

NAME OF THE ELEMENT: TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP OF “AYEWA” (EARTHENWARE BOWL): A CULTURAL HERITAGE OF TANOSO AND KOKOKROM.

DOMAIN: TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP

COMMUNITY: TANOSO, KOKOKROM AND KPANDO

REGION: ASHANTI REGION

DESCRIPTION: The ICH element known as Ayewa, or Earthenware Bowls, is a cherished tradition practiced by local potters in the communities of Tanoso, Kokokrom and Kpando. This traditional craftsmanship involves the meticulous process of transforming clay into circular objects with distinct openings and well-shaped bases. The physical locations of Tanoso and Kokokrom serve as the central hubs for the enactment of this heritage, reflecting a tangible connection between the craft and its cultural roots.

PROCESS: The process begins with the collection of clay using tools such as a pickaxe for digging, a shovel for fetching, and a tricycle called "Aboboyaa" for transport to the molding premise. The clay is mixed with water and pounded using a pestle to achieve the desired texture, with the pestle dipped in water to prevent sticking. Once pounded, the clay is kneaded to eliminate hidden air and remove unwanted materials like stones. The clay is then cut into a preferred size using hands or a cutlass, molded into a round shape, and placed on a potter's wheel. The wheel, set at a low speed, anchors the clay while the potter, with wet hands, taps the top and sides to center and secure the clay. The potter shapes the clay by applying even pressure, gradually increasing the wheel speed for height and width adjustments. Compression of the pot rim widens the pot, and the potter uses fingertips for shaping and thickness. The potter inserts a hand to create an inside curve and uses a bamboo knife to add lines for easy grinding. Excess clay is cleaned with foam and water, and a wire cuts the base for easy removal from the wheel. The formed clay, called "Ayewa," is dried in sunlight and then placed in a brick-sealed oven. The oven, fueled by periodically checked and pushed firewood, heats the Ayewa for over 24 hours. The drying and heating process typically spans three days before the finished pot is removed from the oven.

The practitioners directly involved in Ayewa's creation are men and women aged 18 to 60. Their skills are complemented by the contributions of other community members, including auto mechanics, carpenters, tricycle riders, and masons, who provide essential support in various stages of the crafting process. The language of communication during the practice includes Sefwi and Twi, emphasizing the cultural context embedded in every step of Ayewa's creation.

The enactment of Ayewa involves a multitude of tangible elements, from traditional tools like pick axes, cutlasses, and shovels to specialized instruments like potters' wheels, bamboo knives, and cutting wires. Additionally, the use of firewood, bricks, and an oven highlights the fusion of traditional and contemporary methods in this age-old craft.

Beyond its tangible aspects, Ayewa holds significant intangible value within the community. It plays a vital role in the preparation of traditional meals and medicines, contributing to the rich culinary and medicinal heritage of the region. Moreover, Ayewa is employed in chieftaincy rituals and festivals, underscoring its cultural importance beyond the realm of craftsmanship. The sustainability of Ayewa faces several threats, including deforestation, the unavailability of advanced equipment, and challenges in obtaining permits to cut down trees. Additionally, the reluctance of the youth to engage in the demanding work poses a risk to the transmission of this cultural heritage. Efforts to safeguard Ayewa include the strategic harvesting and storage of clay before the rainy season, ensuring a consistent supply for practitioners.

The relevance of Ayewa to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is evident, aligning with SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). By sustaining this cultural practice, the community contributes to poverty reduction, food security, and economic development.

In conclusion, Ayewa embodies the intricate blend of tangible and intangible elements, weaving together tradition, craftsmanship, and cultural significance. While facing challenges, the community's commitment to preserving and transmitting Ayewa showcases the resilience of cultural heritage in the face of modernization.

Photography:



Consent: TANOSO AND KOKOKROM

Submitted by: National Folklore Board