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THE PRESENCE OF POWER AND AUTHORITY IN ABSENTIA

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the Master of Fine Art (MFA) in Painting and that: to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor materials which has been accepted for the award of any other degree in the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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ABSTRACT

Societies since time immemorial have been communicating their ideologies, philosophies and beliefs to the outside world through methods and practices systematically and consciously fabricated, adopted and accepted by the generality of the members through time and space. These methods include recording and documentation of events, representation of ideas, expressing and communicating myths of origin, achievements in wars, succession plan, cherished values, taboos, etc. Art forms, more often than not provides the medium through which these ideas are documented or expressed. Societies composed and arranged lyrics or words into appellations, dirges, folklores, songs to recount events and feats, pray; bless or revere the gods, spirits, heroes or heroines; express joy or sadness; urge, motivate or incite the youth etc. Some lyrics are further composed into rhythms for playing and drums, flutes, horns and other instruments. Unique dance movements were choreographed not only to edify, praise or entertain the gods, ancestors, kings, priests, and warriors etc. but also to demonstrate journey through migration, feats in war, escape from enemies, capturing of antagonists as well as socio-economic activities. Images; real or imaginative of the ancestors, gods and spirits were moulded, modelled or carved for religious and secular activities such as rituals, libation, deifying, initiation, installation, performances, veneration, etc. Materials from nature and everyday life provided the avenue for these creative activities. Artworks in the form of drums, stools, linguistic staffs, figurines, masks, ceremonial swords, statues, gold weights, body ornaments, headdresses, pots and scare crow etc., were made in wood, metal, clay, ivory, gourds, leather, cowries and fibres. These items ideated, preserved and perpetuated the beliefs of the said people. Through them the history of the people through time and space is told. They manifest the thoughts, wishes, aspirations and beliefs, account for the progress and development, and provide evidence of the culture of the said people. It is worth

noting that the aphorism of these symbols represent an authority or power which in most cases were absent. The issue of power and authority have been discussed severally at various forums. Many people are confused when it comes to the debate that seeks to draw the parallel between the two. A school of thought feels they mean the same while another thinks otherwise. The knotty issues that constitute the centrality of the argument have been discussed extensively. The standpoints and opinions of astute scholars in „power and authority‟ have been cited and discussed. It is an accepted axiom that the concept and exercise of power and authority are fundamental to the founding, stability and development of any society. Power and authority have been used to influence the behaviours of people in an attempt to sway them in order to change their thoughts, values and behaviours. The use of power and authority create social and political spaces in communities when those in authority become absentees. The management of power and authority during the absence of those who wield them has been the core around which most societies have survived. The crux of the research is derived from the events that characterized the arrest and detention of King Tackie-Tawiah I of the Gá State. The king‟s absence created a political and social space which the elders had to manage with passion and diplomacy. How did they do that? How has the information gathered from this experience influenced other societies in managing power and authority? The attempt in answering these questions ignited this research.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1.   Preamble

The visual arts, over the years, have been used extensively by scholars to represent and explain the philosophies and beliefs of societies through material culture.

1.2.   Statement of the Problem

The concept of power and authority has played a critical role in the study of the social sciences: political science, sociology, political economy, political anthropology, and international relations. The issue of power and authority, scholars assert, is complex and multi-layered thus lack an omnibus definition. Lukes (1974) argues that power is formed by society. According to him, they are inherited from the past in the form of structured or culturally patterned behaviour of groups. Parsons (1963) also explains that the legitimacy of power located in the hands of the leaders of a society is based on the value accorded it by the people as a result of self-perpetuating beliefs. In Ghana today, many chiefs have left their stools/skins, which are objects of power and authority, in the hands of caretakers to take up paid-up jobs in the cities because of changing economic factors and needs. In the past some chiefs, because of political reasons, left their stools/skins to sojourn or stay in exile against their wish. The question which therefore arises is that „how are the people governed?‟ what impact does the absence of the legitimate chief have on the people? These and other questions provide the platform for investigation.

