch. The important thing is to get the right consistency of powder, water and starch.

The above provide the three primary colours and can be mixed with white clays to create opaque tints or can be used separately as transparent washes or stains. When mixed they do not provide true secondary colours but other leaves, roots and berries can be used to obtain these. A soft green may be obtained from crushing the leaves of the coco yam or paw-paw. An endless variety of reds and browns may be obtained through boiling and crushing leaves and seed pods. The addition of a small quantity of caustic soda often helps to draw the colour out. Stanfield also points out that, "Many flower petals and leaves can be pressed directly onto the paper where the colour is required. Loofah flower petals give a yellow colour, balsam flower petals a pink or purple. Leaves of the cotton plant yield a soft reddish green." The turmeric root (curcuma domestica) and the fresh annato seeds (bixa orellano) can also be used directly on the paper.

Weaving is a craft found throughout Ghana and many of the local weavers know of plants that produce colours. In the Ashanti region the 'Adinkra' cloth is dyed a russet brown which is made from the bark of the kuntunkuni tree. Another bark from the tree known as 'Badie' produces a thick black dye used to stamping the designs on the Adinkra cloth (Fig. 7). The weavers at Wa in the Northern Region still dye their local
FIGURE 5
RED OBTAINED FROM THE SEEDS OF THE BIXA ORELLANO

FIGURE 6
YELLOW OBTAINED FROM THE ROOT OF THE CURCUMA DOMESTICA
spun cotton, and a shrub locally known as 'Shim' produces a bright blue, whilst the seeds from the 'Bagaloa' give a deep black when soaked in water to which iron slag has been added. The Nigerian tie and dye cloth is of a deep indigo colour produced from fermenting the leaves of the shrub known as 'Elu'. In addition to these, tins and packets of dyes are obtainable from the local markets. These can be dissolved in water and provide an excellent substitute for imported coloured inks and water colours. Stanfield also describes the use of whitewash in conjunction with the market dyes and washing blue.

**Starch**

Cassava starch can easily be bought in localities where it is used for washing purposes. It can be prepared by crushing the cassava to a pulp either by pounding or by passing it over a rough surface, adding water to it, sieving, and then leaving the mixture to stand for a while so that the actual starch settles at the bottom of the container. The starch is prepared by being boiled with water,—when the starch is dry it must first be soaked by mixing with a little water. While on the fire, the starch must be stirred until the colour changes from white to a dull translucent mixture. Dextrine, which is a very strong starch, is prepared by first heating or roasting the powdered starch before water is added and then boiled as above.

**TREE GUM:** is obtained from the Anogeisis Schimpera, a large tree with the gum oozing from the bark. The gum is dark brown in colour and often gives the tree trunk a dark appearance although the original bark is grey in colour. It is obtained by scraping or cutting it.
from the bark of the tree and then refined by adding water and boiling. Sieving usually follows to remove the foreign matter, especially the scraps of bark. It can be used in connection with kokonte, earth colours and clays to provide a paste for the base of a mosaic or for plastering or painting on a wall.

Raffia

Raffia may be obtained from the local market, or, preferably from the raffia palm itself. The young centre branch of the palm is taken and the individual leaves are removed; then either by hand or with the use of a knife the membranes of each leaf are stripped away. This is the raffia and it needs only to be laid out in the sun to dry before it is used. N.B. A variety of yarns and string can often be obtained from the local market. These come in coils or rolls and are particularly suited for the warp thread if a long continuous thread is needed.

Fibres

Fibre is obtained from treating either the elongated leaves or the woody stem of certain plants. The long fibrous leaves of the sisal plant provide a good example of the former whilst varieties of the Kenaf plant that can be found in Northern Ghana have an outer 'bark' which is composed of long fibres that may be stripped from the central stem (Fig. 8). There are two methods of extracting fibre from plants:

1. Beating - this is the process of beating the elongated leaf or bark that contains the fibre until the fibre is left exposed.

2. Retting - this is done by immersing the plant in running
FIGURE 7
THE ADINKRA CLOTH

FIGURE 8
STRIPPING FIBRE FROM THE KENAF PLANT
water, preferably a river, for two to four weeks, removing the plant from the river and stripping the bark from the woody stem. The bark is then washed in the water until only the fibre remains. In this case, the non-fibrous materials of the plant rots during the time it is immersed in the water, thus freeing the fibre.

There are a variety of plants growing in the 'bush' from which fibre may be extracted besides the two mentioned above. These fibres can be used for numerous activities in the schools, including basket weaving, cloth weaving and brush making. Cotton is grown extensively in the Northern region of Ghana and this is ginned and spun by the women and woven into a rough cloth by the men.

**Piassava**

This is obtained from the raffia palm which usually grows along rivers and in swampy places. The palm may be felled and the branches cut. A ladder may be used if the palm is short and only the branches are to be cut down. The piassava is the soft inner wood of the branch which after it has been allowed to dry, can be cut into strips and has constructional properties similar to that of balsa wood. (Fig. 9) The outer part of the branch can be stripped off when freshly cut and is a strong pliant material used in basket weaving. When this is allowed to dry small slivers may be cut from it and used to pin the softer piassava strips together.

Many interesting things can be made from the piassava branches, for example, toy cars, lorries, animals and other
things (Fig. 10). Serving as a soft wood, young children can carve many interesting shapes from it. In Northern Ghana the stalk of the Guinea corn can be used in a similar way to that of the piassava.

**Clay**

Clay is a material common throughout Ghana and many villages have a local source of clay which is used for making pots. The colour and composition of these clays are varied and quite often they are used directly without any mixing or refining. Without refining, the clay is usually very coarse and has a large amount of foreign matter in it, but this provides less chance of distortion and cracking during the firing. These unrefined clays are very suitable for young children and there is no reason why every primary and middle school in Ghana could not have a supply of clay obtained from the particular locality without incurring any expense (Fig. 11).

**Miscellaneous**

Wood is another material that is readily at hand in most parts of Ghana and the softer types that can be easily cut and carved into are suitable for children to work with. A variety of woods, stalks, and leaves can be collected and used for weaving and constructional purposes. Bamboo, cane and stalk of the Guinea corn have many applications to the craft lesson. Tuber roots such as the cassava and coco yam are far superior to the 'European' potato for print making because they provide larger surfaces and their compact structure stands up much better to repeated printings. The various shapes and colours of dried seeds and beans provide interesting materials for mosaic exercises (Fig. 12).
FIGURE 9
CONSTRUCTING WITH PIASSAVA

FIGURE 10
A TOY LORRY MADE FROM PIASSAVA
FIGURE 11
A PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASS WORKING WITH CLAY

FIGURE 12
A MOSAIC OF SEEDS AND BEANS
The above is not intended as a complete list of natural materials suitable for art and crafts in the schools. The materials available vary from region to region and it would be possible for each teacher to explore and utilize the materials available in his locality and structure his art programme around these.

Drawing Instruments

Charcoal

The charcoal can be prepared in two ways. In either case, sticks from the bush, usually of the Hibiscus (malvaceae) family, are cut. In the first method, the sticks are put in a tin, the top or lid of which has holes in it, and then fired either half-buried in the ground or under a pile of wood. In the second method the sticks are loosely burnt by being put under leaves and earth and then this is set on fire. With attention both methods can be successful but care should be taken against the burning sticks being turned to ashes. The most suitable kind of wood for charcoal making can be found through experimentation. The 'sata dua' is a plant which grows in the coastal region and makes excellent charcoal sticks for drawing.

Wax Crayons

A crude form of wax crayon can be made from candles which are always available in Ghana. The candle is melted in a tin and powder colour added and stirred in. This mixture can be poured into the hollow stem of the paw-paw, one end of which has previously been embedded in some clay (Fig. 13). After the wax has been allowed to cool the paw-paw stem is carefully broken open and the coloured crayon removed.
Pens

Feather quills can be easily made from the tail feathers of the chicken or some of the larger wild birds. There are a variety of reeds and stalks which may be cut and experimented with for drawing purposes. "Bamboo can also be used for pens. Sticks should be cut about the size of a thin pencil. When dry the ends should be shaped into a nib with a sharp knife."^4

Brushes

Stanfield describes the manufacture of a stick brush: "Cut a living stick about 8 inches long and chew or hammer the end half inch (or less) until the fibres resemble hairs. The handle should be long especially for painting big designs, as it enables the painter to work at a distance from the picture which is better than being too close. You should experiment to find which plants make the best woods for brushes."^5 Smaller varieties of brushes can also be made by sticking quill feathers into a length of thin green bamboo which serves as the handle. Stencil brushes can be made from lengths of rope or fibre such as the sisal which is tightly bound for the handle and cut flat at one end. A method of making brushes from fibre or animal hair is described below:

Coconut fibre, the hair of the bull's tail, horse's tail or pig's tail will do for the brush. The only disadvantage with that of the pig's tail is in its shortness thereby making it rather difficult to handle when it is being attached to a stick to be used as a brush. The coconut fibre should be taken from the coconut husk and beaten (Fig. 14).
FIGURE 13
POURING COLOURED WAX INTO THE PAW-PAW STEMS

FIGURE 14
BRUSHES MADE WITH COCONUT FIBRE AND ANIMAL HAIRS
Method:
1. Cut the sticks into convenient lengths and shape in the form of a brush handle.
2. Take the fibre or hair and cut into convenient lengths, allowing an extra inch for attachment to the handle. This allowance will be the part to be covered by the ferrule.
3. Attach the fibre to the stick by means of an adhesive and leave to dry. The fibre or hair can also be bound to the stick with very fine wire or twine.
4. Attach the soft tin, which is to serve as the ferrule, by means of an adhesive and leave to dry. The ferrule can also be attached to the handle by punching small holes and using very fine nails.
5. Polish the wooden handle with sandpaper.

