

University of Ghana  
Faculty of Social Studies  
Department of Archaeology

Semester course outline

Course Title: Art History of Ghana

Course Code:- ARCH 307

Course Type: Archaeology/Elective

Target Group: a) Level 300 and Level 400 undergraduates  
b) Students on International programmes from  
USA, UK etc.

Lecturer Schedule: As in University Time Table

Lecture : Professor James Anquandah

## **I COURSE OVERVIEW**

1. Archaeology is concerned with cultural heritage studies of which the arts (visual, verbal, performance) form an important part. Doubts were

entertained in the western world in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as to whether Art history studies in Africa was possible or desirable. Such doubts no longer hold sway as there is overwhelming archaeological as well as extant ethnographic evidence for artistic production among diverse peoples in Africa, over many centuries. There are numerous examples that substantiate this, for instance:

- a) Namibian Foragers rock art (25000BC); (b) Saharan Neolithic rock arts (5000-1000 BC); (c) Pharaonic Egyptian/Kushite/Nubian and Ethiopian arts (4000 BC-AD 1500); (d) Episodes of Nigerian arts (Nok, Ife, Igbo Ukwu, Owo, Esie, Benin) dating from 700BC to 1800 AD; (e) Zimbabwe-Monomotapa culture arts (AD 1200-1700) (f) Episodes of Ghanaian arts (Kintampo Complex, Koma-Bulsa, Akan-2000BC-1800AD)

(2) Various art works as seen in these contexts provide primary evidence of historical events and cultural developments. The task of scholars engaged in documenting art history is to trace continuities and change in the development (over space and time) of form, style, function and meaning of art works and above all, how these reflect the thinking and socio-cultural values of the artist's societies in the past. Hence the study of art and art history *per se* contributes to the development of different aspects of history-social, economic, political, cultural etc.

(3) Archaeology and Art history, in a sense, may be viewed as convenient bedfellows: both disciplines by and large employ the *Artefact or object* as the subject for academic analysis, unlike Anthropology and History which focus attention chiefly on the *social context* of the artifact. By their preoccupation with detailed

studies on the cultural inventory of past societies, archaeologists and art historians, as it were, portray in filigree the societies they study.

In most Sub-Saharan African societies, where written history is a relatively recent genre and oral traditions are often weakened by distortion, archaeology, in spite of the fragmentary nature of its surviving data, serves as fairly reliable source. Its peculiar method of investigation and dating facility bring enrichment and authenticity to art studies and invests it with historic time-depth.

Most archaeologists are non-eclectic and do not put priority, as they should, on detailed enquiry into the images and depictions present in art works retrieved from archaeological sites. Hence the onus is on Art historians to apply their peculiar ideas and research canons in the elucidation of the somewhat cryptic messages embedded in historic art works so that the authors of these art works and their socio-cultural contexts can be better understood and appreciated.

## **II COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The major objectives of the course include the following:

1. To survey with the class the salient literature and data related to the research canons of the discipline of Art history, as applied in Western academia and to ascertain, to what extent, and in what ways, such canons can be effectively applied in art historic studies in Sub-Saharan Africa, in general and Ghana, in particular; such that by the end of the semester course the student would be acquainted with the Method and Theory of Art history and be able to strategise appropriately in any future research.

2. To guide the class to come to grips with the know-how of multi-disciplinary or eclectic approach so vital in social sciences research in Sub-Saharan Africa; and to lead the class to identify and appreciate the key methods and ideas of study available to the archaeologist, art historian anthropologist or the historian operating in Sub-Saharan Africa so that ultimately they would be equipped to carry out project work on their own whether in art studies or whatever, by the application of the eclectic approach, and use of appropriate research instruments.
3. To involve all course participants in practical work in Department Laboratory or Museum on campus, as well as in off-campus Art Galleries/Museums; such practical studies will entail detailed examination and analysis of specimens of art work originating from local archaeological sites or ethnographic contexts (e.g. terracottas, metal vessels or gold weights, ceramics with motifs, ancient ornamented buildings etc.); it is envisaged that thereby, when subsequently confronted with actual art works, students would be in a position to make critical appraisal on the basis of known canons of art history.