1.3.   Research Question

The following questions among others have been asked over the years. This research is therefore aimed at further articulating them and finding answers to them:

1. How had scholars perceived and explored the issue/concept of power/authority globally?

2. How had members of a common ancestry received/marked the absence of a traditional leader or authority?

3. How can the idea of power and authority be expressed through exhibitions?

1.4.   Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. to investigate the belief system of the Ga people in particular and Ghanaians in general with respect to traditional leadership and authority and how articles of art are used to symbolize power and authority.

2. to explore how the concept of creative arts and art exhibition has been used over the years to express and document social issues.

3. to find out how art and material culture were used to ideate the presence of traditional rulers in ties of absence.

1.5.   Relevance of the Topic

The current trend of art (contemporary art) is more of conceptualization of ideas and issues based on historical epochs and everyday life activities: socio-economic and politico-cultural issues. It provides an avenue for exploration, fusion and hybridization of the arts: methodology, technology, materials and forms, into a unit. This phenomenon has resulted into new dimensions

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and forms of art such as installation and public art. In some cases the visual arts are displayed with the accompaniment of music, dance, drama, poetry, video etc. The works are to make statements and address issues of local, national and global concerns. These new developments have widened the scope of art creating a large space for creativity and innovation. The challenge is how to fill the artistic space and extend the frontiers of the arts.

1.6. Current Practice and Knowledge in the Area

Artists like Henry Moore, David Smith, Vito Acconci, Diego Rivera, Isamu Noguchi, Paul Flavin and Tracey Emin have explored and taken installation art very far. Their works probe the mind and provoke issues on the idea of display and the use of space. Their works involve variety of materials, divergent techniques and sometimes incorporated with performances. Literature available on their exploits, knowledge and experience establishes the foundation for further exploration and experimentation.

1.7. Project Relationship to Current Practice and Knowledge

The core of the project would be focused on the conceptualization of ideas from the events that characterized the absence of King Tackie-Tawiah (1880 – 1883) as a result of his arrest and detention; the space created and how it was utilized etc. These ideas would be developed into artistic forms for an installation considering literature and evidence provided by researchers, respondents and artistes.

1.8. The Need for the Research

There is no gain-saying that a lot of work has been done on power and authority by scholars. Power theorists like Michel Foucault, Robert Dahl and Peter Bachrach interpret power as an exercise through either conflictual or consensual mechanisms. Some of them describe power as essentially paradoxical: at a stage power can increase or decrease and authority can also be delegated based on accepted and well defined rules.

The main reason for this research is to examine how the mechanisms of power have worked within the Ghanaian cultural belief system, and how the presence of absentee power and authority has imparted on the socio-economic and politico-cultural life of the people, using the case of King Tacki-Tawiah of Gá-Mashie, Accra.

1.9. Assumptions

This research is necessarily based on the assumption that:

- There are chiefs who have left their stools in the hands of caretakers for greener pastures, for fear of their lives or in political exile
- Material culture has been used by many chieftaincy institutions to perpetuate the presence of power and authority of and absentee chief
- The study will make the public aware of some practices among the African in general and the Ga people in particular that communicate symbolically through material culture

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1.10. Importance of the Study

The study will:

- Contribute to the cultural history of the Ga people of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

- Provide a documented evidence of how the Ga people preserved the stool and marked the absence King Tackie Tawiah when he was exiled by the colonial masters.

- Serve as a source of reference to other researchers such as students, chiefs, art educators, anthropologists and ethnographers investigating into how material culture has influenced the development and practice of cultures across the globe.

- Offer useful suggestions and recommendations of the use of material culture in installation art.

1.11. Organization of Text

The thesis is made up of six chapters. Each chapter is tactically devoted to a significant aspect of the research.

