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Exploring the Multifaceted Narratives Embedded in Some Murals in Accra: A Cultural Insight, Ghana

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Abstract:

This research paper explored the cultural dimensions and significance of some selected murals in Accra, Ghana, with the aim of shedding light on the intricate interplay between art, culture, and identity in the urban landscape. Accra, the capital of Ghana, boasts a vibrant street art scenery characterized by a diverse range of murals that reflect the city's rich cultural tapestry and historical narratives. The study was based on murals at three (3) public spaces in Accra. Eleven (11) people, consisting of five (5) muralists and six (6) members of the public, formed the sample for this research. The study employed the qualitative approach, with a multiple case study as the design, combining visual and thematic methods of data analysis to investigate a curated selection of murals across the three selected neighborhoods in Accra. The primary objectives of this paper were to identify the cultural symbols, themes, and stories embedded within the murals and to examine how they contribute to the cultural identity of Accra's residents. Through interviews with artists, community members, and cultural experts, we gained insights into the motivations behind the creation of these murals and their intended impact on the community. The findings revealed that Accra's murals serve as a dynamic means of cultural expression, preservation, and communication. They depicted a wide array of themes, including historical events, social issues, traditional folklore, and contemporary urban life, all of which were deeply intertwined with the city's cultural fabric. Additionally, these murals foster a sense of place, community pride, and cultural continuity, creating a visual dialogue between the past, present, and future. In conclusion, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how murals in Accra play a pivotal role in shaping and reflecting the cultural identity of the city. It underscores the importance of public art as a catalyst for cultural preservation, education, and community engagement, ultimately enriching the urban experience for residents and visitors alike.

Keywords: Ghanaian culture, murals, chieftaincy, religious practices, festivals, dress, symbols, colour, mythology

1. Introduction

The vibrant city of Accra, nestled along the coast of West Africa, is not only Ghana's capital but also a hub of culture, history, and artistic expression. One of the most captivating forms of art that graces the streets of Accra is its murals. Murals are meaningful and influential artworks in societies around the world. They embellish places and add meaning to them. Public spaces may exist without the community having any relevant connection to them. However, people relate to these spaces when murals are executed in them. The connection is substantial when the theme and subject matter of the works interest the said society. Artworks in public areas are influential communicative outlets that cannot be overemphasized. This is amplified by instances where these artworks generate controversies and sometimes lead to their re-contextualization or sometimes outright removals.

These larger-than-life paintings donning the city's walls are mostly not mere decorative elements but windows into the diverse cultural perspectives that shape Accra's identity. In this exploration, we delve into the captivating world of selected murals in Accra, each a canvas that reflects the city's rich cultural tapestry and history. Accra's murals are more than just aesthetically pleasing urban art; they are cultural statements that narrate the stories of the city's people, their traditions, aspirations, and challenges.

These murals serve as a living testament to the idea that art has the power to transcend boundaries and speak to the hearts and minds of those who encounter it. Whether they depict historical figures, convey social messages, or showcase traditional motifs, each mural contributes to the mosaic of cultural perspectives that make Accra a unique and thriving metropolis.

In this exploration, we will journey through the vibrant neighborhoods of Accra, from the bustling streets of Ako-Adjei Interchange, to the historic alleys of Tetteh Quarshie Interchange, and the Foyer of Accra International Conference Centre (AICC), as we uncover the stories behind selected murals. We will examine the cultural contexts in which these

murals were created and the impact they have on the city's identity, residents, and visitors. We will also explore the role of these murals in preserving traditional Ghanaian culture, fostering social awareness, and sparking conversations on contemporary issues.

Accra's murals are not static; they evolve with time, reflecting the ever-changing dynamics of the city. As we delve into the cultural perspectives of these selected murals, we will also consider how they adapt to new ideas and challenges, echoing the resilience of Accra's culture in the face of modernization and globalization.

Asare (2018) opines that public art effectively presents a window through which societies are viewed. Therefore, it is imperative to explore the multiple dimensions of these selected murals in Accra with an expanded sample size to decode the Ghanaian cultural practices rendered in them and the connections Ghanaians have with them. In essence, this exploration seeks to celebrate the intersection of art and culture in Accra through its murals, inviting readers to appreciate the city's rich tapestry of stories, traditions, and visions. These murals are more than just paintings on walls; they are windows into the soul of Accra, where the past and present converge, diversity thrives, and culture is alive, vibrant, and ever-evolving.

1.1. Objective

To analyze the narratives depicted in the chosen murals, considering their historical, social significance and cultural context in which these murals were created and how they reflect the values, beliefs, and traditions of the Accra community.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Overview of Mural Art in a Cultural Context

In Ghana, mural art dates back to pre-colonial days, and it involved the execution of various themes on walls of rocks, indigenous buildings, and shrines in multiple cultures. Antwi (2015) asserted that Africans expressed different forms of traditional art in their cultural traditions: writing pictograms and ideograms; body painting, pottery, carvings and murals; painting/dyeing of cloth; printing and many other creative activities. He further stated that the indigenous houses in the Ashanti Empire were decorated with designs that carried symbolic interpretations. This assertion shows that murals in the Ashanti culture had profound meanings. In the late 19th century, in Northern Spain and Southern France, people found prehistoric murals and engravings (Rosengren, 2012). These caves with murals are dotted worldwide, and some of them are the famous caves of Altamira, Lascaux, and Chauvet. The first multi-technique research of San rock art reveals that the source of the red pigments came from two different sources; this indicates that their rock surface treatment method included some acid treatment, and hot, soapy water was applied to the surface before painting (Bonneau et al., 2012). Cowhey's report emphasizes the educational relevance of mural art due to its ability to promote the learning of desired experiences of a society. Murals can satisfy diverse contexts like history, landscape, nature, culture, and identity. They can yield the benefits of the muralist and observers. This shows the profound essence of murals in understanding world civilization and the culture of people of the ages in contemporary times.

2.2. Cultural Insights and Theories

Aesthetics in the African sense is expansive and goes down long into the history of Africa. Ibanga (2017) posit that all cultures had already begun their search for the beautiful even before the groundwork of Western philosophy of beauty was laid. This implies that the African philosophy of beauty has been existing independently for ages. For aesthetic appreciation to be significant, it must be rooted in a particular culture (Gbadebo, 2011). Therefore, in exploring the aesthetics of murals in Accra, which are products of the Ghanaian culture, there is the need to situate them in African aesthetics. The African conception of aesthetics paints a richer and more dynamic image of aesthetic perception by painting a picture of African artistic creations as having sectionalized and community-based practical aesthetics. Ibanga 2017 outlines that the concept of beauty in an African environment is communal and useful. The communal sense of beauty, therefore, dictates that whatever is seen as lovely must be balanced but also support societal harmony. Additionally, the purposeful conception of beauty, in an African context, must be used to further some goal.

Similarly, Njiofor (2018) avers that the concept of beauty is viewed holistically in African culture; it includes both the internal (excellent character or good moral conduct and attitude) and exterior (pleasant look) components. However, the internal constituent aspect, which serves as the cornerstone of the African ethical system, is prioritized over the exterior constituent aspect because the latter inevitably deteriorates with time. As a result, the beautiful and the good have a close relationship in African aesthetics.