### **III TEACHING AND LEARNING METHOD/APPROACH**

1. Teaching and learning will be *Interactive* in approach with a view to promoting “deep learning” as opposed to “superficial” or “strategic” learning.

This approach entails a multi-pronged teaching strategy including the following:

- Lecturing
- Tutorial with individuals or groups

- Small students “Buzz” group work. This approach will sometimes be used as a “sandwich” in case of a two-hour long lecture
- Occasional seminar with student presentations
- Practical work involving examination and discussion of specimen cultural materials in laboratory, museums, galleries etc.

## **2. Experiential Learning**

Franz Boas, an American Art scholar told his students:

“We have to turn our attention first of all to the Artist himself or herself”

To this end, in this course, each student will be expected to: (a) develop a questionnaire research instrument; (b) target a practicing or professional local artist or group of artists engage in a one to one or focus group interview document and analyse the findings and (c) produce an original independent paper for assessment as an important component of the University examination

## **3. INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA**

- a. The nature of archaeology and art history requires that lectures and tutorials should, whenever appropriate, be illustrated by means of overhead projector-cum-transparency images or PowerPoint facilities.
- b. Recommended Books or Journal articles will be put on reserve in campus library for students’ use.
- c. Whenever necessary, the lecturer will issue to students printed handouts from book chapters, maps, diagrams, illustrations etc.

- d. Internet facilities are available in the University
- e. There will be opportunity for students to examine actual archaeological and ethnographic materials in the Department's museum, off-campus field sites, and galleries.

## **IV COURSE TOPICS**

### **PART ONE**

1. Introductory Briefing on: Time table, course content, teaching/learning approach, study materials, assessment procedures, introduction of lecturer and students.
2. Concepts of "Art" and "Artist" – Definition and discussions. (a) *Art*: Western ideas of "art" and indigenous concepts and practice in small-scale societies;  
Art as aspect of culture; as creative process (at cognitive and manual levels); properties and characteristics of art; types of art works in terms of character and roles in the cycle of life in society-technological, architectural, economic, ritual/religious, leadership/governance, social control etc.  
(b) *Artist*: Life and work, skill and training, tools and resources, production team, artists' guild, status in society, patron(s).
3. Approaches to Art Studies: Discussion of relative contributions of different Social Science disciplines towards evolution of Art studies in general.
  - a. Anthropological Contribution: Concepts of Evolutionism, Functionalism, Structuralism, Historical Particularism.
  - b. Archaeological Contribution: Concepts of Classification, typology and seriation; stratigraphy; site provenance; archaeological "culture complex", Relative and absolute methods of chronology/dating.

- c. Art historic Contribution: Concepts of Medium, attribute, style, function, form criteria (morphological analysis), quality criteria (aesthetics and ethnoaesthetics), iconography, iconology and symbolism.
4. African Art Studies: State of the Art/Discipline-Discussion as to whether such expressions as “African art history,” “Nigerian art history” or “Ghanaian art history” can be validated or justified?

## **PART TWO**

5. Ghana’s environment and resources: Physical features and characteristics and human ethnic/cultural identities as factors in artistic development through time and space
6. The Multi-disciplinary research strategy: Its importance in studies on Ghana’s art history and art.
7. History of Art Studies in Ghana: Discussions of contributions by 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars:
- a. Explorers/Scientists/Diplomats e.g. T.E.Bowdich (1819).
  - b. Anthropologist e.g. R.S. Rattray (1927)
  - c. Art Historians e.g. R. Sieber (1972); H.M. Cole (1975, 1977)  
Quaracooopome (2003)
  - d. Cultural Historians e.g. D.H. Ross (1977, 1998), T.F. Garrard (1980, 1984, 2003), M.D. McLeod (1981, 1987).
  - e. Archaeologists e.g. J. Bellis (1972), O. Davies (1977), J. Anquandah (1982, 1998, 2003)
  - f. Architects e.g. M. Swithenbank (1969), A. Hyland (1974)
  - g. Professional Artist e.g. K. Antubam (1963)