- Chapter One: Introduction

- Chapter Two: Theoretical Frameworks

- Chapter Three: Chieftaincy as an Institution In Ghana

- Chapter Four: Ideating Material Culture

- Chapter Five: How Objects Constructed the Concept

- Chapter Six: „Wɔgbeŋ Kome" (With One Voice) Summary, Conclusions and

                        Recommendations

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1. The Concept of Power and Authority

The perception of power and authority has over the years been confused, muddled or mixed-up. Many people consider them to mean the same and thus use them alternatively. To appropriately attempt a scholarly explanation of these two words, throw more light on them and draw a distinction between them, social anthropologists and social scientists espouse that they must be situated within the context of leadership. Craig Van Gelder (2007) in his article „Classical Views of Power and Authority" states that „power and authority are critical issues to define when it comes to the question of leadership". To uncover these controversies, I will like to look at these two words independently, first, through the lenses of some scholars and then juxtapose the ideas and sentiments of these scholars to draw some conclusions. Having outlined the focus of my argument, let us start with „power".

2.1.1. What is Power?

The concept of power is very fundamental to the study of the social sciences: political science, anthropology, ethnography, sociology and global relations. Many scholars have described the concept of power as complex and complicated, thus making it difficult to have a universal or omnibus definition. In the midst of these debates, some political scientists have come out with some definitions that need our attention.

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), sees power as a man's present strategy to obtain something good in the future. Other schools of thought perceive power as „the ability to influence the behaviours of others".

It is worth noting that the act of influencing the behaviours of others can be exercised upward (from down-up) or downward (from up-down). With upward power, the subordinates influence the decisions of their superiors or leaders as happens among some political parties in Ghana. „Footsoldiers" lock up party offices, seize properties etc. to demonstrate their stance or opinions or otherwise on some party decisions. Downward power, however, occurs when superiors or leaders influence their subordinates (Greiner and Schein, 1988) in a decision making process.

The social theory of structuralism describes power as an ongoing process which involves direct use of force. It discusses power from two perspectives, primary and secondary. It views primary power as the issuance of threat and secondary power as the means to achieve a purpose. Though power is accepted generally as part of human life, many people describe it as immoral and malicious. The concerns of these people are as a result of how power has been used over the years. Compulsion, masculinity or machoism has been some of the traits, manifestations or characteristics of power. By extension, power is perceived by many people as a myriad of systems of constraints that impede human action and freedom to make things happen at all cost. This argument is attributed to the French scholar and philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984).

He defines power as „a complex strategic situation in a given social setting". He further describes power as the „setting up of shared truths in order to avoid war". To him power is a form of

compromise that avoids conflict and confrontation through the application of knowledge. His concept involves both constraint and enablement.

Some scholars also see power as the ability to sway people in order to change their thoughts, their values, their approaches or their behaviour. To them this is pervasive in most human relationships. Where a group of people come together for a common agenda some members are entrusted with superior power and others with lesser power. This is established as some people have the capacity to influence the behaviours of others and others are more often than not influenced.

Social scientists agree that power comes in many forms and from many different sources. Let us look at a few of the most common forms and sources of power.

1. Power as legitimate authority: One of the most common sources of power is the locus that provides a person or persons with the clout to give orders to subordinates and expects that his/her directives would be carried out. Legitimate authority is available in almost every facet of life although it is currently a major socio-politico-cultural issue that is being contested in many human institutions, e.g. families and communities.

2. Control through rewards: This is considered by most social scientists as probably the most pervasive source of power. Rewards are used by superiors to influence the judgment and actions of subordinates. However, the types of rewards that constitute this form of power vary from society to society. In Ghanaian politics, some political leaders have been accused of using rewards likes „bentua‟ (syringe for enema colon irrigation), „kako‟

(salted dry fish), „nikanika‟ or „abelegblɛmɔ tsɔne‟ (corn-mill), bicycles, cloth, money etc. to bribe and influence the decisions of the electorate to win power. In this form of power, the person who freely gives out rewards is more likely to win favour and win the hearts of many thereby influencing them considerably.

Another form of reward that is widely used is the position that one holds or wields in an institution. The leaders of institutions, by virtue of their position are able to exercise power over their subjects, subordinates by giving or withholding affirmation as a form of intimidation.