Różalska (2016) opines that using language and culture as the primary criteria for categorizing ethnic groups in Ghana, it can be estimated that there are over 90 distinct linguistic and cultural groups in the country, which are classified into eight major ethnic groups. Akan, Ewe, Ga-Dangme, Mole-Dagbane, Gurma, Grusi, Mande-Busanga, and Guan are the seven languages. Before we can understand Ghanaian Cultural practice, it is essential to know the meaning of culture. Idang (2015) stresses that culture encompasses a broad range of human phenomena, including material achievements and standards, beliefs, emotions, manners, and morals. It is the patterned way of life shared by a specific group of people who claim to be descended from a single ancestor. Therefore, the activities, objects, and intangible aspects of Ghanaian society constitute Ghanaian culture.

There are diverse cultural exercises among the ethnic groups in Ghana. Some of them are chieftaincy, ancestral veneration, festivals, religious activities, chieftaincy, family life, trading, housing, dress culture and socialization. Throughout Africa, the arts of various societies are not separable from their cultural practices; hence, there is a need to

dive deeper into some of the cultural practices in Ghana to understand the selected state murals in Ghana. Grant (2017) contends that the term 'visual' is more of a process of vision, judgement, and perception. Grant states further that visual culture focuses on being represented and made meaningful through what is seen. Culture is manifested through visual reproduction and presentation of images, values, representations, individual beauty, and priorities. Therefore, a direct connection of culture to both the tangible and intangible culture of Ghana is their rendition through art. Images are compelling, and the meanings they convey can be explicit or implicit depending upon the context in which they are being delivered or viewed. They argued that the importance of images is not simply in the image itself but in how certain spectators see and look at it in particular ways.

Chieftaincy is an essential aspect of African culture. Community leaders rule African societies in the form of chieftaincy. The chiefs of these communities are heads who wield a lot of power. The eminence of chieftains in Ghana has made it a source of inspiration for artistic expression. It is one of the institutions that has stood the test of time despite the argument against it as being an autocratic institution in terms of how the chiefs get the nod to lead. However, their means of governance were not entirely autocratic (Sakyi, 2003). In his thesis, van de Walle (2017) postulates that in post-independence Africa, post-colonial governments pledged to abolish what they viewed as backward, anti-democratic institutions such as chiefdoms. However, the majority of chiefdoms have survived and, in many cases, increased in stature and legitimacy. This occurrence justifies how important the chiefdoms and kingdoms are in African societies and the reasons why they continue to be a subject matter for artistic expression.

A festival is an event celebrated by a group of people in a given society. It is celebrated to commemorate aspects of their history and sometimes as a means of adventuring into aspects of their community's development. Festivals are an integral part of the culture of many societies. In Ghana, it fosters cultural education, unites people and brings development. Yolal et al. (2016) found that festivals and events positively impact residents' well-being, whereas communal and cultural/educational benefits are good predictors of residents' subjective well-being. In a similar view, Dankwa et al. (2019) revealed that festivals promote cultural values in which people are educated according to the customs, practices, beliefs and general life patterns of a society. The celebration of festivals in Ghana is dominated by activities such as drumming, dancing, cooking and eating, serving food and eggs, and slaughtering animal blood on deities. The depiction of festivals in an artwork, therefore, requires the artist to draw inspiration from these activities. Since parts of the mural are a visualization of the Homowo Festival, there is a need to have a closer look at the Homowo Festival of the Ga. The Ga people are the indigenous people of Accra, and they celebrate the Homowo festival. The unique way of the Homowo festival celebration is opening the fishing season, participating in preparatory rituals of gift-giving and house purifying, enjoying the Homowo meal, performing the Homowo dance and observing the Day of Remembrance (Kwakyee- Opong, 2014). Each of the activities outlined has its significance in the culture of the Ga. This serves as a vital point of reference for promoting Ga culture through art. The Twin Yam Festival is another unique aspect of Ga culture. It is the celebration of twins. Historically, giving birth to twins was taboo among the Ga; hence, the twin's babies were killed (Nortey, 2012). All the indigenous people of the Ga Mashie went through this maltreatment until the wife of Nii Okaija (Chief of Gbese, one of Ga Mashie's seven quarters) delivered male identical twins and hid them away from the Ga Mashie. On the return of the twins when they were grown, their striking identities were admired by all, including the traditional area's rulers. Following consultation with their gods, it was agreed to abolish twin killing. It was replaced with a yam festival to honour twins during the Homowo festival. The study added that the inclusion of yam in the festival is to distinguish it from the August corn harvest Homowo festival and to imbibe a hardworking attitude in the people since cultivating yam requires a diligent worker.

The religious practices of Ghanaians are diverse. Each ethnic group in the country has its own unique way of expressing religious beliefs. Before the advent of Christianity, Islam and other foreign ones, the ethnic groups worshipped the sky, water bodies, earth, plants and animals. Ghanaians have indigenous religious practices that include belief in gods with supernatural powers, taboos, totemic belief, and libation pouring, among others. Essel (2014) opined that for centuries, libation has been a part of Ghanaian culture and that it was rooted in African traditional religious beliefs. It had not been frustrating until foreign religious concepts divorced from their practices emerged as a result of the colonialists' onslaught. In the interior of Africa, Islamism and Christianity were established in the interior of Africa. In addition, Essel's research investigated easel paintings depicting libation by two post-colonial artists. However, no attention has been paid to the rendition of libation in state murals and the particular distinction of the practice in various cultures. Notwithstanding the above religious conflict surrounding libation pouring, it has been a major resource for artists in portraying the culture of Ghana.

Dress refers to the art of covering the human body. It is an important aspect of a person's culture because the clothes they wear can serve many purposes. Eicher (1972) outlines the forms of the dress by writing; individuals dress in wrappers, tunics, trousers, shirts, cloaks, headgear, and footgear; they straighten, curl, stiffen, oil, colour, and twist their hair, shaping and sculpting it. They embellish their bodies with paints, scars, tattoos, and scents; they complete their costumes with an array of accessories and paraphernalia, including jewellery, scarves, bags, swords, whisks, and fans (p. 156). Eicher broadly considers dress to include everything that people use to cover their bodies. The study asserts further that the Yorubas are sensitive to subtle colour combinations in their dress. Dress in the African and Ghanaian senses, in particular, goes beyond covering the body to portray socio-cultural meanings. Essel and Amissah (2015) opine that the Ghanaian smock and caps with trousers combination outfit of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah at the Declaration of Ghana's Independence was symbolically distinctive in look and unifying in character. Boakye (2010) observed that when Ghanaian prominent figures such as chiefs and queen mothers attend functions, they adorn themselves with numerous beads. His assertion infers that beads are a highly regarded accessory of dress in Ghana. Due to this, Boakye further states that no other time in a Krobo girl's life, not even during her marriage ceremony, can she be dressed extensively in beads. Dipu thus

offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a woman to wear an infinite array of beads with symbolic meanings. It highlights feminine curves, the essence of which is also derived from the fertility theme. Individuals adorned themselves with extremely expensive beads to demonstrate their social standing. A trend of occasional dress that has been mostly practised by the coastal communities is the fancy dress or masquerade dress. Fancy Dress Street parading entails wearing eccentric dresses and performing dances in front of chiefs' palaces, public squares, and streets. To make this possible, tailors create patchwork and striped costumes that are paired with a cloth or rubber animal or horror mask from the region (Micots, 2012). The practice of masquerading is very common in towns like Winneba, Swedru, Cape Coast and Takoradi. The discourse above shows the essence of dress in Ghanaian cultures, hence the need to study those that are used as a subject matter of the state murals.