8. Case Studies on Prehistoric and Historic Art Traditions in Ghana  
2000BC to present:
- a. prehistoric Kintampo Complex, “Ghana’s earliest arts” (2000BC – 500BC)
  - b. Akan terracotta arts (AD 1500-1900) – Examination of European written sources, oral traditions, ethnographic documentations, and archaeological excavations (Garrard 1984; Rattray 1927, Sieber 1972; Bellis 1972; Davies 1977; Quarcoopome, 2003)
  - c. Akan metal arts (AD 1400 to present) – Brass gold wights; Brass *Kuduo* and *Forowa* vessels; gold sword ornaments.
  - d. Akan Textile arts (AD 1700 to present) – *Kente*, *Adinkra*, Asafo Company flags etc.
  - e. Asante *Abosomfie* cult buildings (19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century)
  - f. Fante Posuban Asafo Company Buildings (18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century)
  - g. Koma – Balsa arts (AD 1200 – 1800)
  - h. Northern Ghana masking arts (19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century)

## V. ASSESSMENT

- a. Assessment of Students’ learning
  - i. Continuous assessment in class (oral presentations; multiple choice questions; and essay –type questions)
  - ii. Independent Field Project Essay – 30%
  - iii. Formal University Semester Examination – 70%
- b. Students’ assessment of course and teaching.

## VII. READING LIST

### (A) RECOMMENDED GENERAL TEXTS

1. Adams M. 1989 African Visual arts from an art historical perspective  
*African Studies review* 32(2):55-103
2. Anderson, R. 1989 *Art in small –scale societies* Prentice Hall
3. Ben-David, J. 1973 How to organize research in the social sciences  
*Daedalus* 102(2):39-51 American Academy of Arts and Sciences,  
Cambridge MA.
4. Bernardi, B. 1991. The aesthetic criteria: towards an understanding of  
African art, *Arte in Africa* Edited by Bassani, E and Speranza G.  
Florence Centre for African Art.
5. Ben-Amos, P. 1989 African Visual arts from a social perspective,  
*African Studies Review* 32(2): - 1 – 53.
6. Brain, R. 1980 *Art and Society in Africa* Longman.
7. Boas, F. 1927 *Primitive Art* Oslo
8. Dewey, J. 1958 *Art as experience* New York
9. Drewal, H.J. and Pemberton, J. 1989 *Yoruba-Nine Centuries of Africa  
Art and Thought*.
10. Gardner, H. 1980 *Art through the Ages* Harcourt Brace
11. Gombrich, E.H. 1967 *The Story of Art* Phaidon.
12. Jansen, H. W. 1962 *History of Art* Prentice Hall, New York
13. Lhote, H. 1958 *A la decouverte de fresques du Tassili* Parigi
14. Ki-Zerbo, J. 1981 African Prehistoric Art *UNESCO General History of  
Africa. Vol. 2;656-686*
15. National Museum of African Art 1987 *African Art Studies-the state of  
the discipline* (Papers by R. Sieber, H.J. Drewal, E. Eyo, R. Abiodun,  
A.A. Gerbrands) Smithsonian Institution Washington.

16. Ottenberg, S. 193 Ninth Triennial Symposium on African Art Forty years of African Art Studies *African Arts* 26(1) : 71 – 73 and 91 – 93.
17. Panofsky, E. 1955 Iconography and iconology *Meaning in the Visual Arts* Garden City, N. J.
18. Philips, T. (Ed) 1995 – *Africa-the Art of a continent* Royal Academy of Arts, London. (Papers by K. Appiah and John Picton)
19. Vansian, J. 1984 *Art History in Africa – an introduction to method*, Longman.
20. Willett, F. 1971 *African Art*, an introduction Thames and Hudson, London.
21. Woldering, I. 1963 *Egypt: Art of the Pharaohs*