3. Expertise: A person with a specific skill that is scarce and is in great demand is strategically positioned to exercise considerable power and control or influence decisions taken by the group. E.g. people who are very eloquent and creative. Football stars can threaten the authorities announcing their intension to resign from the team or withdraw their services when they are highly needed.

4. Persuasive ability: The ability to understand issues more clearly, wisdom to know when to speak and when not, etc. Some individuals have this gift and they use it to their advantage.

5. Stronger will: Some people are gifted with decision making and implementation skills. There are others who lack this because of past experience.

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6. Reputation: Well known or popular leaders exercise far greater influence than those who are less well known or unpopular.

Now that we are aware of the concept of power, can we at this stage consider authority?

2.1.2. What is Authority?

Authority is one of the most complex principles of social institutions. It is among the topmost relationships that emerge as a result of mutual understanding and interaction. The thoughtful actions and inactions that go on amongst members of a group demonstrate the level of an entrenched authority established in the group and wielded by the leadership. The concept of authority, according to some scholars, is a little difficult to explain considering its operational rapports embracing both sociological and psychological content (Arendt 1969: 114). The term „authority" is quite inexplicit. It is derived from the Latin word „auctoritas" and has various meanings such as reputation, dignity, value, conscience, assurance, affirmation, veracity, notability, significance, role model and opinion. Two types of authority have, however, been identified: epistemic and deontic. Epistemic, is expertise-based, and deontic connotes obligations and control. According to Neiman (1986), these two forms of authority are closely related to each other. To him deontic authority to a greater extent is based on knowledge and competence.

In moral awareness studies (Kohlberg 1981; Piaget 1952) opine that, authority is usually described based on the relation between supremacy and subordination. Tadić (1987) cites the following as concepts of authority: willingness, decision, command and order, in the logic of subordination. In real life situations authority is manifested in well-defined social roles: parental authority, the authority of teachers, managers, judges and coaches (Bocheński 1974). Authority is power that has been legitimized by subordinates without coercion or force. This legitimacy, more often than not, is derived from traditions, religions and social contracts (Burns, 1978).

From the foregoing discussions, there seems to be a missing link. I therefore wish that we turn our attention towards interrogating the relationship between power and authority.

2.1.3. The Relationship between Power and Authority

The sociologist Max Weber (1968) argues that government is an institutionalized power. To him „power represents any degree of probability to fulfill someone‟s will over others in spite of resistance, and government represents the probability that certain people will obey a command of certain content‟. Power rests solely on the coercion of the will, while authority rests on what Weber describes as the „inner justification‟ of dominion (Seligman 2000). Weber extricates three forms of the authority: traditional, charismatic and rational-legal.

Some political theorists consider the concepts of power and authority as synonyms (Dordevic 1973). Others claim there are some differences in quality since power represents a political category and authority, a social and moral category. According to Raz (1979), authority is a „species of power‟. He explained this statement by stating that „to have authority over others one must first have power over them‟. To him effective authority is only possible when it is regarded by majority of the people as legitimate. These discussions, you will agree with me, is becoming more complex than we thought. This shows the level at which scholars have debated and

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interrogated the issue of power and authority. To navigate more into the issues, I feel obliged to look at some theories of power and authority. Please let us move on.

2.1.4. Power and Authority Theories

Power and authority are critical issues when it comes to traditional leadership. In this essay, despite inherent limitations, I will do my best to provide an overview of how power and authority have been theorized by sociologists, social scientists and anthropologists within the past years. I will attempt a summary of some of the classical approaches to defining power and authority. Look at

the various critical viewpoints that provide alternative dimensions to some of the acclaimed and entrenched assumptions by leading scholars, and evaluate the results. Thirdly, I will discuss the modern trend and re-conceptualization of power and authority, and finally, provide an overview of how traditional societies within the African communities see and feel about power and authority and its impact on the on-going debate.

The theorizing of power and authority, according to leading sociologists, social scientists and anthropologists, was due largely to the rise and development of the discipline of sociology. The quest to develop theories about the human social order provided the motivation, drive, energy and platform. As I try to provide an overview of the theories of power and authority, I will like to precede the discussion by looking at a few historical antecedents.