Visual symbols form a major part of the nonverbal communication of cultures in Ghana. Traditional symbols are found in indigenous Ghanaian art, which is primarily a literal translation of thoughts and ideas, expressing and symbolizing the people's values and beliefs (Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al., 2016). The use of symbols is integrated into the existence of these cultures throughout pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence Ghana. Notable among the cultures which make use of visual symbols are the Akans. Some of their visual symbols are the Adinkra, linguist staff, umbrella tops and stools. The Adinkra symbols are widely known and used in various art forms such as sculpture and in the carving and modelling of stools, murals, and other artefacts. Recently, the symbols have been integrated into the interior designs of the Jubilee House, the seat of Ghana's Presidency and the designs of the robe of the Speaker of Ghana's Parliament. The Adinkra Symbols represent the ideas and values of Ghanaian society. The ensuing suggests that extensive scholarship is available on the use of the adinkra symbols in communication and visual art forms, but what remains silent is the use of the symbols in murals in general and paintings in particular. Another set of symbols gaining popularity is the Ga Samai. Like the Adinkra symbols, the Ga Samai has philosophical and cultural meanings that have been attributed to them. There are many symbols, but some are sacred, so not everyone can view them. This suggests that each ethnic group in Ghana has their own set of symbols and totems that they revere, and the Ga-Adangbe are no exception (Osei et al., 2021). Some of those allowed in the public domain are listed below.

Like visual symbols, colours have a strong symbolism in many African societies. In Ghana, there are variations in the concept of colour symbolism among ethnic groups. Essel and Amisshah (2015) contrast the revelation by Antubam on Akan colour symbolism when they argue that colours used in smock production in the northern part of Ghana have no symbolic connotations. In a more general sense, the authors emphasized that northern cultures use colours arbitrarily, irrespective of the occasion, such as a funeral, naming ceremony, marriage, or festival. In contrast to the northern cultures and similar to the Akan's, red is used extensively in the Ga culture during the Homowo festival. The Ga traditional leaders of various clans dress in red to sprinkle *Kpokpoi* on the streets of Ga Mashie. Gold is reserved for royalty to denote rank and power in the Ga-Adangbe culture. White is primarily associated with the Ga people to symbolize purity. Their priests and priestesses wear white robes during festivals and when required to perform spiritual duties (Osei et al., 2021). These colour symbolisms transcend beyond cloth to many cultural artefacts in the Ghanaian context. For instance, Opoku (2010) found that white beads symbolize purity, while yellow beads symbolize wealth among the Krobos of Ghana.

Another concept that binds African societies' belief systems and cultures is myths. Maček (2018) remarks that myth retells stories to explain origins and establish group identities. This implies that myth promotes historical aspects of cultures that do not have a verifiable reality but are widely believed by members of that culture. Drawing themes from mythological concepts for executing artworks continues to be a fascinating area of art. Maček further states that myths are relevant because they are shared within societies and cultures. Hence, they are remembered and passed on as they elicit strong emotions. This illustrates that although myths may not be true, their practice and continuity are widely accepted and promoted within a given culture. The idea of Egyptian art, widely known as "Art for Eternity", focuses on mythology. This concept influenced ancient Egyptian art to a greater extent, including building pyramids, mummification, paintings, and sculptures. An instance of a mythological concept is summarized by Murulaid and Mastroiano (2017). According to ancient Egyptian and Greek mythology, a beast known as the Sphinx roamed the region surrounding Thebes, murdering anyone who could not solve its riddle. Finally, the tragic Greek hero Oedipus confronted the terrifying creature and defeated it, thereby securing his throne. The narrative above has been utilized for the execution of painting and in the military tactics of the United States of America. Another popular myth in Ghana and most coastal communities in Africa is the "Maame Wata." Drewal (2008) opines that people are drawn to her as an irresistible, seductive presence brimming with seductive temptations and powers. Hence, Maame Wata worshippers have repurposed images, art, and ideas from local and global sources. This assertion infers that to depict mythological themes, artists amalgamate different subject matter- either the whole of an item, its parts or a combination of both to explore such themes. Wilkins (2005) reveals that students can observe how myths can be used for various purposes, such as promoting their cultural identity through art and coming forth with creative composition.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

The study was qualitative in nature. The main understanding of qualitative research premises on the fact that meaning is socially made through peoples' interaction with their environment (Merriam, 2002). Murals in Accra, like many forms of public art, are rich and multifaceted cultural expressions. They often carry deep historical, social, and symbolic meanings that are not easily quantifiable. Qualitative methods are well suited to delve into the nuances of these cultural expressions. It also allowed for a detailed and in-depth exploration of the chosen murals and their narratives, enabling the researchers to capture the subtleties, emotions, and personal perspectives of the artists, viewers, and stakeholders

involved. Because these Murals were embedded with specific cultural, historical, and geographical contexts, this research approach, which made use of tools like interviews, participant observation, and content analysis, provided a holistic understanding of these murals in relation to the broader cultural landscape of Accra.

Given the exploratory and interpretive nature of the topic, the qualitative approach was well-suited and feasible. It allowed for a holistic examination of the chosen murals without the need for numerical measurements or statistical analyses.

In summary, the qualitative approach was highly justified for the exploration of the multifaceted narratives embedded in these selected murals because it aligned with the complexity of the cultural phenomenon, offered in-depth exploration, considered multiple perspectives, and respected the ethical and interpretive aspects of the research.

3.2. Research Design

Objectives of any research predispose the researcher to opt for suitable design(s) to fulfil them. Antwi (2015) opines that every good research design is pivoted on answering specific salient questions, such as: What are the questions to study? What data are relevant? What data to collect? How do we analyze the results? Given these questions, the researcher used the multiple case study design of the qualitative research approach. The multiple case study, also known as a collective case study, applies the same set of procedures and instruments to each of the cases (Yin, 2003). Cresswell (2013) asserts that research investigates details of an inquiry in its natural setting concerning its context. Baxter and Jack (2008) opine that researchers can investigate differences and similarities in situations using multiple case studies. In this regard, each of the selected murals was treated as a case to enable findings to be made by comparing and contrasting them. The design facilitated an in-depth enquiry of the selected murals and allowed for comparison among them. Additionally, Baxter and Jack (2008) assert that researchers can use a multiple case study design to achieve more robust results.

The murals under discussion vary in themes, styles, and locations, so the researchers chose multiple case studies as the design for this paper. A multiple case study allows you to select a diverse set of murals to study, providing a rich dataset for analysis. This diversity helped capture the multifaceted narratives present in the selected mural art scene. The topic emphasized exploring multifaceted narratives. Using multiple cases allowed us to examine a range of narratives across different murals. This approach provided a more holistic understanding of the cultural insight embedded in these artworks.