## **B. RECOMMENDED TEXTS ON GHANA ARTS STUDIES**

22. Anquandah, J. 1982 *Rediscovering Ghana's past* Longman
23. Anquandah, J. 1998 *Koma-Bulsa: its art and archaeology* ISIAO, Rome
24. Anquandah, J. 2003 *The Arts of Koma-Bulsa, Ghana yesterday and today* p. 134-149. Ed. C. Falgayrettes-Levau and C. Owusu-Sarpong, Paris.
25. Antubam, K. 1963 *Ghana's heritage of culture* Koehler and Amelang Leipzig.
26. Bellis, J.O. 1992 *Archaeology and the culture history of the Akan of Ghana* PhD Thesis, Indiana University.
27. Bowdich, T. E. 1819 *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* John Murray, London.
28. Cole, H. M. 1975 *The Art of Festival in Ghana* *African Arts* 8(3): 12 – 23.
29. Cole, H. M. and Ross, D.H. 1977 *The arts of Ghana* U.C.L.A Los Angeles

30. Davies, O. 1977 *Excavations at Ahinsan, Ashanti, Ghana A. 17<sup>th</sup> century Site with ritual pottery and terracottas. Pietermaritzburg, Natal University.*
31. Erlich, M. 1976 A catalogue of Art taken from Kumasi in the Anglo-Ashanti War of 1874 PhD Thesis Indiana University.
32. Fox, C. 1988 *Asante brass casting: Lost wax casting of goldweights, ritual vessels and sculptures Cambridge African studies centre monographs, Cambridge*
33. Garrard, T. F. 1980 *Akan Weights and the gold trade*, Longman.
34. Garrard, T.F. Figurine cults of the southern Ghana *Iowa studies in African Art* Edited by C.D. Roy p. 167 – 190. University of Iowa
35. Garrard, T. F. 2003 Akan Metal Art *Ghana yesterday and today* p. 151-183. Edited by C. F. Leveau and C. Owusu-Sarpong. Musee Dapper, Paris
36. Hyland, A.D.C. 1974 An introduction to the traditional and historical architecture of Ghana M. Dodds (Editor). *History of Ghana*, Accra.
37. Kwami, Atta, 2003 Ghanaian Art in a time of Change *Ghana yesterday and today* Ed. By C. F. Leveau and C. Owusu Sarpong Musee Dapper, Paris
38. McLeod M. D. 1981 *The Asante* British Museum
39. McLeod, M. D. 1987 Asante goldweights-images and words. *Word and Image* 3(3): 289-295
40. Nunley, J. W. 1977 Sikilen : Transformation of a Sisala Masquerade. *African Arts* : 58-64.
41. Posnansky, M. 1979 Dating Ghana's earliest art *African Arts* 12(1): 52-53 U.C.L.A. Los Angeles.
42. Quarcoopome, N.O. 2003 Ancient funerary portraits *Ghana yesterday and today* edited C. F. Leveau and C. Owusu Sarpong Musee Dapper, Paris.

43. Rattrary, R. S. 1927 *Religion and Art* in Ashanti Clarendon Press, Oxford.
44. Ross, D. H. 1977 The iconography of Asante gold sword ornaments, *Africa Arts* 11(1) : 16-25,90.
45. Ross, D. H. 1998 *Wrapped in Pride-Ghanaian Kente and African American Identity*, (Papers by Ross, Quarcoopome, Adedze etc.) Fowler Museum of Cultural History U.C.L.A Los Angeles.
46. Sieber, R. 1972 Kwahu terracottas, oral traditions and Ghanaian history *African Art and Leadership* Edited by D. Fraser and H. M. Cole p. 173-183 Madison.
47. Swithenbank M. 1969 *Ashanti Fetish houses* Accra.

### **C. OTHER READINGS.**

48. Alpers, S. 1977 Is Art history? *Daedalus*, 106:1-13.
49. Berns, M. 1980 African Art Studies in the 1980s. *Africa Arts* 4:15-23, 90 U.C.L.A.
50. Biebuyk, D. 1983 Africa Art Studies since 1957. *African Studies Review* 26(3 - 4) : 99 – 118
51. Eyo, E. and Willett, F. 1980 *Treasures of Ancient Nigeria*.
52. Gerbrands, A. A. 1990 the History of African Art Studies *African Art Studies* 11 – 28
53. Niangoran – Bouah, G. 1984-87 *L'univers Akan des poids a peser l' or* (Akan world of gold weights ) Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, Abidjan.
54. Perrois, Louis 1972 *La Statuaire Fang* Paris (Model on Morphological analysis in Art history).