The writings by Nicollò Machiavelli of the 16th century and Thomas Hobbes of the 17th century come to mind when questions about „theories of power" crop up. The standpoints of these two scholars are considered classics of political writings. Their works, according to Clegg (1989), represent the two main schools of thought along which discussions about power have been rooted over the years.

Hannah Arendt in her essay, „What Is Authority?" provides an insightful analysis of the transition that resulted from one society to another and one stage to the other. She theorizes traditional society in terms of authority as being enshrined in the traditional social order which is centered on the core of obedience and self-discipline. Conversely, she opines that this obedience was usually based on some type of persuasion, and to her when force or coercion is used that authority is a failure. She

goes on to talk about the rise of totalitarian rule, critiquing the Nazi and Fascist regimes that emerged during the twentieth century.

Max Weber, who had earlier theorized about power and authority in similar fashion like Hannah Arendt, was less of a critical critique of its consequences. His major works were published before the rise of the regimes that Hannah sought to address. Weber referred to by most scholars as an epitome of classical school of sociology, contributed immensely to the understanding of the ways in which power and authority function in the modern world. He theorized three types of authority: rational-legal, traditional and charismatic.

Weber himself preferred the rational-legal approach. In this approach, roles and positions were clearly defined thus eliminating the discretionary dimensions of the exercise of authority which in Weber"s opinion was common in both the traditional and charismatic approaches. His works contributed to the rise of a theoretical framework within sociology that was christened the structural-functionalist school.

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In the 1960s and 1970s the contingency theory of power and authority was advocated. The key concept of this theory proposed that situations that demanded a managerial style must be treated independently.

In providing a comprehensive understanding of how power and authority can be exercised in an organization the proposers of critical social theory sprang an alternative theoretical approach to that of the structural-functionalist view in understanding the exercise of power and authority in organizations. Three proponents can be cited as key contributors of theoretical perspectives to

understanding power and authority. These personalities are Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault.

Karl Marx, the first to be noted, professed of power conflicts as being integrally entrenched within the economic system and materialism. His most helpful contribution to the debate was his assertion of power as being part of the basic fiber and characteristics of the economic and social order.

The second figure to be cited as having contributed immeasurably to the development of critical social theory is Friedrich Nietzsche. He demonstrated an overwhelming critique to almost every facet of modern society by steadily reviewing every issue closely associated with either morality or values. In his final analysis, Nietzsche opined that the will to power is vital to the organization of the social order.

The third personality is Michel Foucault. His archeological approach to outlining the origins of various social organizations and their inferences and impact on human behaviors are described as „full of provocative insight". The key theoretical contribution offered by Michel Foucault to the development of the critical social theory is his popular statement that knowledge is power.

In the 1960s, most parts of the world were characterized by social turbulence, disorder or insubordination. This condition made a number of post-structural theorists formulate painstaking critical social theories. In doing so they were influenced to a large extent by the twentieth century principles of exegesis that provided foundations and considerable trend for theorizing about the

human social order. The key works of the three figures quoted above provided the platform and the conceptual framework.

Thomas Hobbes projected the causal thinking about power as hegemony. To him, power is central and crucial to sovereignty. He emphasizes that power is the embodiment of the state, community or society. In the mid-twentieth century scholars accepted the view point of Hobbes, however Machiavelli''s strategic and conditional approach received a transformed and renewed interest in France.

Alfred Adler is credited for opening a discussion on power in psychology. His argument of linking power relations with the psychic of the individual created a platform for scholars in social science to start a comprehensive awareness and curiosity in interrogating the concept of power after the Second World War. People like Max Weber (1947) followed the Hobbesian line and developed organizational thinking. Weber''s interest in bureaucracy led him into linking

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power with concepts of authority and rule. He is on record to have researched into the sources of authority that activate legitimate power.

Theories of power after Weber gained a new twist and direction. The investigation of illegitimate power within the formal and legitimate structures of power hierarchically and bureaucratically received scholarly attention giving birth to Weber''s bureaucratic model (Merton, 1957).