The design enabled us to compare and contrast various murals dotted at the three locations. The design enabled us to identify common themes, differences, and unique elements, helping to uncover patterns and nuances in the narratives represented in the murals. Accra's mural art is influenced by its cultural, historical, and socio-political context. By studying multiple cases, we were better positioned to contextualize the narratives within the broader cultural landscape of Accra, contributing to a deeper cultural insight. Each mural had its own story to tell. Multiple case studies allowed for in-depth exploration of these individual narratives, ensuring that the complexity and depth of each mural's message were thoroughly examined. While the focus was on Accra's murals, the insights gained from a multiple case study could have broader applicability. They could serve as a basis for understanding mural art in other cultural contexts, making our research more relevant and valuable. Since our research topic was about "exploring," a multiple case study aligned well with this exploratory nature. It allowed us to delve into the subject matter without predefined hypotheses and discover novel insights. Multiple case studies are often qualitative in nature, which is appropriate for studying complex cultural phenomena.

In summary, the multiple case study approach was well suited for exploring the multifaceted narratives embedded in Accra's chosen murals. It enabled us to comprehensively investigate the cultural insights represented in these artworks, capture their diversity, and contextualize them within the broader cultural landscape of Accra.

3.3. Description of the Study Area and Murals Selected

The murals at prominent locations in Accra, namely the Accra International Conference Centre (AICC), Ako-Adjei Interchange, and Tetteh Quashie Interchange, hold significant cultural and historical value. Established in 1991, AICC initially served as the venue for the Tenth Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement. Over time, it has evolved into Ghana's largest conference facility, standing as a symbol of international collaboration. Situated opposite the Ghanaian Parliament and State House, AICC continues to host prestigious national and international gatherings.

The Ako-Adjei Interchange, formerly known as Sankara Roundabout, is positioned along Liberation Road in Osu, Accra. Surrounded by notable institutions like the Canadian Embassy, Standard Chartered Bank, and The Royal Netherlands Embassy, this interchange, the first of its kind in Ghana, is in close proximity to the Jubilee House, the official residence of Ghana's President. The central section of the interchange features a collection of murals that have been chosen for our research.

The Tetteh Quashie Interchange, the second interchange constructed in Ghana, pays homage to Tetteh Quarshie, a renowned agriculturalist pivotal in the widespread cultivation of cocoa in Ghana. Serving as a bridge between National Highway 1 (N1) and National Highway 4 (N4), the interchange holds geographical significance. The N4 route begins at Tetteh Quarshie Interchange, traversing through the Greater Accra Region's Legon and Adenta before connecting to N6 at Kumasi in the Ashanti Region via Aburi, Koforidua, and Asokore in the Eastern Region. On the other hand, the N1 route starts at the Elubo border with La Cote d'Ivoire, passing through Sekondi-Takoradi, Cape Coast, Winneba, Accra, and Tema, concluding at the Aflao border with Togo (Anane-Frimpong, 2022).

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

By engaging in interviews with artists, community members, and cultural experts, we delved into the underlying motivations that spurred the creation of these murals and the intended impact they were meant to have on the community. Our selection of participants followed a stratified purposive sampling strategy involving four artists and two cultural experts. Additionally, we employed a convenience sampling technique to include six community members who were easily accessible, a practical approach when dealing with a large target population (Alvi, 2016).

To gather the necessary data for our research, we utilized various data collection instruments. These instruments included non-participant observation, interviews, and focus group interviews. Non-participant observation, a method in which the researcher does not actively participate in the observed phenomenon (Harrell & Bradley, 2009), was particularly valuable in examining the executed murals. This method allowed us to analyze the visual content of the murals, shedding light on the rendition of Ghanaian cultural narratives in the artworks.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both artists and community members to understand how Ghanaians connect with the murals and the knowledge they derive from the art. In these interviews, predefined themes and questions were arranged in advance, employing open-ended questions to elicit diverse and profound responses (Mathers et al., 2000). This approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the public's connections with the murals and the significance of the artworks in public art education.

The data collection process for our study began with the distribution of introductory letters, which were provided by the Department of Art Education at the University of Education, Winneba, to various organizations, including the Creative Arts Council of Ghana, GAVA, Accra Dot Art, AICC, and Ghana National College. This initial step was essential to gain access to our target respondents and obtain permission to photograph the murals.

Once we received approval from the mentioned entities, we visited the mural sites to capture images of the artwork. We also scheduled interviews with the muralists. During these interviews, we first obtained informed consent from the participants before proceeding with the questions outlined in our interview guides to gather their responses. Additionally, on a separate occasion, the researcher visited the mural sites and interviewed six individuals who happened to be passersby and willingly agreed to take part in our study.

To analyze the research data, we employed both thematic analysis and visual analysis tools. Thematic analysis focused on the qualitative aspects of the collected material, emphasizing the most significant patterns of meaning within the data, as proposed by Joffe and Yardley (2004) and Joffe (2012). This approach was particularly useful for making sense of the interview data obtained from the artists and cultural experts.

For visual analysis, we followed the guidance of Tutor Phil (2021), who recommended breaking down the murals into their constituent parts and discussing the relationships among these elements. This method allowed us to explore various aspects of the murals, examining how different parts related to each other and contributed to the overall meaning conveyed by these artworks.

3.5. Data Analyses Tools

We utilized Thematic Analysis and Visual Analysis tools to extract insights from our research data. Thematic analysis, as described by Joffe and Yardley in 2004, focuses on the qualitative aspects of the materials under scrutiny. It aims to uncover the most significant patterns of meaning within the collected data, as highlighted by Joffe in 2012. Recognizing the significance of thematic analysis, we applied this method to interpret the interview data gathered from artists and cultural experts.

For our visual analysis, following Tutor Phil's recommendations from 2021, we adopted a strategy of dissecting images into their constituent parts and delving into the relationships between these elements. This approach was especially beneficial when evaluating the murals, allowing us to examine various aspects of the artwork and discern the meaning that emerges from the collective interpretation of these elements.

4. Murals in Accra: A Visual Exploration

4.1. Accra International Conference Centre (AICC)

AICC Foyer showcases a captivating 1990 mural crafted by F. Delali. The artwork vividly captures a riverscape, lush vegetation, and poignant symbols of people navigating canoes and a traditional compound house against the backdrop of a mesmerizing sunset. Adorned with Adinkra symbols, Akuaba dolls, and human figures bedecked in resplendent golden millinery, the mural weaves a narrative that pays homage to the cultural richness of the southern Akans in Ghana.

In the central panel, a majestic tree takes center stage, its branches and leaves reaching out in a display of natural grandeur. The facade of the compound house at the forefront features indigenous symbols and textures reminiscent of the walls of traditional dwellings. At the mural's base, scenes unfold, depicting diverse activities prevalent in indigenous Ghanaian society, such as hunting, fishing, and transportation by canoe.

