



Colours of the Ghanaian Savannah

Foreword

Barbara Putz-Plecko



Barbara Putz-Plecko
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The University of Applied Arts Vienna (Austria) and the Nubuke Foundation (Ghana) have for years been working together in a spirit of fruitful partnership. This cooperative relationship is based on shared appreciation of diverse cultures, active interest in various traditions and forms of practice, active interest in storing knowledge, in perspectives and visions, as well as the joy we have in learning together – from each other and with each other – with a view to contributing constructively and collaboratively to solutions of current and future problems.

The team of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, under the direction of Barbara Putz-Plecko and Christoph Kaltenbrunner, found tremendously active, visionary and reliable partners in the team of the Nubuke Foundation, and in particular in Odile Tevie and Kofi Setordji, and is pleased to be able to pursue, step by step, the objectives set forth in the memorandum that both teams jointly formulated.



Odile Tevie
Co-Founder and Director, Nubuke Foundation

The cooperative undertaking between the Nubuke Foundation and the University of Applied Arts has the following aims:

- a. to share artistic experience and practical and theoretical knowledge in:
 - 1) weaving and dyeing traditions and current forms of practice as well as in
 - 2) their historical, cultural and technical foundations;
 - 3) in the conditions, climate and context in which the craft is practiced;
- b. to create a trans-cultural learning community in close collaboration with practitioners and local communities;
- c. to develop a knowledge base of textile material culture for the benefit of future activities and agendas of the new Textile and Clay Centre of the Nubuke Foundation in Wa;
- d. to stimulate contemporary art practices and trans-disciplinary practice-based research scenarios;
- e. to collate and disseminate indigenous knowledge and skills to foster their transformation into contemporary and future use (for example, by creating a local physical archive, a digital archive, a website; preparing didactic materials) and to bolster the weaving culture as a part of the regional heritage that provides a means of subsistence;
- f. to foster skills, knowledge and creative, artistic and technical ingenuity as the basis of excellent craftsmanship and innovation;
- g. to stimulate field research in collaboration with regional cultural organisations (for example the Centre of National Culture);
- h. to encourage openness towards the new being a precondition for the development of visions for the future – a future both individual and collective.¹⁾

1) Excerpt from the Memorandum of Understanding between the Nubuke Foundation and the University of Applied Arts Vienna, 2019.

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Odile, Barry, Bianca, Karin, Christoph, Kofi, Manuel in front of the Nubuke Centre

Workshop with **Ladji Barry** at the **Textile and Clay Centre of the Nubuke Foundation** in Wa, Ghana, February 2018.

Participants:

Nubuke team:

Kofi Setordji, Odile Tevie, Bianca Manu, Benjamin Thompson

Team of the University of Applied Arts Vienna:

Barbara Putz-Plecko, Christoph Kaltenbrunner, Karin Altmann, Manuel Wandl

In February 2018, a first workshop was held at the Textile and Clay Centre of the Nubuke Foundation under the direction of Ladji Barry, a dyer and artist from Mali. The aim of this first workshop was to establish an initial basis for an “active archive” of the region’s material culture.