Dahl situated his argument of power within the boundaries of an authentic community. His interest was to understand the ruling élite class which came into being after World War II (Hunter, 1953). According to Dahl''s theory of community power, power is exercised in a community by a specific

person, whiles others are prevented from doing what they actually prefer to do. It is not surprising that, till this day, most writers dealing with organizational behavior make reference to Dahl"s delineation of power as the ability to make someone perform an activity that otherwise he or she would not have done.

In the seventies, Steven Lukes (1974) added his version to the discussions of power. He shifted the discussion from the two dimensions of power; overt and covert dimensions, by introducing a third dimension - latent dimension of power, to the general discussion of power. The overt dimension of power deals with acknowledged political preferences, while the covert dimension deals with political preferences that reveal themselves through protests and criticisms about political non-issues. The third dimension (latent), which was introduced by Lukes, deals with the relations between political preferences and real interests. Power, according to Lukes, is measured

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by the ability to brainwash the people to change their mindset and perception contrary to their desires.

The writings of Michel Foucault (1979, 1980, and 1996) extended the frontiers and took the debate on the concept of power from sociology to all the fields of the social sciences and humanities. Decentralization of power is one of the greatest innovations of his thinking.

Anthony Giddens (1982 and 1984), a critique of Foucault, followed the footsteps of Foucault and those before him. He created an all-encompassing social theory which he called „structuration" or duality of structure. To him, power is an important component of the social structure that is created and exercised by members of a common belief. The same power influences them and limits them.

In sum:

- Power is acquired and exercised through authority.

- Power is an asset that is manifested through a social system.

- Power in most cases involves conflict which is considered unnecessary.

- Power is both resistance and obedience.

- Power is directly linked to oppression and governance.

- Power is both evil and good, and makes development possible.

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In all, for power and authority to thrive the issue of „obedience" becomes a necessary phenomenon. It will therefore be helpful if we interrogate the concept of „obedience to authority" as argued by a social theorist.

2.1.5. Obedience to Authority

Obedience is the inner feeling that commits the individual into acting in a certain way to achieve a socio-politico-cultural purpose. It is a system that cajoles subordinates to the dictates and machinations of superiors. Obedience can lead to an entrenched behaviour tendency which can affect sympathy, morality, and ethics. C. P. Snow (1961) laments about obedience when he writes:

'When you think of the long and gloomy history of man, you will find more hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience than have ever been committed in the name of rebellion. If you doubt that, read William Shireis 'Rise and Fall of the Third Reich'. The German Officer

Corps were brought up in the most rigorous code of obedience in the name of obedience they were party to, and assisted in, the most wicked large scale actions in the history of the world'.

The issue of „obey before complain" has characterized most activities of military wings. The „asafo" wing of communities, according to oral tradition perpetuated heinous and scandalous crimes against humanity on the orders of their superiors. Some of these orders were based on symbolic representations. Symbols of power and authority were used to communicate though the presence of the said authority and source of power may not be physically present. This issue moves us into the debate and myth surrounding the conviction or principle of „presence in absentia".

2.2.1. Presence in Absentia

The concepts of power and authority, according to scholars, create social and political spaces in communities. These spaces occur when those in authority: chiefs and other titleholders become absentees voluntarily or involuntarily during the performance of their statutory activities required by tradition. How the leadership of the community manages this situation raises fundamental issues that has to be interrogated. This section of the thesis will discuss the theories of presence and absenteeism and examine how these concepts have been used by those who wield power and authority to psychologically influence the mindset of the members of the community philosophically.

2.2.2. Presence

Presence is a concept with many sides. It is a term that indicates the existence of something or creates the impression that something exists. In discussing presence, I will like to focus basically

on the psychological perception that makes a person experience the absence of „something‟ when he/she is confronted with a virtual space, how he/she interacts with the objects in that space, and how he/she conceives the sense of the presence of that thing. In most circumstances when people are faced with such situations it is the „observer‟ who gives meaning to the perceived idea based on past experience or traditional norms.