The third panel captures the essence of jubilation as people joyously carry baskets of food, engage in spirited jumping, and partake in celebratory dancing. The choreography of these figures, especially those bearing foodstuffs, suggests a connection to supernatural powers bestowing a bountiful harvest upon the people—a theme resonant with various Ghanaian cultures that celebrate festivals to express gratitude to spirits for abundant yields.

While Adinkra symbols are commonly explored in textiles, their significance in Ghanaian paintings is a less-explored realm, making this mural a distinctive contribution to the artistic representation of these cultural motifs.



Figure 1: A Colossal Mural in the Foyer of Accra International Conference Centre
Source: Fieldwork, 2021

4.2. The Ako Adjei Interchange Murals

At the Ako Adjei interchange, nine murals were identified and selected for the study. They are: A multi-picturesque band of murals on the Ako-Adjei Interchange depicting a portrait of Ako Adjei, libation, a sprinkling of kpokpoi, fishing activities, an abstract relief mural by GAVA, depicting the beauty of the Ga women and the Dipo puberty rite of the Krobos, The Mankota Mankono, patterns of kente and shapes, The Twin Festival of the Gas, The initiation ceremony of the Ga priestesses, Masquerade dress, A transition of Accra from rural settlement to a cosmopolitan and industrial area and An assemblage mural depicting the core values of the Ghanaian society.

The mural created by GAVA showcases a diverse array of Ghanaian figures, with a central focus on Ako-Adjei, a prominent figure in Ghana's struggle for independence from British colonial rule. This monochrome painting depicts Ako-Adjei in an elevated and regal manner. Adjacent to him, a male figure is portrayed in a three-quarter view, adorned in a white shirt and draped in cloth resembling a toga. This figure is believed to represent the Ga Chief Priest, known as the Wulomo. Both figures are depicted with outstretched hands, each holding a green bottle.

The mural also includes representations of an elephant and an antelope in profile view. The antelope stands atop the elephant, symbolizing the Mankota Mankono, an element of the Ga Samai collection. Additionally, the mural presents a scene featuring a king and his linguist, both attired in traditional Ghanaian clothing, complete with a vibrant yellow crown and intricate beadwork. Following this, a depiction of the Kpokpoi sprinkling ritual at the Homowo Festival is showcased, featuring six human figures adorned in warm hues. The central figure, donned in a striking red, black, and white patterned headgear with a gold cloth around the neck, takes center stage.

The mural transitions into a portrayal of fishing at sea, employing shades of blue and green to convey the vastness of the ocean and its waves. The central focus here is a canoe, manned by two fishermen, with the Ghanaian flag fluttering on the right end. A substantial fish, connected to the canoe by a white line, underscores the collaborative effort required to secure such a catch.

Adjacent to the Ako-Adjei Interchange, GAVA's abstract relief mural celebrates the beauty of Ga women and the Dipo puberty rite of the Krobos. This mural is divided into three sections. On the left, two half-naked female figures are depicted with voluptuous curves and graceful body contours. The right figure, sporting an orange headgear, is adorned with ellipses and a horizontal incised line, embellishing the chest. Hands rest on their hips, and their expressions evoke a sense of singing.

In the right section, five women are depicted carrying pots with elongated necks and abstracted human heads. The central figure stands out with a brown hue and a yellow-green neck, while the figures on the left and right feature distinct headpieces and necklaces. In the middle section, various shapes and forms in different colors adorn a green backdrop. Three masked heads, mouths agape, dominate the scene, symbolizing body art within the Ga community.

A recurring motif in the mural is the Mankota Mankono symbol, depicted in a flat tone, featuring an antelope atop an elephant. This motif can be seen on the front and back of the eight pillars of the southern block of the Ako-Adjei Interchange.

Notably, the Accra Dot Art has created a realistic mural that captures the Twin Yam Festival of the Ga people, complete with Ga Symbols and celestial elements. The mural displays human figures carrying yams, twins and nyanya leaves, with a rich color palette enhancing the scene's vibrancy. The distant figures are rendered with reduced details and smaller sizes. The mural vividly conveys the celebratory spirit of the festival, incorporating three-dimensional Ga Symbols in red and purple.

Inside the Ako-Adjei Interchange, on the internal wall, a vibrant galaxy is portrayed alongside a procession of seven human figures, executed by the Accra Dot Art. The moon is depicted with textured red and pink shades, while celestial bodies like clouds, stars, and the moon adorn the background. The priestesses, wearing elaborate sleeveless dresses and

vertically stretched, colorful masks, are depicted in a parallel perspective. These masks serve to protect their identities during ceremonial rituals guided by ancestral spirits.

On the southern pillars of the Ako Adjei Interchange, the Accra Dot Art has presented a rendition of colorful masquerade dress adorned with Ga Symbol designs. The contrast of the vivid colors against a black background adds depth to the artwork. The integration of traditional symbols in the dress design adds a cultural dimension to the pieces.

Facing the Canadian Embassy, a multi-picturesque mural showcases the evolution of Accra, featuring three canoes, a lighthouse, high-rise buildings, a seascape, an indigenous settlement, and a monochromatic portrait of Ako-Adjei. The canoes symbolize the Gas' fishing traditions and the serenity of their sea voyages. The lighthouse marks the arrival of Europeans in Accra, transforming both the culture and physical landscape of the city. The indigenous settlement is portrayed in earthy tones, with mud houses and scenic hills. A flat portrait of Ako-Adjei is depicted, while the mural subtly hints at other historical figures, such as Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.

At the Ako-Adjei Interchange, a horizontal assemblage artwork incorporates a variety of shapes, including footprints in yellow, blue, white, and pink. The piece also features blue, pink, brown, black and white shapes. The mural includes freestyle lettering that conveys essential principles of Ghanaian civilization, such as unity, positivity, hard work, and wisdom. Abstract human heads representing facial features are interspersed around the text, reinforcing these principles. Inscriptions reading "Let's jaw jaw not war war, and be patriotic" appear next to the abstract heads. This artwork serves as an embodiment of Accra's shantytowns and their vibrant cultural expressions.



Figure 2: A Multi-Picturesque Band of Mural on the Ako-Adjei Interchange Depicting a Portrait of Ako Adjei, Libation, a Sprinkling of Kpokpoi, Fishing Activities
Source: Fieldwork, 2021

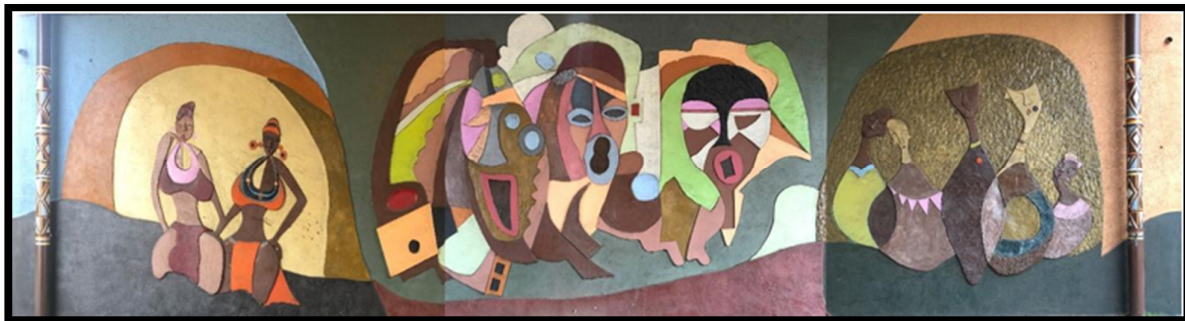


Figure 3: An Abstract Relief Mural by GAVA, Depicting the Beauty of the Ga Women and the Dipo Puberty Rite of the Krobos
Source: Fieldwork, 2021