Below are some examples of ways in which the aforementioned materials were used with groups of children during a series of experimental art classes at the Cultural Centre, Kumasi, Ghana. The quotations come from a report made by the students who conducted these art classes.

Wall Painting:
A group of 12 primary school children were asked to paint a market scene on an inside wall that had been previously whitewashed. The children helped map out an area on the wall approximately 24' x 2'6" and each child was then allotted a space in which to paint the people they had seen in the market (Fig. 15). A previous discussion with the children had highlighted the various sections of the market and the things that would be seen there. The children prepared their own colours
using the range of earth colours in addition to ground charcoal for black and washing blue. The colours were mixed with a little water and cassava starch. The starch acted as a binder and made for easier application of the colour on to the wall.

The use of local colours for the murals was commended. The real quality of these colours, however, can only be noted after the work has dried. It was thought valuable that children could see their individual work in the group mural. Examples of these can be done in schools and covered over later if so desired. It was found interesting when one child abandoned the brush and used his fingers to level up the thick earth colours on the wall.

Use of Earth and Vegetable Colours

As experiment was made to find the reaction of pupils, who had previously used powder colour, to a situation where the only colours they had to work with were those that could be obtained from the earth, seed, roots and leaves. The children first collected these materials and were encouraged to freely experiment by crushing seeds and leaves directly on the paper and drawing with roots and charcoal. This generated a great deal of enthusiasm and wonder at the colours that appeared on the paper. Below is a description of a lesson that developed out of this experiment.

Demonstrate the use of various colours by applying them freely to create patterns.

Tell the story of the Sasabonsam and the Dwarf who fought over a pot-full of food. Describe the Sasabonsam as very tall, long haired and possessing a tail and two horns whilst the Dwarf is short, bushy haird, and has crooked legs and protruding eyes. Set pupils to draw the whole story or any part of it. Allow free application of the colours.

Exhibit the work for children to see. The colours used proved more successful than was expected and most of the children thought there was no difference between these
and the imported powdered colours. However, I had a feeling the starch used was too much and this tended to weaken the strength of the colours. Two children complained the colours had spoilt their work and that they did not like the results. 8

Claywork

Clay is a material that is not often used in the schools yet it is one that children usually enjoy. The teachers sometimes say that it is the children themselves who dislike it because it is so messy. However numerous exercises involving clay were carried out at the Cultural Centre and there were only one or two isolated examples of children complaining of the mess. Experiments were made in decorative tiles, slab work, moulded shapes using the round forms of the calabash as a mould, coiled pots and free modelling (Fig. 16). Below is a report on a lesson in which primary school children were asked to model their "classroom teacher" and allowed to incorporate other materials as they wished.

Children went about their work with great enthusiasm. Four or five of them modelled more than one figure and two, on their own initiative, added dishes and pipes. For the head, the clay was rolled into balls either in the palm or on the floor before being placed on the boards. There were however two exceptions where round heads were made directly on the boards. Most children used bits of clay to build the noses and eyes and showed ignorance of clay as a plastic medium. Some children scratched or drew in the features of the face with sticks or embedded stones and seeds to represent the features, especially the eyes and the teeth. Two children used twigs for the hair and three others used flat sticks as improvised modelling sticks. Modelling sticks were not provided by the teacher. All children appeared to be satisfied with the results of their work. 9
FIGURE 15
A MURAL OF A MARKET SCENE

FIGURE 16
MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS MAKING COILED POTS
Weaving

Experiments in card weaving and weaving on simple wooden frames were done by primary and middle school children respectively (Fig. 17). The children were encouraged to use local fibres and string and thread obtained from the local market. These were dyed by the children themselves and the primary group spent some time extracting their own fibre for card weaving.

The teacher discovered that the children had no knowledge of the way raffia is extracted from the raffia palm. All along, they have been using ready-made raffia sold in the market so this seemed a novelty to them when the teacher demonstrated the method of extracting fibres. The first day's attempt to remove the raffia from the raffia palm leaves was not successful. Only about two or three could get the knack of doing it. This was because they were confused about which side to cut and the teacher had to show them the right side on many occasions. Also, in cutting to the thin membrane, which is the raffia, the children could not control the knives and had to cut through the leaf. All this will require a lot of practice. The next attempt may prove successful.

With the removal of fibre from the sisal hemp. The children thought by beating hard they could get the fibre out. This rather resulted in the breaking of the sticks being used for beating. There was intense interest shown in this type of work especially when the fibre showed. One child removed a fibre and showed it to the teacher (Fig. 18).

Mosaics

Although stones and broken crockery are sometimes impressed in the mud walls of the houses mosaics created some difficulty for the children at first, since they had no prior knowledge or experience of this technique.

The children were busy but on the whole I had a feeling that they used the technique of drawing with the mosaic materials. Most of them just lined up pebbles or seeds in
FIGURE 17
WEAVING ON A WOODEN FRAME

FIGURE 18
EXTRACTING FIBRE BY BEATING THE SISAL LEAF
a way akin to crayon or chalk drawing without any consideration for design, grouping, or arrangement.

As binders, the egg and the plaster did not prove as good as the others. Kokonte, the tree gum, starch and white clay combined, appeared to be the ideal binder as kokonte and starch alone or starch and clay tended to crack on drying.11

The middle school children involved in the above experiment were encouraged to continue and later exercises proved more successful. They began by collecting their own materials which included pebbles, wood scraps, and seeds. The seeds are of particular interest since when dried they are very hard and come in a variety of sizes, shapes, colours, and textures. These proved to be an ideal medium for mosaics. Cards, pieces of asbestos and wooden planks were used as board and the adhesive was made from local materials involving no expense. (Fig. 19).

 Printing 1

An effective method of producing monoprints was developed by using earth colours, charcoal and washing blue mixed with starch spread or rolled onto glass (Fig. 20). Small end cuts of glass used for louvre windows can often be obtained from building sites. There follows an account of this method being used with a group of primary school children.

Demonstrate the mixing of the various colours with starch and how to apply them on the glass. With your finger draw a shape on the glass and make prints for all to see. This is done by pressing newsprint over the impression made on the glass.

Group children into three and give each group an already prepared paste to be spread on the glass. With their forefingers they should draw on the glass various figures.
FIGURE 19

NATURAL MATERIALS AND ADHESIVES
BEING USED IN A MOSAIC

FIGURE 20

A STARCH AND EARTH COLOUR MONOPRINT
The topics may include 'Okomfo Anokye,' 'My best friend' and 'a woman selling at the market.'

Assemble the work for children's comments. Children were busy throughout being fascinated about the effect of this simple printing method. Even the three children who had, in the previous week, asked to be given work in clay gave up that idea after the initial stages of printing had been demonstrated. The starch used as a binder proved really suitable. However, where the paste was too liquid or there was too much applied the prints were not as successful as those which had less paste. In the latter, interesting accidental textures were created.12

This approach was later developed to the point where silk screens were pressed directly on to the impressions. When dry, the cassava starch acted as a natural blocking out agent and prints could be made from the silk screen.

**Printing 2**

The process of printmaking can provide an endless source of delight to children. Various printing exercises could help to bring alive the subject of pattern making instead of it being the mechanical and uninteresting routine that might result from following the outline suggested in the current art and crafts primary and middle school syllabus. Nearly any surface that is coloured and printed will result in an interesting pattern or texture and the variety of leaves to be found in tropical Africa are no exception to this. The soft wood of the gourd and the large tuber roots of the yam can be cut and gouged into and patterns created from printing these. Below is the account of a lesson using coco yam and crumpled paper as a medium to print with (Fig. 21).