Heeter (1992) defines presence as the sense of „being with others‟. To Biocca (2001), it is the „level of awareness of the co-presence of another human, being or intelligence‟. Short, William and Christie (1976) describe presence as „the degree of salience of the other person in the

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interaction‟ and the „feeling that one has some level of access or insight into the other‟s intentional, cognitive, or affective states‟ (Biocca & Nowak, 2001).

According to Biocca (2001), presence is motivated by the desire to transcend „… beyond the limits of the body and the sensory channels‟. He describes this state of the mind as „cyborg‟s dilemma‟, that is, the extension of the human senses through machinations. Biocca opines that a person perceives a sense of presence in three forms: being there, being with another person, and having a feeling of self-presence. The first two forms of presence are almost the same. They are relatively comparable to the notions of presence and co-presence. He ties perception of the sense of presence to the observer‟s experience of oscillations or unstable illusions. To him an observer‟s sense of presence connects three places; the physical environment, the simulated environment, and the imagined environment. The perceptions of presence and co-presence are linked to notions related to virtual space, immediate environment, embodiment, social setting, and the presence of others.

The creation of the sense of presence and how it impacts on the observer"s opinions, actions, inactions and behaviours becomes a major concern worth quizzing.

Man"s day to day interactions with the environment, for example, the use of words (language), forms, symbols and actions tends to develop some communicative concepts. Scholars describe this approach as the „activity theory". The Activity Theory explains how man"s involvement in activities within the environment contributes towards the development of a body of knowledge and understanding of his/her world.

The discussion of presence in this essay will be concentrated largely on the ideas, objects and actions that determine the psychological perceptions of presence. When one enters a virtual space, interacts with objects in that space, and develops perceptions of being there, he/she develops a sense of presence. Thus, regardless of the source of the perception of presence, it is the observer who assigns these associations and meanings to such experiences.

2.2.3. Absence

The term „absence", since the 1960s, has been discussed severally by different scholars attracting many theoretical frameworks. Each scholar highlights specific components of absenteeism based on his/her background, past experience and mindset.

Chadwick Jones et al (1982) propounded the theory of withdrawal; that is, absence from office for a fixed period. Johns (1978) professes the non-attendance form of absenteeism as Blau and Boal (1987) present a four-category taxonomy. These are:

a) Medical – absence as a result of illness, injury and fatigue

b) Career-enhancing – absence to pursue a task related programme or upgrade ones knowledge, skill and experience.

c) Normative – response to the norms of the society or organization

d) Calculative – strategic allocation of time to achieve a purpose

March and Simon (1958) put forward two main categories of absenteeism: involuntary and voluntary. Involuntary absenteeism consists of issues beyond the control of the person involved, for example, ailment, bereavement, abduction and threat of attack. Voluntary absenteeism emanates from the persons free will. Examples are study-leave, vacation and vocation. Having delved into the idea of absenteeism, I guess it will be prudent to identify and discuss a few consequences of absenteeism.

2.2.4. Consequences of Absenteeism

Goodman and Atkim (1984) assert that absenteeism produces both negative and positive consequences which affect the individual subjects, colleagues, family, society etc. The absence of the leader of a community affects the people psychologically, socially, economically and religiously, etc. His/her absence, according to oral tradition, can only be permitted by the established „culture‟ of the people. Chadwick et al (1982) explain „culture‟ as used in this dissertation as the set of beliefs and practices that influence the totality of absence of the leader. This body of ideology outlines the frequency and duration of absences that can occur within the organization. Members of the community are generally aware of this culture or norm and they collectively approve of it as appropriate for the leadership. From the foregoing discussion it is

quite clear that the leader of the community does not act in isolation, his/her actions and inactions are regulated by the norms of the people. The breach of which attracts a sanction.

2.2.5. Presence and Absence

Presence and absence are two opposing concepts. To be able to probe and appreciate them symbolically and practically, I will like to examine their spatiality and materiality, study the kinds of absence that have been made present in the social and political space, analyze the „social life of things", assess the relationship(s) between the individual and the objects that are

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symbolized, consider the values of these symbolic objects, their functions and what they make present. I will further explore the relationship between absence and presence.