Figure 4: A Mural of the Mankota Mankono, Patterns of Kente and Shapes



Figure 5: A Mural of the Symbols and the Twin Festival of the Gas
Source: Fieldwork, 2021

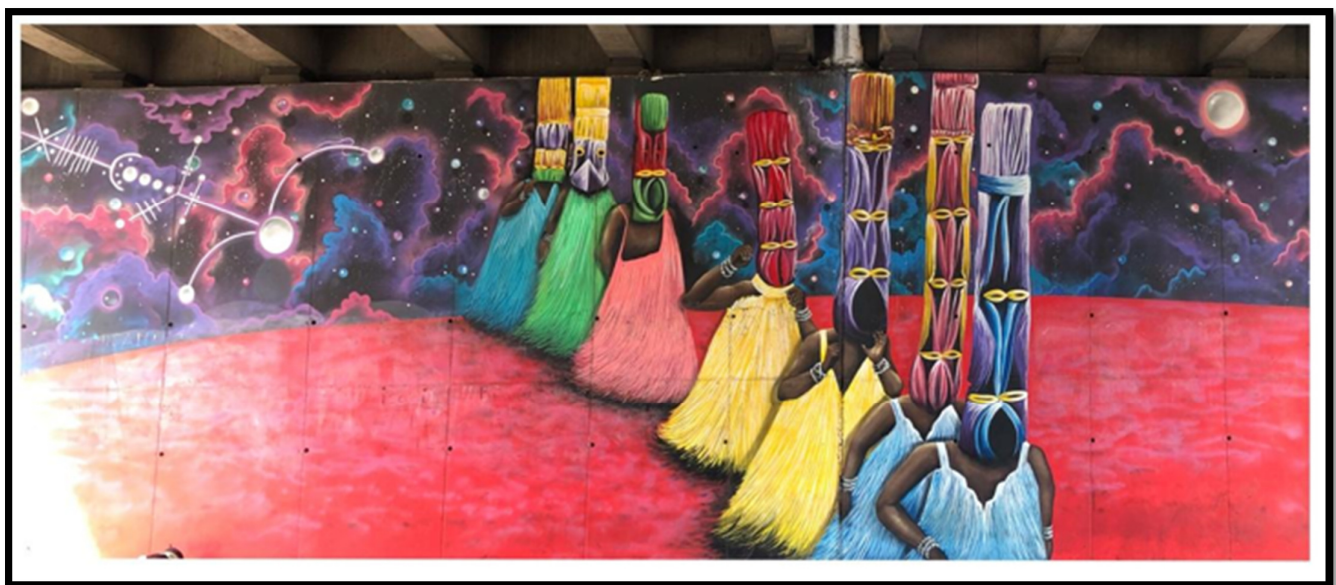


Figure 6: A Mural of the Initiation Ceremony of the Ga Priestesses
Source: Fieldwork, 2021



Figure 7: Murals Masquerade Dress at Ako Adjei Interchange
Source: Fieldwork 2021



Figure 8: A Mural of a Portrait of Ako Adjei and a Transition of Accra from Rural Settlement to a Cosmopolitan and Industrial Area
Source: Fieldwork, 2021

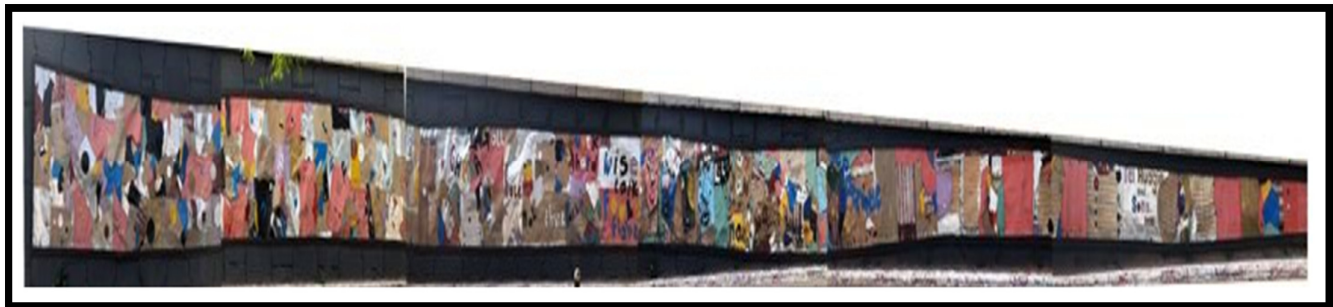


Figure 9: An Assemblage Mural Depicting the Core Values of the Ghanaian Society
Source: Fieldwork, 2021

4.3. The Tetteh Quarshie Interchange Mural

The muralist depicts a collection of standing and seated women dressed in traditional Ghanaian dresses with their names boldly written on their clothes. The first figure is portrayed in a black hat, wearing a long dress covered in yellow and orange. The lower end of the dress is depicted in red, with three patterns of Adinkra symbols arranged diagonally from the left leg to the right chest of the figure. Written around the Adinkra symbol in the middle is the name, Adorkor Coffie. Laura Adorkor Coffie migrated to the United States from Ghana with the explicit intent of repatriating African Americans to Accra. In the early 1920s, she became a field director for the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). By 1927, she had established the African Universal Church, which was headquartered in Jacksonville, Miami. She was dubbed "Warrior Mother of Africa's Warriors of the Highest God" by her devotees. In 1928, while delivering a sermon, she was assassinated by Garvey's men.

Next to the Adorko Coffie figure is a realistic painting of a woman in red and black headgear, wearing red short sleeves patterned with white Adinkra symbols. She is also wearing a yellow fabric with orange patterns in the toga style. Efua Sutherland, a Ghanaian playwright, poet, educator, and children's author, founded the Accra Drama Studio and was instrumental in the establishment of PANAFEST in Ghana. The next figure is a female with a masculine haircut painted with natural colours. The figure is clothed in a red and pink cloth in the toga style. On the fabric at the chest is an inscription of Yaa Asantewaa, a prominent figure in Ashanti history who resisted British attempts to have access to the Golden Stool (Sika Dwa Kofi).

The last figure is a woman in full view, with hair shaped conically and the body painted in shades of brown. She is strapped with red and black cloth around her chest, and the name Dedei Ashikigshan is on the cloth. The second figure is another woman in spectacles and with an impressionistic hairstyle of tied braids, posed in a three-quarter view. She wears an orange straight dress, wraps a blue and white kente around the chest, and wears red slippers. The muralist depicts various figures, including Esther Ocloo, Mabel Dove, Theodosia Okoh, and Annie Jiaage. Each figure is dressed in a unique

way, with the inscriptions of their names and achievements. Esther Ocloo, born Esther Afua Nkulenu, was a pioneering entrepreneur in Ghana who founded Nkulenu Industries Ltd, a food processing company and was one of the founding members of Women's World Banking in 1976. She was known for her efforts to advance local industrialization and popularize micro-lending schemes.