Demonstrate how to fashion the coco yam or yam for use as stamps to print with and show how paper is crumpled so that the end can be used for printing.
Give children practice to work freely on loose sheets of paper allowing them freedom to choose their own colours.

Hand over the pamphlets made in the previous lesson and ask pupils to use the prepared coco yam and the crumpled paper to print on the pages.

The children enjoyed all the types of printing presented. Various patterns were created but almost all the children used the crumpled paper for one colour and used the coco yam stamp for another colour. Children's enthusiasm for the work was so great that some of them ended up by soiling not only their pamphlets and their work but also spilling colour over their bodies and uniforms as well.

(b) The Methods

Traditional craft forms that can be found throughout Ghana are, Pottery, Spinning and Weaving (baskets, matting and cloth) Woodcarving (figures, stools and utensils), Leatherwork, House Building and the art of the Blacksmith. (See illustrations between chapters.) Other craft forms are associated with more specific areas such as the leather work of the North and the printed cloth and the lost wax casting (gold weights) of the Ashanti Region. It is impossible to give a full description here of these various craft forms or of the tools, knowledge and skills possessed by the local craftsmen and women; but the point must be made that all of this is of tremendous importance to art education in Ghana. Not only does a knowledge and appreciation of these craft forms help to create 'an awareness of traditional heritage' but at the same time they can make a real contribution to the art programme itself. A few isolated examples of how this can occur are cited below.

In Ghana there are some soft woods (piassava and osese) that can easily be carved and cut into by children. However the problem is that there are seldom any suitable knives or
cutting tools available. But a trip to the local blacksmith may easily remedy this. Knives and cutlasses are often manufactured by using the band metal that is strapped around wooden boxes and containers. A simple knife suitable for school use can be made from the thinner varieties of this band metal (Fig. 22). The metal is flattened and straightened out and cut into suitable lengths. One edge is then ground down to a cutting edge and the upper portion can be converted into a handle through binding with cane or adding wood or old tyre rubber held together by rivets in the form of ordinary nails. Middle school children should be able to manufacture these knives themselves with a little advice from the blacksmith. Such a project gives the children an opportunity to become acquainted with a traditional craft, talk to the craftsman himself and involve themselves with the production of a set of craft knives that can be used for a variety of activities including carving, construction and printmaking. Similar visits to other craftsmen would result in the children gaining a better understanding and knowledge of the traditional crafts, particularly if they can apply this knowledge in the art lesson. An introduction to weaving and the making of simple looms might be facilitated by seeing a local weaver at work and studying his methods and the construction of his loom.

One of the problems of claywork in the schools is that the finished pieces do not get fired and consequently fulfil no function and soon get broken. Sometimes the excuse is made that there are no kilns, yet in Ghana the potters have never used kilns and use instead an open firing method. The finished pots are allowed to dry out in the sun and then placed
FIGURE 21
MAKING COCOYAM PRINTS

FIGURE 22
KNIVES MADE FROM BAND METAL
near a small open fire where they are slowly revolved and moved closer until this process of gradual heating has removed all the moisture and prepared the clay body for contact with the sudden heat that occurs in the final firing. This final firing takes place in an open space and ash from a previous firing is first spread in a circular area. The pots are carefully stacked within this area in three or four layers with firewood carefully placed between each layer (Fig. 23). The pots are placed so that their openings are facing into the centre of the fire and the final effect is of a pyramidal shape around which more firewood is closely packed. This is then set alight and after the pots have been allowed to cool they are removed with long sticks. There is very little cracking and breakage and the end result is a fairly sturdy pot that is chiefly used for either cooking purposes or containing water. There is very little evidence that this method has been used to fire childrens' claywork done in the art lesson, yet there is no reason why it could not prove successful. Below is an account of a first attempt made by a student teacher to fire the claywork done by a group of primary school children.

Let pupils in this group prepare a fire. Let them place the models around the fire. Call all the children in the class to stand around the fire and teach the following through questioning:

The models should not be put directly in the fire because they will break. They must be warmed, and gradually heated so that the water in the models is dried out. Even if there is no water, there must be gradual heating so that expansion will be gradual.

It is always better to make models hollow so that they can dry quicker, and firing can also be done more quickly.
It is advisable to place flat objects on their edges so that the flat side which faces the fire may get even distribution of heat. If they are too flat to stand on the edges, an object may be placed behind them to support them. If this supporter is a stone, make sure it is not very close to the fire or else it may get heated and explode and cause the model to fall and perhaps break. When a new piece of firewood is added watch it carefully. It may catch fire and this heats the model suddenly and may explode it.

Ask the children to put the models in the fire and pile on firewood. When the models become red hot they will be properly fired and later they can be removed. (Fig. 24)

Children enjoyed the firing, and were eager to see the result. The fire was opened and the models were allowed to remain in it until all the firewood was burnt out. I was not entirely satisfied with the result since some of the works cracked and some broke into pieces. This is partly due to over firing and partly to the joining of parts to the main bodies during modelling. Children did not use clay slip nor scratch the parts to be joined or if they did, they did not press them firmly together. Perhaps the cracking might be the result of quick cooling. The weather was colder than usual. Thus the air which came in contact with the models removed from the fire might have had a bad effect on them.14

Obviously further study is needed for the traditional firing methods used by the local potters and more experiments made in respect of firing time, cooling time and external temperatures; but the above account does indicate that the open firing method is practical and could make a valuable contribution to the craft programme in the schools. Not only does such an approach make use of traditional methods but also it provides the children with an added purpose and enthusiasm for claywork when they know that their work can be fired and that they can participate and help in this process.
FIGURE 23
THE OPEN FIRING METHOD

FIGURE 24
CHILDREN'S CLAYWORK FIRED BY THE OPEN METHOD
Tie and dye and resist methods of decorating cloth are traditional to many parts of Africa, although in Ghana it is an activity usually confined to the Nigerian women who live in the larger urban areas such as Kumasi, Ashanti (Fig. 25). These methods have proved to be excellent ways of teaching pattern making and textile decoration to children. Any type of cotton cloth can be folded in various ways and bound with raffia. (Fig. 26). This is then dipped in a dye bath and further tyings and dyeings can be done before the cloth is eventually washed and opened out to dry. Other effects may be achieved through tying around pebbles and seeds and stitching the cloth together. The resist approach is similar to batik only cassava starch is used as the resist instead of wax. These traditional methods of cloth decoration involve little or no cost (particularly if the dye vat is prepared by the children) and the techniques involved allow for free and imaginative approaches on the part of the children. When a student teacher introduced tie and dye to a group of training college students their enthusiasm was so great he had trouble in dissuading them from removing their shirts and putting them into the dye vat. The following describes a similar reaction on the part of a group of middle school children to their first experience with tie and dye.

The majority of the children chose to do the 'tie and dye' and actually shouted for joy when they were given their pieces of cloth to start work. Out of this group, only one or two children chose to do their work in one colour, the others preferring two. Some of the children did not do the tying tightly enough and the result was that they nearly lost the original white of the cloth. They appeared satisfied with the results and some of them, mostly girls, begged to be given some of the dye for their own practice at home.15
FIGURE 25
A NIGERIAN TIE AND DYE CLOTH

FIGURE 26
TYING THE CLOTH WITH RAFFIA
Other crafts such as leather work and the printing methods used in connection with the Adinkra cloth could also be introduced into the art programme. The various techniques associated with house building could have application to constructional exercises. In this way the traditional crafts could make a valuable contribution to the art and craft lesson and the children retain an awareness of the traditional Ghanaian crafts that are already diminishing in the face of growing industrialization and the availability of inexpensive factory made goods.

(c) The Cultural Materials

There are many aspects of traditional culture that could have a vital interrelationship with the art programme. The craft forms of Ghana have already been discussed; but there is also the story telling, the symbolic designs, the music and dance all of which help to contribute to the total pattern of life. There are moments of worship and sacrifice, the gods and ancestors, the funerals and meetings of the elders with their chief, the sowing and harvesting of the yams, the complexity of inter-family relationships and the inevitable punctuation of faith and death (Fig. 27). All this is part of the racial heritage of every Ghanaian child no matter how changed his present way of life may appear amidst the noise and movement of a large urban centre. These experiences which are part of his traditional past, and often still part of his changing present, need to be revitalised through avenues of creative expression if they are to become part of his permanent future.

The activities which occur within those aspects of
traditional life mentioned above provide an endless source of topics and motivation for picture making. These activities range from the simple and everyday, such as the fisherman pulling in his nets or the farmer planting his yams, to the special ceremonial and festive occasions. The variety of colour and movement in the market place, the shape and texture of the fish trapped in the net, the dignity of the Ashanti Chief borne shoulder high on his palanquin can all be explored and expressed by the Ghanaian child through his picture making activities. In this way the child becomes increasingly aware of the numerous traditional activities that go to make up his racial heritage. At the same time he can be encouraged to become more sensitive to the vitality and richness in colours, shapes, textures and patterns of his natural environment.