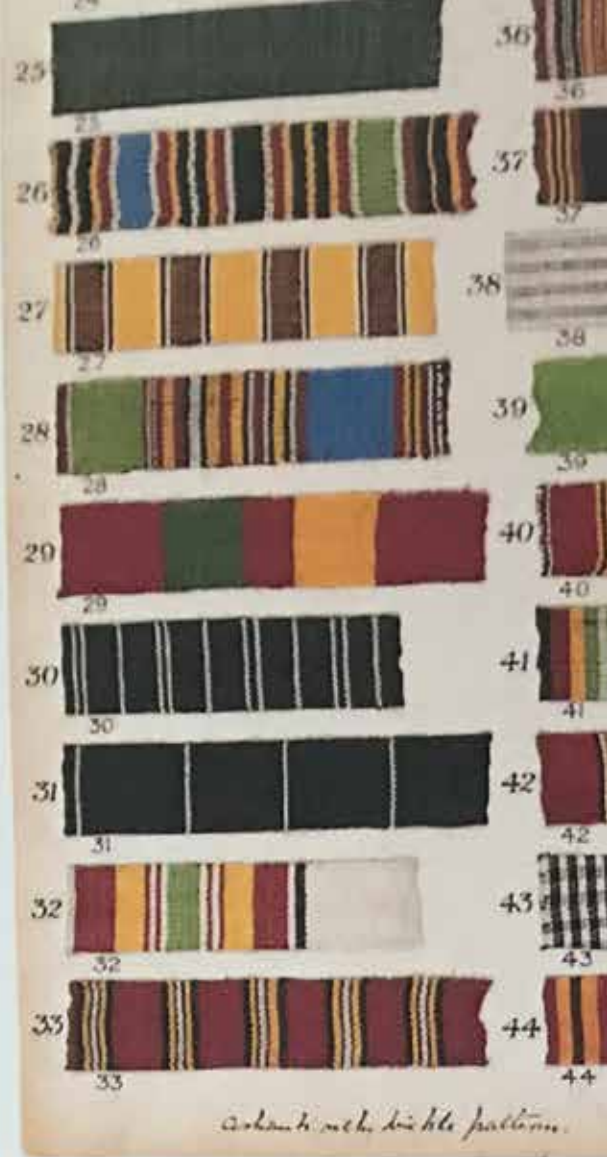
Ghana has a very impressive and multifarious textile tradition. However, here too it is evident that as a result of industrial textile production and importation valuable skills and implicit knowledge about dyeing and weaving cultures are being lost – experience and knowledge that represent an important and indispensable potential for future cultural, economic and social development in the region.

Innovation builds on (historical) implicit and explicit knowledge. A repository of knowledge that is able, by means of a system that is both vigorous and easily accessible, to make the knowledge that has evolved historically understandable, tangible and useful will be a central and valuable tool box for stimulating and supporting regional developments in the field of textile production and for guaranteeing its further professional existence. It is important that such an archive should not be seen as a closed collection but, rather, as an open structure that constantly evolves, expands and transforms. It should be a structure that serves the region and encourages interregional and international exchange, a structure that allows the wonderful qualities and specificities of these textile cultures to be seen beyond national borders.

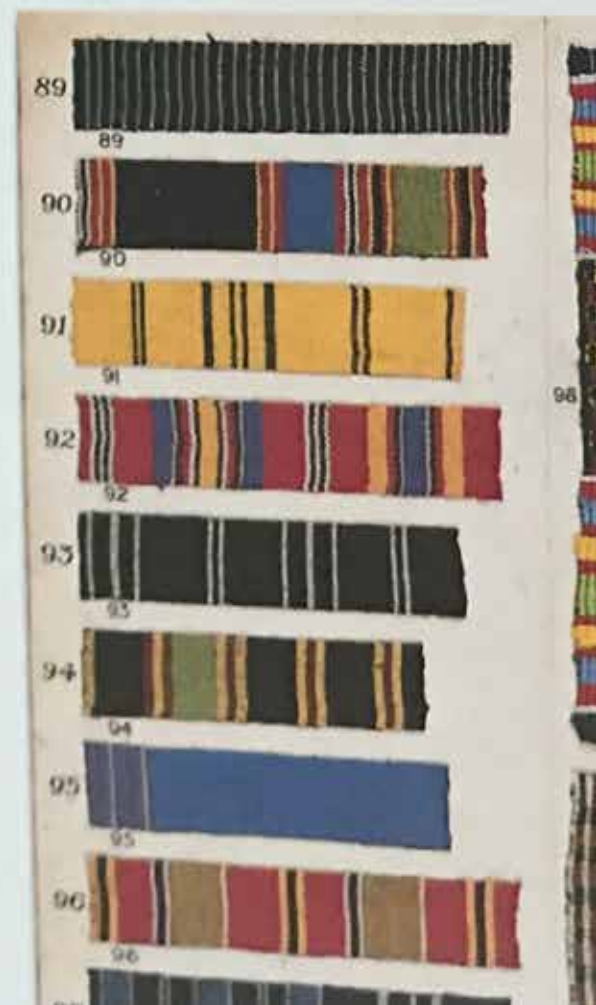
The workshop focusing on the dyeing potentials of plants of the Savannah and on mud dyeing techniques began this examination of regional conditions and resources for textile production.