Mabel Dove, another figure, was the first woman elected a Member of the African Legislative Assembly and the first female Africa's newspaper editor in Africa. Theodosia Okoh, a stateswoman, teacher, and artist, was renowned for designing the Ghana Flag and contributing to the development of hockey in Ghana. Annie Jiaage, the first female Ghanaian lawyer and judge, was also a human rights activist who played a significant role in the organization that evolved into the Women's World Bank. She was a member of Ghana's 1991 constituent assembly, which drafted the country's constitution. In summary, the portraits showcase the contributions of various figures, including Esther Ocloo, Mabel Dove, Theodosia Okoh, and Annie Jiaage. These figures serve as reminders of the importance of women's rights, economic empowerment, and the role of women in shaping the world.

On the pillars of the Tetteh Quarshie Interchange is a mural representing the entrance to the land of the living dead. These symbols are circular renditions showing a rotation around a central point. The outer layer of the symbol is painted yellow and divided with red lines. The divisions are embellished with a collection of Ga Samai symbols in dark blue. The symbols portray an overhead view of a well that revolves at high speed towards the bottom. These symbols are projected by a background of blue textures.

On the wings of the wall bearing the veneration of the National Heroines is a depiction of the marine ecosystem. The water is painted dark tones of blue and brilliantly coloured fishes, plants and bubbles. The fishes in the distance are silhouetted to give the work perspectival details.

The Elemonkbird graffiti mural is a hybrid of trunks and tusks of two elephants, a monkey head and a bird's wings. The work is rendered on a black background, which gives it high contrast. The elephant is represented by its trunk and tusk. The colours are blended to create a three-dimensional illusion of the elephant's head. The two elephant heads are seen as a mirror reflection of each other. In the middle of the picture is a yellow rendition of the head of a monkey. The monkey's head has a curvy lip, edges, impressionistic fur, hollow eye sockets and a nose. This makes the monkey's head appear masked. Inserting through the monkey's eye socket is a rendition of the wings of a bird in blue. According to the muralist, the Elemonkbird is a Dagaati (an ethnic group from Northern Ghana) mythology about creating fruitful life experiences by working together with others.



Figure 10: A Mural of Ten Ghanaian Heroines
Source: Fieldwork, 2021



Figure 11: Murals of the Entrance to the Land of the Living-Dead
Source: Fieldwork, 2021



Figure 12: A Colourful Rendition of the Marine Ecosystem
Source: Fieldwork, 2021



Figure 13: Elemonkbird Mural
Source: Fieldwork, 2021

5. Cultural Insights and Key Narrative

5.1. Rendition of Ghanaian Religious Practices

The murals depicting Ghanaian religious practice are found in the Ako Adjei Interchange Mural. In the mural, the muralist from GAVA portrayed the Ga Chief Priest and Libation pouring among the Gas. In contrast, those from Accra Dot Alt portrayed the initiation rites of the Ga Priestesses, Twin Yam Festival and ancestral veneration. It was revealed in an interview with the respondents from GAVA that the Gas believe that they have their roots from Kush (one of the 12 tribes of Israel). In effect, they have staff who connote the Supreme Being. A muralist from GAVA revealed that The Supreme Being is represented by the Ga Chief Priest (Wulomo). The dress of the figure in the mural is that of the Chief Priest (Wulomo), who is at the top of the hierarchy of leadership in the Ga Society. He oversees spiritual needs, such as performing traditional prayer and coming up with the spiritual roadmap before Homowo Festivities, instituting a ban on drumming and noise-making (MGADIM2). According to the muralist, the Chief Priest is revered as a holy person who has personal contact with God. He communicates messages from God to the Mantse, while the Mantse also consults him for spiritual information on issues in the Kingdom. The Gas uses *Ngbge Daan* and water in pouring libations. The *Ngbge Daan* is a wine prepared from maize, and its significance is connected to the hunger they faced when they migrated to Accra. During the period of hunger, they found a grain, planted it, and it yielded. Accordingly, they made the wine and many things out of it, and that is why they used it in pouring libations. However, the Europeans brought in schnapps, and the Gas preferred it to the Ngbe Daan in the pouring of libation (MGADIM2).

To please God, they used the British Schnapps. However, the Chief Priest occasionally uses the Ngbe Daan to perform the libation. Libation among the Gas has a set of arranged incantations. They start by calling the Supreme Being (God), their maker, the earth god, and their deities. These deities are Nungua, Sakumono, Korle, Osu, and Klotey. Ancestors, such as the first chiefs, their descendants, and the first settlers, are also mentioned. This hierarchy is mentioned before their needs- seeking blessings and support from the hierarchy. Another religious practice of the Gas portrayed in the works is the Initiation Rites of the Ga Priestesses. The muralist postulated in an interview that the Ga Priestesses undergo training to certify them with the spiritual ethics and impetus to serve the Chief Priest in overseeing the spiritual needs of the Gas. After the training, they are initiated in a private ceremony during which it is believed that the spirits descend on them. As such, they make utterances believed to be of the spirits. In order not to reveal their identities, they are costumed in masks.

5.2. Rendition of Chieftaincy in the Murals

The chieftain portrayed in the mural is that of the Gas. Aside from seeking the spiritual needs of the people, the Ga Chief Priests are the kingmakers of the Ga Kingdom. Staff or the sword, representing the chieftain of the Gas, has the Ga Mantse and administrative head. The Ga Mantse leads them in wars, cultural traditions and developmental issues. The Chief seated with his linguist denotes the durbars organized during festivals and at the visit of a prominent person(s). This is where the Chief presents information to the people. The muralist asserted that all clans within Ga Mashie, such as *Aseni*, *Otublohu*, and *Gbesei*, have unique customs. Hence, when the occasion arises, all the chiefs and the people organize a durbar. Thus, there is no plan or calendar for organizing durbars except for festivals. The Ga Mantse and the sub-chiefs sit in state and walk among the people to show their authority and communality. Shaking hands with the Ga Mantse is an honour to the Gas, so the people get the opportunity at such instances when he walks among them. The Chiefs and the people are calm and receptive, which is why Accra became cosmopolitan.