Besides the techniques and methods used by the traditional craftsmen and women there are the craft objects themselves and the decoration that is often found upon the surface of these objects. The traditional craftsman may enhance the wall of the hut, the surface of the pot or the virgin expanse of cloth by the addition of a motif pattern or design. In the central part of Northern Ghana there is, in some areas, a tradition of house decoration. The walls of the houses and compounds are decorated with black and white clay which is applied with a crude brush. The repetitive type of patterning that results has a natural vitality and rhythm (Fig. 28).

The Kokomba tribe in North-East Ghana decorate their pots by incising into them; then after the firing further
FIGURE 27
THE COLOURFUL RITUAL OF AN ASHANTI FESTIVAL

FIGURE 28
A PAINTED WALL IN NORTHERN GHANA
decoration is applied with a bird feather dipped in a colour that is extracted from the bark of the "Dawadawa" tree. (Fig. 29). The simple lineal patterning that results is always in harmony with the overall shape of the pot. Another form of geometric patterning is skilfully employed by the leather workers of Northern Ghana to decorate hats and bags (Fig. 30).

The traditional funeral cloth of the Ashanti is known as the Adinkra or Kuntunkuni cloth (Fig. 7). The cloth is covered with symbolic motifs that are printed on by using the "Adinkra stamps":

The stamps are cut from pieces of calabash, with three sticks in the back which are joined to make a point. This serves as the handle for the stamp. There are about sixty different designs. Some are variations which have evolved through the failure of some other craftsman of the adinkra cloth to copy the original accurately. All the designs are traditional and have names and proverbial meanings. Many have historical, allegorical or magical significance. For example, there is one design called 'Gyawu atiko' (the back of Gyawu's head). Gyawu was a sub-chief of Bantama in Kumasi, who shaved his head in this fashion. This as you can see has a historical significance. There is another design known as 'Kyekye pe aware, nso aware mpe no' (the star Venus wants to be married to the moon but the moon does not want her). This, of course, has an allegorical as well as a proverbial significance. An example of a design with a magical significance is the 'Mmusuyidie' (something to remove evil). This was used as a charm. Another example of a design with a proverbial meaning is the 'Papani amma yeanhu Kramo' (all who pray and pretend to be devout Moslems prevent us from knowing who are the true Moslems).16

These are only four isolated examples of traditional methods of decoration but they give some indication of the varieties of approach to traditional decoration and pattern making that could easily be incorporated and used in the
FIGURE 29
A KOKOMBA POT

FIGURE 30
A LEATHER HAT FROM NORTHERN GHANA
school art and craft programme. Instead of the stereotyped and rote approach to pattern marking suggested in the art and craft syllabus for primary schools, pattern making could become an interesting and meaningful activity if it was related to sources of traditional patterns and designs. Children could be encouraged to study and observe the variety of pottery shapes made in Ghana and the way various kinds of patterning blend with the particular shape. A Kokomba pot in the classroom would provide a far more lively and stimulating introduction to pattern making than does the mechanical process of "folding the paper into four strips and plain-painting with 2 colours".

Instead of confining the child's pattern making to a lined page of an exercise book why could he not be encouraged to decorate the laterite walls of his schoolhouse using the method and materials that have been described above. The Adinkra cloth could serve as an excellent introduction to print making. The children and teacher might discuss the methods involved in printing an Adinkra cloth or, better still, they might go and study a craftsman in the process of printing a cloth. Instead of the calabash stamp the children could cut their designs into the section of a yam and print these on newsprint. This might lead to a further study of the Adinkra stamps themselves, their proverbial significance and the harmonious effect achieved through the repetition of these simple design units. At the secondary school level there is no reason why these same Adinkra stamps could not provide motivation for a more advanced design study involving shape and space relationships. In similar ways, the symbolic designs of
the Ashanti gold weights and the linguist sticks, the traditional patterns on the Kente cloth, the shapes of wooden spoons, combs and drums, could enrich the art lesson. This would have the twofold advantage of acquainting the child with his traditional heritage and sensitizing him to the natural beauty and vitality inherent in many of the craft objects.

Throughout Africa story telling is a traditional pastime that occupies the long evenings in the village square or around the communal fire. The Ashanti tribe have a rich store of folklore that is primarily given expression in story form. One of the central characters of this folklore is Kwaku Ananse a rascal spider who achieves his ends through a combination of wit and cunning. His antics provide for an incessant flow of stories, the titles of which are descriptions in themselves; e.g. "How Kwaku Ananse won a Kingdom with a grain of corn." "Why the Lizard stretches his neck" "Why Kwaku Ananse stays on the ceiling." The following is a brief account of an Ananse story that was told to a group of primary school children as motivation for a painting lesson.

Ananse visited his mother-in-law. When he was about to go back home the mother-in-law offered him some hot-boiled peas which Ananse, out of shyness, declined to accept. When the mother-in-law was getting ready to see Ananse off he stole into the kitchen unnoticed, opened the pot containing the hot peas, and took some out of the pot. Just at that moment he heard the footsteps of the mother-in-law so he filled his hat with some of the hot peas and put it on his head. He felt the scorching heat of the hot peas burning the hair and bruising the scalp so he pretended that he had been attacked by a severe headache and shook hands hurriedly with everybody and set off from the house. The little children in the house suspecting Ananse's action to be faked, ran after him and removed the hat and found the cause for his strange behaviour. Ananse being thus put to shame ran away.
After the story had been told the children discussed the incident of Ananse with a hatful of peas upon his head. Their paintings showed highly imaginative interpretations of this scene and of the possible combinations of spider and human forms of Ananse himself (Fig. 31).

'Sasabonsam' is the devil in Ashanti folklore and lives in the forest. His image is so frightening that the mother may sometimes use his name as an ultimate threat in disciplining her child. The following description by a teacher of the head of Sasabonsam was very effective in encouraging the children to model heads that were both expressive and showed a feeling for plastic form (Fig. 32).

Ask the children to beat and knead their clay. Describe the head of "Sasabonsam." It is round. It has two frightening round eyes. He can use them to see in every direction. Teeth can be projected from the mouth to the chest. He can also make them appear small. When he wants to catch a child the nose is enlarged. Some Sasabonsam have protruding foreheads. The back of the head can be long.

It is evident that the folklore and stories of Ghana can make a valuable contribution to the art and craft programme. Also the art lesson can help to keep these stories 'alive' for there is the danger that they may otherwise diminish and be forgotten as the media of radio, films and television takes the place of traditional story telling.

Drumming and dancing are essential aspects of traditional Ghanaian life. The only kind of schooling that was in any way similar to the formal schooling of the West originated from drumming. The Akans had schools for drummers where boys learnt the secret 'language' of the drums. Drumming and dancing is the necessary accompaniment to any form of ceremonial
FIGURE 31
A PAINTING OF ANANSE BY A PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD

FIGURE 32
THE HEADS OF 'SASABONSAM'
or festive gathering. The child grows up in a rhythmic environment that is expressed in the beating of the drums and the movement of the dance. Thus a natural form of 'rhythm and movement' is a characteristic mode of expression for Ghanaian children. Besides the fact that this provides an excellent foundation for music in the schools it also has its application to the art lesson. A variety of approaches involving dance, mime, and dramatic expression could serve as motivation for painting, modelling and mask making activities. Also, such an approach would help the child to express this 'rhythmic' feeling in his paintings and patterns whilst at the same time it would help to conserve the traditional forms of dancing and drumming.

In concluding this chapter on traditional craft methods and environmental and cultural materials, it must be emphasized that the foregoing is in no way intended to be a complete and exhaustive survey. A general direction has been suggested and a few isolated examples given; but the possible developments and adaptations within this framework would depend upon the inventiveness and imagination of the individual art teacher and the particular environmental situation in which he is teaching.
FOOTNOTES


13 *Ibid.* p. 82.


18 Ibid. p. 30.
CHAPTER VIII. A PROGRAMME OF RENEWAL AND PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Art Education as a Means of Creative Synthesis

The use of traditional methods and materials in the art programme has been developed in some length but it would be wrong consequently to consider that this has precedence over the other propositions that together constitute a new direction for African art education. This would only lead to a regression away from the challenge of a 'renewal' which demands an integration of traditional and Western patterns. Art education can make its contribution by helping children to be appreciative and aware of their traditional heritage and yet at the same time use and adapt aspects of this heritage in relation to the cultural change that is inevitably occurring through the influence of, and contact with, Western culture. This process of adaptation and resolution of conflicting aspects of cultural change can only be achieved through a creative approach, "where freedom is allowed and stimulation given to the child in order that he can express himself and his relationship to the two worlds." It is this need for creative expression that is unchanging and comprises the major process that is central to any system of art education. It should be the universal concern of all art teachers and applies equally to the children of Norther Ghana in their schoolhouse of sticks and straw as it does to the children of North America.