The following photo gallery shows the sequence of events as the workshop progressed. The captions describe the work phases illustrated.

- (1) Introducing specific qualities of dye (dyed wool from Barry’s own stock)
- (2) Identifying plants in the vicinity of Wa that are used for dyeing (n’galama, mahogany, dana dana, m’peku, mango, neem, teak, orange, yellow root, millet stock, cola nut)
- (3) Categorizing plants used for dyeing
- (4) Preparing materials for systematic dyeing experiments
- (5) Systematic dyeing experiments
- (6) Documentation of dyeing processes with and without the materials to be dyed being treated (with eucalyptus leaves, alum, baking powder, lime juice, vinegar, neem leaves, iron) before and after application of dye
- (7) Preparing materials for mud dyeing; treating them with n’galama
- (8) Painting fabrics with various painting devices
- (9) Set mud dyes



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Introducing specific qualities of dye (dyed wool from Barry's own stock)





Identifying plants in the vicinity of Wa that are used for dyeing





Categorizing plants used for dyeing



THE ART LOSS REGISTER

Object ID

Black	Grey	White	
Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
Black	White	Black	White

cm



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Categorizing plants used for dyeing



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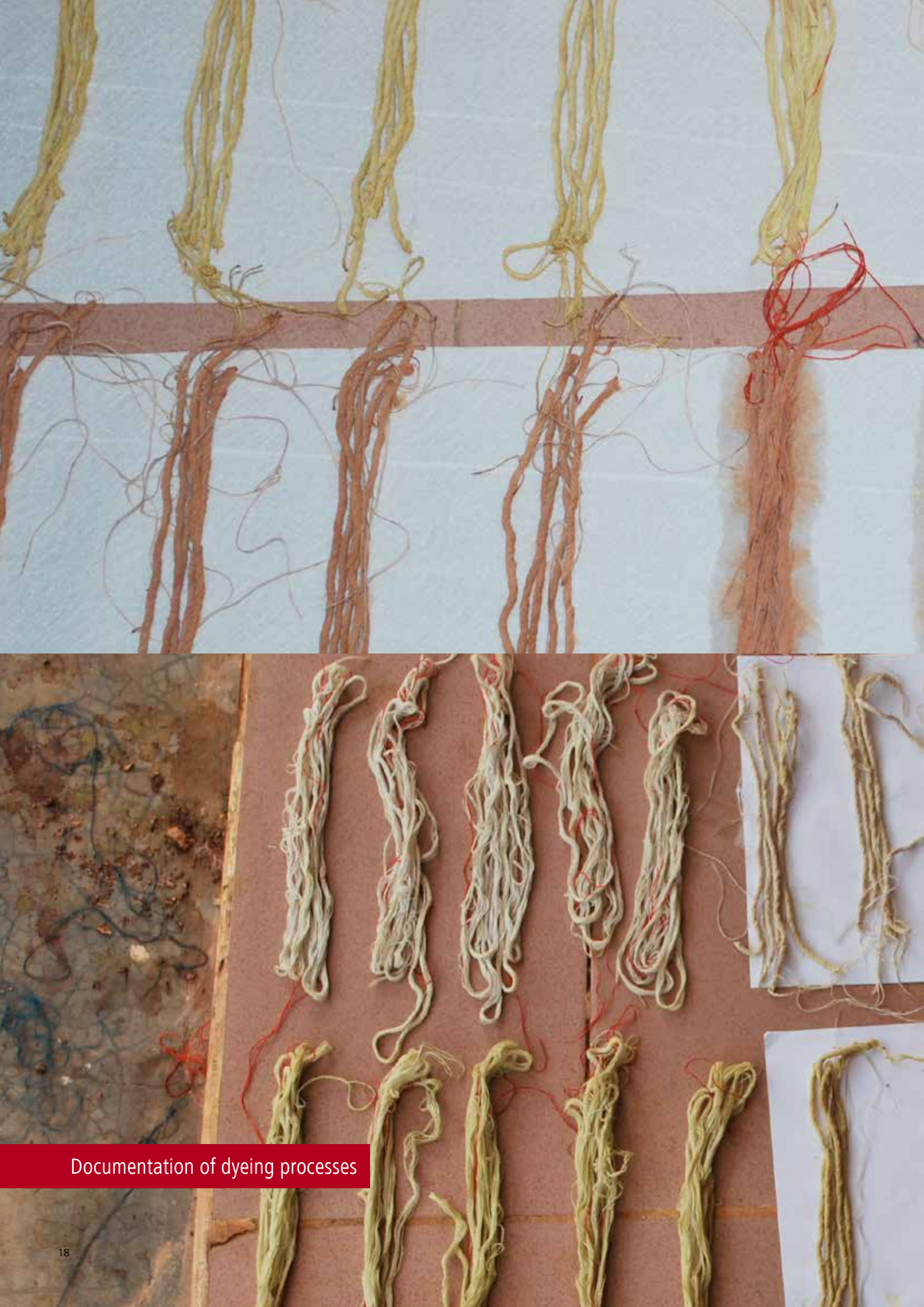
Preparing materials for systematic dyeing experiments