5.3. Rendition of Festivals in the Murals

Homowo and Twin Yam Festival are the two festivals depicted in the murals. The muralist rendered the people in red costumes and the sprinkling of the Kpokpoi at the Homowo Festival. The muralist averred that the festival starts at Nungua amidst performing rituals such as libation offerings and sprinkling of *kpokpoi*. Then it comes to *Gamashie*, and then to *Nungua* and then to *La* and *Teshie*. This follows the direction of the sunrise to the sunset, which is in line with how the Gas settled in Accra. However, the sprinkling of the *kpokpoi* has no relation to the sun's movement. The Ga Mantse goes to his ancestral homes in Abola and Gbesei, where he was selected to commune. The *kpokpoi* is prepared from corn dough and bigger fish from the sea. The food is eaten, but it must be sprinkled at key houses first. The Ga Mantse chooses one of the critical houses to sprinkle the food. The sub-chiefs also visit their ancestral homes to do the same. After the Chiefs are done with their part comes merry-making and fun. The food is served in a big earthenware bowl and pot, and then the Chief or the Head of the family scoops it into an earthenware bowl. It is eaten with washed hands. Everything must be consumed that day, and the people and their chiefs feast together at their ancestral home. Family and community members, including feuding parties, feast together. As a result, unity and resolution of conflicts are attained. Part of the food is also sprinkled to feed their ancestors since they believe in life after death- thus, the ancestors are still alive, only that they have transitioned to the other world.

Noowala, which means to give life, is said among members. That is to shower people with excellent words or good wishes. "*Afe ooo Afe, next year we will still be alive. You would have gotten what you want, and you would have succeeded in what you have stated. The person will speak directly to your problems if they know them,*" - This is just like seasonal greetings for the Christmas and New Year seasons. Another festival portrayed in the mural is the twin festival of the Gas. It is performed every year to honour twins in Ga Mashie. The muralist affirmed that the festival is presently attached to the Homowo Festival in the ceremony, but each serves a different purpose. In the Twin Festival, the Gas uses yam in the preparation of food. The significance of the yam is that it educates people on the need to be hardworking (Nortey, 2012). Also, the festival involves a house cleansing ritual. This ritual entails the preparation of a concoction with *nyanya* herbs

and seawater. Sometimes, eggs, money and other things are added to the concoction. After the concoction is prepared, incantations are said over it. People also speak their problems over it, and then it is carried and poured into the sea. By pouring away the concoction, it is believed that the problems that were said on it are being poured away. The muralist affirmed that sometimes people apply some of the concoction on their hair and face. Additionally, separate mixtures are made for the twins and the household. In portraying this aspect of the Ga Mashie culture, the muralist realistically depicted people carrying the concoctions in basins and a woman pouring the concoction.

5.4. Rendition of Dress Culture in the Murals

The research found that in the rendition of the king/chief, the chief priest and the people, it was incumbent on the muralist to portray them in their respective dress and regalia. This was achieved by portraying them in a context that makes them easily recognizable to the viewer. Owing to this, the Wulomo was depicted in his white cloth and headgear near the libation pouring. The Ga Mantse was also depicted in his traditional clothes while seated with his linguist. In the muralist's view, dressing for occasions by African women is incomplete without accessories such as earrings, bangles, and necklaces. Bead jewels are exclusively portrayed in the works of the king/chief, heroines, and celebrants of the festival, who are wearing white and yellow beads. This gives credence to an assertion by Opoku (2010) that individuals adorned themselves with extremely expensive beads to demonstrate their social standing. These accessories are used to enhance their beauty. Hence, in a bid to depict the female figures, they first considered the curvy stature of the Ga women before their clothes and ornaments. These ornaments include traditional beads worn around the waist, neck, and wrist and more of them are seen during festive occasions. Another source of inspiration for the muralist is the Dipo Puberty Rites among the Krobos. Dipo involves girls wearing a *danta* dress with beads on their waist and exposing their breasts and hips to project their beauty. One notable culture along the coastal communities or rivers in Ghana is seeing children swim naked. Due to this, the muralist portrayed people engaged in fishing and transportation of goods and services without wearing clothes.

The study also found that the muralist chose brilliant colours while painting the traditional Ghanaian outfits of the Ghanaian heroines. Their dresses included printed fabric and kente. Also, a variety of styles of dressing with printed and Kente fabrics were depicted. These are the wearing of the cloth in toga style over a garment and strapping it around the chest- either bare-chested or over a garment. Necklaces and bangles featured prominently in their costume. Dresses in the form of elaborate gowns that are usually seen in the masquerade parading festivals were painted to portray the heroines in their afterlife abode. The nature of the dresses corroborates with Micots' (2012) assertion that tailors create patchwork and striped costumes that are paired with a cloth or rubber animal or horror mask from the region.

5.5. Ghanaian Visual Symbols in the Murals

Visual symbols from the Akan and Ga cultures are featured greatly in the murals. The findings of the research revealed that red costumes among the Gas during the Homowo Festival signify two things: remembrance of hunger and rejoicing over the abundance of food. History has shown that the Gas went through a long period of hunger due to drought. There was a famine for some time, and they prayed to God and had enough food. Therefore, they become poised to recall the associated sorrow and joy. Red is, therefore, used to portray mixed emotions - recounting the hardships they went through and expressing their joy and appreciation to God for giving them a bountiful harvest and enough food to eat.

Traditional motifs of the Akans were painted in AICC mural. They include an Akuaba doll which is also a symbol of beauty and fertility in the Akan culture of Ghana. And a variety of Adikra symbols. In the Ako-Adjei Interchange mural, the Mankota Mankono symbol was painted in patterns on the eight northern pillars and boldly represented between the libation and the seated Ga Mantse and as a linguist staff of the linguist of the Ga Mantse. This symbol shows the Gas' premium on the importance of better strategies in leadership and a great society. The Ga Samai was also portrayed in the murals on the eight northern pillars, the northern block and the Tetteh Quarshie Interchange. According to the muralist from Accra Dot Alt, painting the symbols in the works contextualizes the murals within Ga culture and promotes symbols like that of the Adinkra symbols. The depictions of the symbols in the works are in congruence with Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Appiah and Nartey's (2016) assertion that traditional symbols are a primarily literal translation of thought and ideas, expressing and symbolizing the people's values and beliefs.

5.6. Mythological Concepts in the Murals

One of the belief systems of Ghanaians and some Africans is the concept of life after death. This belief has driven art on the continent throughout known history. These concepts were applied in the murals to portray the spiritual and ideological beliefs of Ghanaian society. In consonance with Maček (2018), the research found that mythological themes were portrayed to establish the identity of Ghanaians. The belief in life after death is shared within cultures in Ghana. Based on this, the muralist chose to include the ideal life the national heroines are supposed to enjoy in their afterlife. Figure 12 shows a picture of the spiritual realms during the initiation of the Ga Priestesses. The Elemonkbird mural is also based on a mythology of the elephant, bird, and monkey coming together to make a beautiful society. The findings of the research show that different, related and unrelated subject matter, individual items, or their parts were composed to convey mythological themes of Ghanaian society (Drewal, 2008; Murulaid & Mastriano, 2017).

6. Conclusion

The study findings reveal that the murals predominantly depict a limited scope of Ghanaian culture, predominantly focusing on Akan and Ga cultural traditions. These artworks highlight aspects such as religious ceremonies, festivals, chieftaincy, attire, the historical evolution of Accra, and the honoring of Ghanaian national figures. Additionally, they

reinforce perceptions of Ghanaian women and the societal expectations placed upon Ghanaians. The impact of these murals on the perception of national identity, cultural heritage, and civic values among Ghanaians is considerable. As a result of the cultural elements depicted, Ghanaians often feel a strong sense of connection to these murals.

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