Art education everywhere must be concerned with encouraging the child to express himself and his experiences, for it is the discovery and manipulation of visual symbols that provides one of the symbolic processes through which the
child creates meaning and order. The experiences of different children in different environments will obviously be different; but art as a visual symbolic process remains unchanging. The Ghanaian child lives in a time of cultural change and it is imperative that he has opportunities to express and give meaning to his experiences which are so often derived from the contact and conflict of the two worlds. This is something which the child will do naturally—can only do naturally—in an atmosphere of freedom, understanding and encouragement. In this sense the 'Education through Art' that Herbert Read feels is so necessary for Western man applies to the African as well, for both are in need of attaining some kind of unity or synthesis. Read suggests that modern technological civilization does not provide the answer to man's quest for harmony and order and that Western man has become divided against himself. The result is, "a split consciousness, a world made up of discordant forces, a world of images divorced from reality, of concepts divorced from sensation, of logic divorced from life."\(^1\)

As an answer to this Read proposes an education that will preserve the organic wholeness of man and of his mental faculties, so that as he passes from childhood to manhood, from savagery to civilization, he nevertheless retains the unity of consciousness which is the only source of social harmony and individual happiness.\(^2\)

This unity of consciousness can only be achieved through a natural form of education where the child grows up in harmony with his own inner nature and is encouraged to express his feelings and experiences through creating symbols:

He therefore creates . . . a visual symbol, a cypher in the language of line, which will express his feelings, communicate its quality to others, fix it in the shifting world of appearances.\(^3\)
The contemporary African is also a man divided against himself and it would appear that one of the primary aims of African education should be to help resolve this cultural split. The African child must grow in harmony with his own inner nature—which is intimately bound up with his traditional culture—and this can only come about through an education that encourages the child's natural desire to express and communicate his feelings and conceptions in a visual symbolic form. It is this process of symbolism that is natural to every child and provides the basis for a universal language. The art programme can create intercultural understanding since, as Read suggests, all art involves a natural tendency towards a visual order. This visual ordering constitutes a natural law through which we structure and give meaning to our feelings. Children's art illustrates this tendency towards ordering and forming through a visual symbolism and "we are confronted with a universal phenomenon—the use of a language of signs and symbols that is common to children of every race." In this sense the Ghanaian child who is expressing, in a visual form, his experiences—which so often occur against a background of conflicts and combinations of Western and traditional cultural patterns—is using a language of signs and symbols that knows no barriers and provides a natural mode of intercultural understanding.

It is through creative expression and the subsequent acts of symbolism that the Ghanaian child will be able to give meaning and order to the confusion and uncertainties of experiences that reflect a culture in transition. Foundations will be established for new patterns of ideas and actions.
Children living in or near the larger towns and consequently in closer contact with the changes wrought through urbanisation and industrialization should be encouraged to draw upon their experiences of cars, lorries, buses, roads, street lights and sidewalks and many storied buildings, of hospitals, department stores and factories where many people will work at many machines that turn cocoa into chocolate and bauxite into aluminum and that produce a sometimes 'faltering' flow of products that range from 'Black Star' matches to a variety of plastic buckets and bottles. They (the children) must be encouraged to picture father on his new bicycle and mother in her Western dress and to discuss the sights, the sounds and the problems of city life. They must come to grips with problems involving new kinds of relationships of son to father, mother to daughter, of new attitudes to authority, age and the opposite sex, of new ways of life and cultural patterns. Only by placing everything within his grasp—the old and the new, the traditional and the Western—will it be possible for the Ghanaian child to work towards his own answers, his own resolutions to his own problems. Elimo P. Njau speaking at the International Congress of Africanists in 1962 summed up the new approach needed in African art education in the following words:

Let the children sing, paint, sculpt, model, carve, or construct with whatever materials they can find in their surroundings. Let the children express themselves freely and develop their creative powers to their fullest. Guide them to discover, know and understand their African background, present surroundings and life as a foundation for their future explorations abroad!

Sometimes the teacher will need only to provide the
right materials and 'atmosphere' for the child to create and express, whilst on other occasions the teacher will need to take a more positive role, guiding and challenging the child to search for his own answers. This will occur through the child using natural materials in new ways and adapting traditional methods to new purposes. The traditional backstrap loom which is found throughout Ghana is used to weave cloth into narrow strips which are later woven together to achieve a wider cloth. There is no reason why the children could not construct their own looms—rather than use the inevitable piece of card—with raffia palm and bamboo. In consultation with their teacher they might also discover methods of adapting these looms to weave wider strips of cloth. During 1965-66 a post-graduate student, Mr. Nyarko, did extensive research on the construction of simple looms. (Fig. 33). Whilst at the College of Art at the University of Science and Technology he adapted the traditional backstrap and Nigerian loom for school use and also explored local fibre-producing plants and methods of extracting fibre from them. In the Ashanti region, raffia, sisal and kenaf provide an abundant source of natural weaving materials. In the training college little weaving is done except with paper strips and Dryad kits and if there is a loom then it is a model imported from England along with the yarn.

Another post-graduate student Mr. Owusu Banahene, chose puppetry as his research project. Puppetry is a foreign medium to the African yet it has enormous potential educational value for African children in the newly emerging nations. Drama, and the acting out of anxieties and emotions through the
ceremonial dances and rites, were an essential part of the traditional way of life. The dancer was transformed into a spirit or ghost through the mask and clothing that he wore. He was the puppet. Such processes and the beliefs that underlie them are no longer compatible with the way of life of the contemporary African; yet they are an important part of his heritage and serve a function that is still needed. The traditional folklore and stories of Ghana--of the Sasabonsam and Kwaku Ananse--are ideal subjects for puppetry. Puppetry could provide a medium for the child to express and act out his fears and emotions through the continued use and adaptation of the stories and figures of Ghanaian folklore. The piassava, soft woods, fibres, gourds and shells etc. provide a ready source of materials suitable for puppet making. If children and students are encouraged to approach the crafts in this way then traditional methods can serve as a basis for further experimentation and discovery. The method of coiling a pot can be applied to modelling a figure or head. Changes and adaptations in the shape of traditional pottery may be encouraged in accordance with changes in function and style. African children should be shown good examples of Western art and design rather than the cheap and tawdry offerings of tin and plastic that they find in the market place. By seeing and appreciating 'the best of both worlds' there is more likelihood of their finding a satisfactory synthesis themselves.

An example of how this approach may be put into practice was a design project undertaken by the author and a group of 2nd year design students at the College of Art at the University of Science and Technology in April 1965. The
project was 'designing in space' and the students were introduced to experiments made with space modulators by Moholy Nagy. After this they went about constructing their own modulators, experimenting with local materials, e.g. raffia palm, piassava and bamboo. Problems of line shape and space were discussed and experiments made with light and shadow were recorded through photographic methods. Finally the students were given the problem of constructing a 'walk through' modulator on an open stretch of ground. They studied the methods and materials of their traditional house building and incorporated these into the construction of their modulator (Fig. 34). In doing this they not only became more aware of the problems of designing in space but also more appreciative of the qualities of space, shape and form that are reflected in their own traditional buildings. It is this kind of approach that makes demands upon the imagination and inventiveness of children in relation to their own environment that is needed in the art programmes of Ghanaian schools.