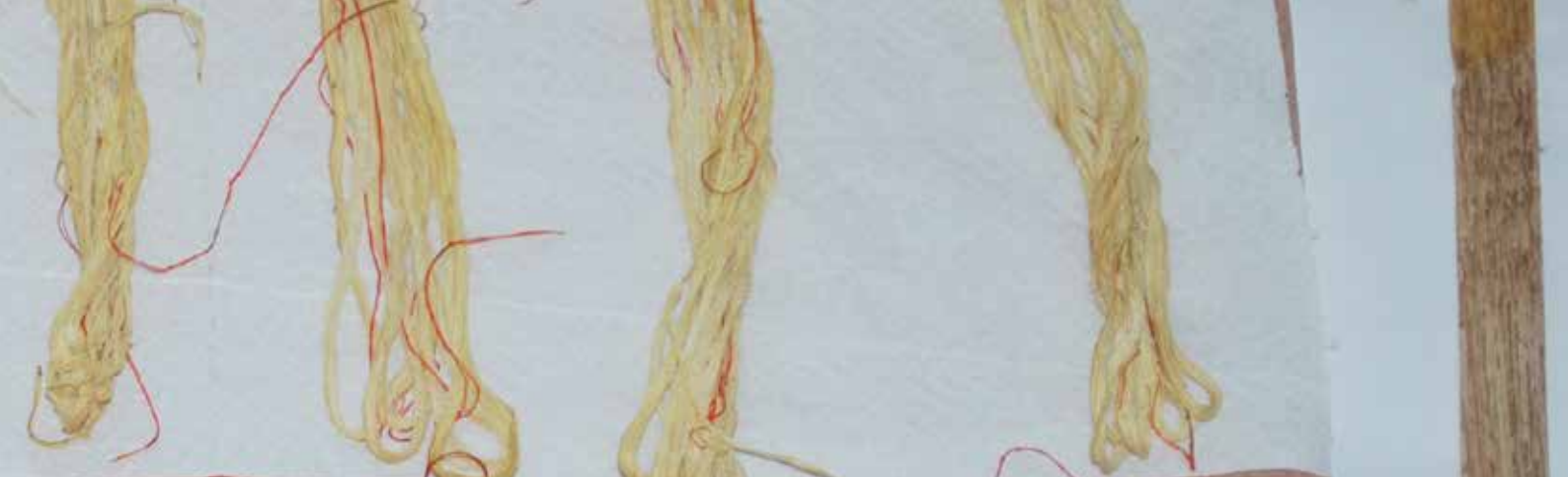


Systematic dyeing experiments





Documentation of dyeing processes





Preparing materials for mud dyeing; treating them with "n'galama"





Painting fabrics with various painting devices





Painting fabrics with various painting devices





Set mud dyes