It has already been noted that the natural materials in the particular locality can serve as the main source of supply for art and craft activities but also they can be an endless source of discovery when children are encouraged to use them imaginatively. The child who learns that she can more easily apply the thick earth colours to the wall by using her fingers or discovers that marks can be made by crushing the anatto seeds directly on the paper is involved in the very real educational process of discovering ways of using, adapting and consequently appreciating aspects of the immediate environment. In East Africa Elimo Njau has taken this approach
FIGURE 33
A LOOM DESIGNED FOR SCHOOL USE

FIGURE 34
A SPACE MODULATOR INCORPORATING NATURAL MATERIALS AND TRADITIONAL BUILDING METHODS
with the children he teaches and he remarks that:

The children, by trying to explore their surroundings, have discovered for themselves original techniques and methods using banana fibre, bark cloth, natural earth colours, feathers, local clays, beadwork, seeds, gourds and various other tactile materials found in their local surroundings.\(^6\)

The merit of an inventive and fresh approach to materials is exemplified in the findings of another postgraduate student, Mr. Asaku-Gyapon, at the College of Art at the University of Science and Technology. In his research into inexpensive ways of using local materials for the art programme he demonstrated how children could paint on the cement floor of their classrooms using only earth colours and cassava starch. A new approach to picture making was discovered through sprinkling coloured sawdust on to surfaces prepared with cassava starch. (Fig. 35). By using local market dyes he coloured wood shavings and beans, using these to build up mosaic pictures. (Figs. 36 and 37). Another approach to mosaics involved the pinning of small coloured pieces of piassava to a backing made of piassava strips. This obviated the use of glue and provided the additional freedom of removing and replacing parts of the design at any stage of the construction (Fig. 38). It is this kind of approach to natural materials that should be at the core of the art and craft programmes in the Training Colleges. The students could explore the materials available in the particular locality and be encouraged to find new ways of working with these materials. Only if the students themselves have discovered some of the qualities and possible applications of these materials will there be any chance of their developing a resourceful and imaginative approach to the teaching of art in the schools.
FIGURE 35
A PICTURE MADE FROM COLOURED SAWDUST AND STARCH

FIGURE 36
MOSAIC EFFECTS WITH COLOURED WOOD SHAVINGS
FIGURE 37
BEANS AND SEEDS COLOURED WITH MARKET DYES

FIGURE 38
A MOSAIC DESIGN USING PIASSAVA PINNED TO A BASE
The Art Tutor and the Syllabus

It is at this point that consideration must be given to two of the more valid reasons given by art teachers and tutors for the present lack of interest in art education. These were:

5. Because of unsuitable and insufficient training in the teaching of art and crafts at the teacher training level.

6. Because of the use of syllabuses in art and crafts in schools and training colleges that are out of date and unsuitable in the light of present African needs and experiences.

These two areas are closely linked and it cannot be overemphasized that any improvements will only come by first finding a satisfactory answer to the question, 'Why teach art?' Ghanaian art education must have a basic philosophy and aims in order that administrators, teachers and students will recognize it as a subject that has an important and dynamic part to play in the education of Ghanaians now and for the future. This thesis has attempted to answer the above question and suggest a basic philosophy and aims for art education in the independent nations of West Africa. The solution of how to implement the kind of art programme that evolves from these aims—and which has been outlined in this and the preceding chapter—is through establishing new directions in the aforementioned two areas of teacher training and art and craft syllabuses.

The most important single link in the training of art and craft teachers is, undoubtedly, the art tutor in the training college. The students in the training colleges are
the future school teachers of Ghana. The attitudes and abilities that the art tutor encourages in his students will be reflected in their desire and ability to teach or not teach art in the schools. The approach that he takes will inevitably influence the whole course of art education in the school system. It is at this point that a change of direction must first be established. Programmes of in-service training and summer refresher courses need to be established by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with Winneba Training College and the College of Art at the University of Science and Technology. These programmes would provide opportunities for the art tutors to meet together in order that they themselves might, through discussion and guidance, make a re-appraisal of their attitudes to art education and become acquainted with new ideas and approaches to children's art and the materials and methods that can be used in the art and crafts lesson. At the same time, Winneba Training College and the College of Art should formulate plans for an advanced art and craft teacher training course of at least one year's duration that would ensure a steady supply of highly trained teachers and tutors entering at the Secondary and Training College level. Once there is in each training college an art tutor convinced in the 'worthiness of his cause' and who has an inventive and imaginative approach to the problems of materials and methods then the vicious circle of a dead and stereotyped pattern of art education will be broken.

Running parallel with these teacher training programmes there would have to be a complete review of the art and craft syllabuses for the Primary and Middle Schools and the Training Colleges. The art tutor will not be able to operate effectively
unless he is backed by a syllabus that provides him with not only a broad outline of basic ideas and information about materials and methods but also sufficient freedom for him to use his initiative and develop a programme that relates to the needs of his students and draws upon the materials available in the immediate environment. The present art and craft syllabuses for Primary and Middle Schools and Training Colleges are very similar and suffer from the same faults. (See Appendix A for the Art and Craft Syllabus for Training Colleges) They are all comprised of a series of unrelated and mechanical procedures, exercises and topics that are listed repeatedly and with little variation for each year of the course. Topics are given for picture making but there is no suggestion of any form of motivation or effort to relate subject matter to the students' interests and experiences. It would appear that children are primarily expected to work from book illustrations and use imported materials and methods. An undue emphasis is placed on picture and pattern making yet there is no attempt to suggest that there are any common elements which link these subjects together or that they have any relationship to craft or 'handwork'. No demands are made upon the art teacher to use his own initiative or imagination and in the primary and middle school syllabuses there is no mention of aims, no suggested or implied philosophy of art education and no mention of the significance art may have to the child and what may be expected of him at various stages of his development. The art and craft syllabus for Training Colleges lists the following aims:

1. To help students to acquire skill in:

   (a) Drawing and painting
   (b) Illustrating their lessons
   (c) Preparing teaching apparatus
2. To help students to be conversant with the art and crafts outline syllabus for the primary schools by basing the art and crafts work on its contents.\textsuperscript{7}

The second aim is illustrative of the previously described "vicious circle" or repetition of dull and monotonous art programmes in Primary and Middle Schools and Training Colleges. Sections (b) and (c) of the first aim may be valid and necessary acquisitions for teachers in a school system where there is little money or provision for visual aids and apparatus but they have little or no relationship to the major proposals and function of art education and reduce the art tutor to the level of a technical assistant who helps future teachers gain certain skills that will be of use to them in teaching other subjects. The first aim implies that the primary purpose of drawing and painting is to acquire skills and no reference is made to creativity, imagination, personal expression, or appreciation. The disinterest and boredom often generated by the present art programmes in the Training Colleges is directly reflected in the inadequate and misguided aims outlined in the syllabus. Many art tutors and teachers are themselves aware of the need for a complete revision of the syllabuses. In a student seminar held in April 1964 at the College of Art, University of Science and Technology a list of recommendations was made in respect of the Primary and Middle School Art and Craft Syllabuses and were forwarded to the Ministry of Education (See Appendix B).

The Association of Art Tutors in the Ashanti region have made similar representations to the National Teacher Training Council in respect of the Art and Craft Syllabus for the Training Colleges. In a memorandum to the Council they emphasized that a new syllabus must:
1. Tap the initiative of both tutor and student.
2. Encourage the fuller and more liberal development of art and craft of Training College students.
3. Be concerned with art and craft arising from our own educational and social needs.
4. Be concerned with principles rather than instructions for carrying out actual lessons.
5. Take constructive account of regional differences.

The Memorandum also emphasized that a new syllabus must begin with a basic introduction and a concern with aims:

It was emphasized that the introduction to the syllabus should be in the form of a more elaborate aim expanded into a philosophy of art education and justification for the whole art programme. This introduction should be a basic guide to teachers, making it possible for the tutors and the students to use their initiative and not just follow the syllabus slavishly. Obviously teachers and tutors and all those concerned with art education must continue to press the Ministry and the N.T.T.C. to set up committees of qualified people to review and rewrite the syllabuses. Syllabus revision and new approaches to teacher training are the chief media through which a revitalized system of art education can be introduced and implemented in Ghanaian schools and Training Colleges.

Conclusion

In conclusion the art and craft programme should provide for both a knowledge and appreciation of the Ghanaian heritage and also opportunities for adapting and using that knowledge in relation to the needs and experiences that develop out of a culture in transition. The latter will occur naturally in an atmosphere of freedom and understanding, but on occasions there will be the need for challenge and guidance in order
that new ways of using natural materials and applying traditional techniques and methods may be discovered. An art programme that is based upon the above principles would have a real function to fulfil in the school and in the wider context of renewal and revitalization of Ghanaian culture. Art, to the traditional African, did not result in 'things' but in 'processes'—processes of creative action that were integral parts of the whole community. In this sense art education in Ghana could become a process of creative action and an integral part of a curriculum based upon African needs and experiences.
FOOTNOTES

1 Herbert Read, *Education through Art*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1958) p. 68.


7 *Art and Craft Syllabus for the Four Year Course in Teacher Training Colleges*, (Accra: National Teacher Training Council, July 1963).


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APPENDIX A

Art and Crafts Syllabus for the Four Year Course in Teacher Training Colleges.

Prepared by the Art and Craft Panel of the National Teacher Training Council

July 1963
AIM: (1) To help students to acquire skill in:
   (a) Drawing and Painting
   (b) Illustrating their lessons
   (c) Preparing teaching apparatus
(2) To help students to be conversant with the Art & Crafts outline syllabus for the Primary School by basing the Art & Crafts work on its contents.

ART

(1) Pattern making and simple colour training
   (a) Writing pattern     (b) Line pattern
   (c) Scribbling pattern  (d) Dabbing pattern
   (e) Comb pattern        (f) Rubbed pattern
   (g) Counterchange with geometric and other shapes
   (h) Unit repeat (all over and border, with representational or abstract units) using stencils or drawing the pattern freehand.

(2) Object drawing
   (a) Drawing of single objects - jug, bowl, bottle, hat, etc.
   (b) A few objects composed for still life drawing.
   (c) Drawing and painting of a group of objects, each different from the other in colour, shape, size and texture with a draped background.

(3) Figure drawing
   Simple relative proportion of the parts of the body: Action poses such as standing, walking, sitting, kneeling, pounding fufu.
   Drawing of match-stick figures.
(4) Memory work
Drawing and painting of places visited, events or incidents witnessed and illustration of stories read.

(5) Frieze work
This may illustrate other subjects, e.g. History, Scripture, Geography or some College activity.

(6) Lettering
(a) Block capitals drawn and painted, to be used in posters and labels.
(b) Even stroke or ball pen writing.

CRAFTS

Clay Modelling
Animal and human figures, birds, fish, etc., to be fired and/or painted.

Papier Mache
Masks, bowls, plates, etc. These may be finished with enamel paint, or powder colour and varnish.

Paper Pulp
Animal, birds, fruit, etc.

Group Projects
Use of different kinds of materials such as clay, card, paper pulp, paper, grass for making village scenes, Noah's Ark, Tema Harbour, the railway station or lorry park, etc. Paint and arrange these in a sand tray.

Raffia Work
Winding on card foundations, balls, table mats, bowls, napkin-holders.
Raffia or Wool Work

Weaving on card looms with long blunt needles. The following may be made out of the woven material; table mats, pochettes, bags.

Straw Work

Plaiting, coiling, and sewing of table mats, bags, etc.

Paper Work

(a) Hats, concertina, windmill and Christmas decorations.
(b) Paper weaving.

Bookcraft

(a) Envelopes, bookmarks, etc.
(b) Single section notebooks in decorated paper covers.
(c) Single section albums and scrap books in decorated quarter-bound covers.

Leather Work

One piece articles e.g. hat bands, table mats, book markers.

Basketry and Mat Making:

(a) Cane, grass and reed baskets.
(b) Fibre mats.

Soft Toys

With felt, cloth or other materials.

ART & CRAFTS SYLLABUS - SECOND YEAR

AIM: (1) To help students to acquire skill in:
(a) Drawing and Painting.
(b) Illustrating their lessons.
(c) Preparing teaching apparatus.

(2) To help students to be conversant with the Art & Crafts outline syllabus for the Primary School by basing the Art & Crafts work on its content.
A R T

Pattern Making
This is the same as First Year, but on an advanced level.

Figure Drawing
This is preceded by match-stick or line figures in action. Proceed to use the block form for the drawing of the human figures; studying the proportions of the body from models. Use the Blackboard and the drawing sheet for these lessons.

Drawing and Painting
Still-life, Imaginative composition and landscape painting.

Lettering
(a) More practice in the use of 'even strokes' or 'ball pens' for writing labels, and passages for booklets.
(b) Practise with broad or square pens: Strokes, letters, words and sentences.
(c) Writing of programmes, pieces of poems and prose with appropriate borders.

Poster Making
Posters for sports, entertainments, exhibition, etc. These may be either drawn and painted or cut out in coloured paper.

Frieze Work
Choose suitable subjects e.g. festivals, incidents, stories. These are to be either drawn and painted or cut out in coloured paper.

B. SUGGESTED THEORY WORK FOR FIRST AND SECOND YEARS

Demonstration and Discussion on:
1. (a) Lines: - Kinds of lines
(b) Basic Shapes for drawing two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects.

2. Object drawing: - Relative proportion of the different parts of an object.

3. Simple Perspective: - (a) Kinds - lineal, aerial and colour.
   (b) Its application in drawing and painting.

4. Expression of tones - light and shade.

5. Simple colour Theory - (a) Primary and Secondary colours.
   (b) Other colours.
   (c) Mixing of colours.
   (d) Use of simple colour charts.

C. CRAFTS

Clay Modelling

   Post, bowls, animals, human figures (both pressed and coiled methods are to be taught) Models are to be fired and/or painted.

Marionette and Puppetry

   For staging short plays.

Basketry

   (a) Baskets with cane and wooden bases.
   (b) Baskets and bags with grass, reed, plaited straw or plaited raffia and other materials available.

Leather Work

   Two-piece articles e.g. soft money bags, purse with one compartment, shopping bag with handle, knife-sheath.

Bookcraft

   (a) Portfolio, blotting pad, loose-leaf cover.
   (b) Multi-section binding, using quarter-binding covers (albums, notebooks, sketch books)
Textiles

On looms and wooden frames, make table mats, and floor mats with raffia, cotton wool, or ropes.

Fabric printing

Tie and dye.

Wood Carving

Carved paper knife, ladle, walking stick, state sword, dolls, animals, hand and wall brushes.

**ART & CRAFTS SYLLABUS - THIRD YEAR**

**AIM:** (a) To help students to increase their skill in Art and crafts activities based on the Art and Crafts Outline Syllabus for Primary and Middle Schools.

(b) To prepare students, through method lectures, to plan and conduct these activities.

**SUGGESTED NUMBER OF PERIODS:**

1. One period of forty minutes a week for method work.

11. One double period of eighty minutes a week for practical work.

**A R T**

A. 1. Pattern

(a) Comb pattern with more than one colour.

(b) Stick printing for border design.

(c) Various unit repeat patterns with representational shapes, abstract or geometric units.

(d) Writing pattern.

(e) Stippling pattern.

(f) Stencil pattern.

(g) Spraying pattern.

(h) Folded paper pattern with texture.
2. **Still-life.**
   Direct still-life painting of groups of objects: fruits, flowers, etc., with a background and a foreground.

3. **Sketching**
   Quick sketching of action poses:
   (a) Students posing in turns for about 10 minutes each.
   (b) Animals and birds.

4. **Drawing and Painting**
   (a) Memory: Composing pictures of scenes observed from everyday life e.g. Installation of a chief, durbar, dancing.
   (b) Imaginative: Painting scenes from African (Ghanaian) folklore. e.g. Kwaku Ananse and the yam farm.

   **Note:** These can be done in any suitable medium.

5. **Illustration**
   Simple illustration of stories, nursery rhymes, and Ghanaian folklore in pen and ink, and any other suitable medium. e.g. scraper board, line.

6. **Lettering**
   Simple broad pen lettering of prose and poem, using locally made or imported pens.

7. **Posters**
   Making posters to advertise College activities or local industries, using any kind of lettering that suits the design.

8. **Mural Painting**
   Painting of scenes, festivals, industries, etc. in powder and poster colours.
B. METHOD WORK

1. Short talks and discussions on:
   (a) The old and the new methods of approach to the teaching of art and crafts in the Primary and Middle Schools.
   (b) Aims of teaching Art and Crafts; its place in the scheme of Education.
   (c) Stages in children's development in Art.
   (d) Materials and Media.
   (e) Methods of teaching and conducting lessons on the different branches.

2. Short talks on Art Appreciation at intervals, based on
   (a) Pre-historic Cave Painting.
   (b) Art in Egypt.
   (c) Art and Crafts of West Africa, etc.

C. CRAFTS

1. Bookcraft
   Multi-section binding of library books, albums, etc. using quarter, half and full-binding covers.

2. Carving
   Carving of stools, figures, etc. in both soft and hard wood.

3. Weaving
   Weaving on the Table, Nigeria, and Traditional looms: Scarves, towels, kente-stole, etc.

4. Basketry
   Making baskets with various local materials.

5. Modelling and Pottery
   Modelling figures, animals, pots, bowls, etc. using either the coil, slab or round method.
ART & CRAFTS SYLLABUS - FOURTH YEAR

In the fourth year, more time will be given to the theory and the method of teaching Art and Crafts in both the Primary and Middle Schools.

**SUGGESTED NUMBER OF PERIODS**

i. One double period for practical work.

ii. One single period for theory work.

A. 1. Students will be required to make and paste relevant specimens of work dealt with, in their Art and Crafts notebooks for future reference.

2. Each student will be allowed to follow his bent by choosing two or three subjects, from the following list, for a year's study:

(a) **Drawing and Painting**
   Landscape, imaginative composition, still-life and life drawing.

(b) **Pattern**
   Advanced work based on any of the patterns learnt in previous years.

(c) **Fabric printing**
   Calabash, cocoyam or line-cut unit repeat patterns.

(d) **Lettering**
   (1) Simple illuminated writing of prose or poetry in broad-pen.
   (2) Writing of notices in block lettering.

(e) **Posters**
   Posters for local and College activities.
(f) **Bookcraft**
   (1) Making of multi-section books.
   (2) Loose-sheet covers, etc.

(g) **Basketry**
Waste paper and shopping baskets; using local materials such as cane, palm branches and grass. Introduce colour by dyeing where necessary.

(h) **Carving**
Using either hard or soft wool for carving figures, animals, or traditional dolls and stools.

**NOTE:** The work should be done mainly in the Art Room during Art & Crafts classes, for easy sharing of materials and for students to benefit from Specialist's suggestions and help. Work done will be collected at the end of each term for assessment and display. After school teaching practice, students will be required to present a collection of specimens of children's work done under them.

**LIST OF TEXT BOOKS**

**First & Second Years**
1. Pen Practice by Walker Higgins ....... B. T. Batsford.
2. Paperwork for Primary Children by G. Clark ...... Evans.

**Third & Fourth Years**
1. Art & Crafts for African Schools by N. F. Stanfield ... Evans.
3. Teaching Creative Art In School by Rosalind & Arthur Ecofott.

**TUTOR'S REFERENCE BOOKS**
2. The Teaching of Art & Crafts in Schools by Evelyn Gibbs
   ....... Ernest Benn.
3. Art & Crafts for African Schools by J. W. Grossert ....
   ...... Shutter & Shooter.
4. Modern Art Education in the Primary School by Max Dimmack
   ...... McMillan.
5. Principles of Art Teaching by Ruth Moch ...... U.I.P.
7. Handwork for Schools by Dean & Jolly ...... O. U. P.
10. Arts of West Africa by N. E. Sadler.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. The Art & Craft Teacher by Udo
   Ema, J.A. Longmans
2. Child, Art by Viola U.L.P.
3. Modern Art Education in the Primary
   School by Max Dimmack. McMillan
4. Principles of Art Teaching by
   Ruth Mock U.L.P.
5. Paper work for Primary Children
   by Clark, G. Evans
6. Handcrafts for Elementary School
   by Moore, Franc C. Hamburger,
   Carl Kingzett. D.C.Heath Co.
7. Drawing Design & Crafts by
   F.J.Glass A.T.Batsford
   Book 1 Design
   2 Materials
   3 Basket Work
   4 Picture Making

9. Art Adventures with Discarded Materials

10. Art for African Schools N.F. Stanfield Evans

11. Dryad Craft Leaflets various Dryad

12. Art and Crafts for Africans Gresser. Shutter & Shooter
   Clay Modelling and Pottery

13. Pottery without a Wheel K. Tyler Dryad


15. Modelling M. Petric Dryad.
   Spinning, Weaving and Mat Making

16. The Weaver's Craft Simpson & Weir Dryad

17. Simple Weaving Mochrie Dryad

18. Raffia Work Crampton Dryad

19. The Junior Basket Maker Crampton Dryad

20. Leatherwork for Boys and Girls N.A. Poole Dryad

21. Leatherwork Roseman Dryad
Woodcarving

22. Woodcarving

Bookcrafts

23. Bookcrafts for Juniors

24. Bookcrafts for Seniors

Lettering

25. Script and Writing Patterns for African Schools

26. Pen Practice

27. Writing and Writing Patterns

Art Appreciation

28. The Arts of Mankind

29. The Religion and Art of Ashanti

30. The Story of Art

31. Art Through the Ages

A. Durst Studio

Collins Dryad

Collins Dryad

Douet U.L.P.

W. Higgins Batsford

Richardson U.L.P.

Van Loon Harrap

O. U.P.

G. Ambrich Phaidon

Gardner Bell & Son.
APPENDIX B

Art Education Course, April 1964.

Discussion on the syllabus for art and craft in primary schools.
The seminar spent a useful period in discussion of the Primary Syllabus prior to the visit of Mr. Wiafe Debrah, Senior Education Officer at Saltpond with a special concern for Art and Craft in schools.

We hoped to advance the following recommendations:

1. That the proposed new Syllabus should present Art/Craft, not as isolated subjects on the curriculum, but as a natural extension and opportunity for children which should grow out of their lives and their school activities.

2. That the syllabus should be readily understood by non-specialist teachers (including pupil teachers). This does not mean introducing an elaborate vocabulary (which may impose restrictions on the work done); it means rather that the whole Syllabus should be written in terms which are generally understood.

3. That the Syllabus should help teachers to understand the purpose and aim of art and craft in the primary school.

4. That it should provide positive guidance in two spheres;
   (a) in terms of principles to be followed, rather than giving actual lessons in detail
   (b) in terms of practical information about materials and equipment.

Suggested content of the Syllabus in broad plan:

1. A simple, well-written introduction on why we teach art and craft in primary schools and what the children could be expected to derive from art and craft.

2. A section which would make it quite clear to teachers how to find starting points for art and craft activities — starting points which are appropriate to the age, development and immediate interest of children.
3. Practical information about materials and equipment.
4. The scope of art and craft in the primary school.
5. Planning art and craft throughout the primary school.
6. Books which will help teachers of art and craft in primary school.

The Sections suggested above in more detail

1. WHY WE TEACH ART AND CRAFT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Certain fundamental points about art/craft should be made in simple well-stated language, for example: that the aim is not simply to offer children a drawing or painting or making experience but to open their eyes to the world around them; not simply to offer the opportunity to acquire skill for its own sake, but to develop in children resourcefulness and initiative.

It is very important for primary school teachers to realize that the adult conception of the world is very different from that of children, and to try to make children see the world as adults do is harmful. In view of this what children produce in art and craft need have their approval only in the sense that the teacher should be sure that what the children are doing is of educational importance, i.e., helping to develop them as persons.

Drawing and painting and making things are very natural activities for children, and teachers should be encouraged to recognize the need for children to express their ideas about the world around them in a relaxed and childlike way.

2. STARTING POINTS FOR ART AND CRAFT IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Three main starting points were suggested:
(a) the children's interests at any particular time.
(b) school activities and lessons,
(c) the materials.

(a) **Children's interests**

It is very important that the teacher should be helped to identify these interests. He will then be able to suggest topics and activities which will be meaningful to children. As the child develops so his field of interest widens, finally to embrace local, national and international events and aspirations.

Many of the subjects suggested in the present syllabus are such that the children would need to rely entirely on their knowledge of illustrations in books.

(b) **School activities and other lessons.**

Anything that can be done to bring together art/craft and other areas of learning the better for the children's development. Each activity will assist the others, and the integration of art/craft with other school 'subjects' will help children to regard art/craft as part of learning and part of life.

(c) **The materials**

The materials themselves can form a stimulating starting point for art/craft, and it is a pity that the syllabus suggests that pictures and modelling grow almost exclusively from title subjects.

**Local differences**

In these three ways we could expect art/craft in Ghana schools to grow more naturally and vitally from the interests of both children and teacher:

- from the varied ways of life in each area;
- from local resources of material;
- from local customs, landscape and activities.
These local interests need not, of course, overlay older children's interest in national events and aspirations, all of which should find a natural place in their art.

3. MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

Much more could be done in the syllabus to inform teachers in this matter. The grant for materials will need to be spent on special materials such as paper. But to rely on purchased materials alone leads to a very dry kind of work. Natural materials (and materials not made especially for art/craft) can provide a greater stimulus to imagination and ingenuity.

Much more attention could be devoted to the storage and distribution of materials.

Financial provision for buying local materials is necessary.

4 & 5. THE SCOPE AND DEVELOPMENT OF ART/CRAFT THROUGHOUT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The present divisions into 'Picture Making', 'Pattern' and 'Modelling' are presented in such a way that these activities seem to be separate from each other. But at the present moment we feel that some kind of framework to suggest the scope of art/craft in the primary school must be retained. Every effort should be made to suggest that there is an overlap. It ought not to be necessary to suggest different materials for each activity.

We suggest the following elements:

Picture Making  Pattern Making  Construction

We should like to see the programme based on work for the year rather than for each term in the year. We suggest that the term division is unrealistic. In this section we recommend that the emphasis be on appropriate starting points and materials for each class throughout the primary school.
For example, we hope for a greater variety of starting points for pictures, starting points in which the children may participate, for example, movement, mime, music. And at all levels things seen and handled form appropriate starting points, all kinds of things from the natural and man-made world.

In pattern, too, there could be many more sources, arising from, for example:
the need to decorate (something made by the child)
the activity of arranging for its own sake
interlacing and twisting
measuring, cutting, scratching, painting etc.
All of these various activities leading to pattern would need to be related to the various class levels.

The activity of construction should be enlarged to include a great variety of suitable materials. Clay is obviously fundamental in this, but could be used in combination with other materials, especially by young children.

6. BOOK LIST

This is in need for complete revision, choosing only those books which present art and craft from an educational point of view.