Social and political spaces within the community contain „things" that are both animate and inanimate. These „things" constitute the core around which life in the community revolves. Every member of the community understands these things (Hallam and Hockey, 2001). The chieftaincy institution „… creates, acquires, conserves, uses, communicates and exhibits" (International Council of Museums, 2008; Hudson, 1999), these „things" for purposes of reverence, cultural symbolism and material culture. There is a significant difference in how the ideas for these objects are conceptualized, created, used and interpreted by communities. By dwelling on the concept of the "social life of things" it will be necessary to examine the objects by studying their forms/shapes, meanings, uses and trajectories (Appadurai, 1986). Additionally, it will be interesting to critically look at how communities came by these objects at different places and almost at the same time (Kopytoff, 1986). Pels, Hetherington and Vandenberghe (2002), recognize that these „objects need symbolic framing, storylines and human spokespersons in order to acquire

social lives; social relationships and practices in turn need to be materially grounded in order to gain temporal and spatial endurance". For a more detail inquiry into the above-stated claim, it will be useful to select a few of these objects and examine the issues that make them what they have been accepted to be. For this discussion I have selected the:

- Traditional Stool of Authority

- Ancestral Dolls

- Linguistic Staff

a) Traditional Stools of Authority

The traditional stool of authority is a simple seat without a back or arms. It is carved from one piece of wood (monoxyle). It is composed of three parts: the base, the middle section and the top. The top of the stool which always exceeds the base in length is usually curved in an arc form to ensure safe and comfortable sitting. The base is normally a rectangle, though there are quite a number of these stools across some cultures of Africa that have circular or no bases. (plate 2.1)

Plate 2.1 Some stools across the cultures of Africa. Accessed from the internet on 27/10/2012

The middle section of the stool has no definite shape or form. This part of the stool can be shaped into forms, patterns and symbols to reflect the philosophies, desires, wishes and aspirations of the community or institution that owns it. It is carved to express symbolic meaning 35

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that evokes the status of the occupant, the belief of the people, socio-cultural history and values. The stool has multiple functions. It is an important political symbol and an object of veneration, conveys expressive messages and serves as a prominent object associated with rites of passage. The stool also serves as a medium through which the living establishes and maintains contact with the ancestors.

Sarpong (1971) describes the stool as „nothing but a wooden seat". Fosu (1994) sees it as the single most important piece of sacred furniture in the royal household and palace. The sacred life of a stool begins with the pouring of libation to appease the spirit of the tree before felling it. Additionally, before carving is started, the carver has to go through spiritual cleansing, refrain from all pleasures, and be totally committed to the task in isolation or solitude (Sarpong, 1971). Upon completion the stool is consecrated through rituals to make it ready for use. In modern times,

because of commodification and mass production most of these rules have been neglected if not abandoned all together. In some communities wood is not used alone in designing and making stools. Veneration objects such as beads, cowries, feathers and metals are attached for special spiritual purposes. In the Bamum kingdom of Cameroon, for example, the royal stool is heavily adorned with multi-colored beads and cowry shells.

b) Ancestral Cults/Dolls

Ancestral Dolls: Some of these objects are made for the public while others are shrouded in secrecy. These objects are designed and made in the images of apical ancestors, past and venerated leaders and warriors, conceptualized forms of gods and goddesses. Many people

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consider these sculptures as interesting and imposing. They are made to represent the absentee or deceased leader or warrior, god or goddess. They psychologically invoke the presence of the image or concept they represent. Ceremonies are organized in their honour, dirges, songs and appellations are chanted in reverence to them. To some social critiques, these sculptures have the potential to create tension and mystery because they bear no inscriptions in disclosing their identity. Examples of these ancestral dolls include the „akuaba" and „ametikpakpe" of Akans and Ewes of Ghana respectively. The „ibeji" figures of Nigeria, the Rao of Archipelago, and the A"a of Austria.

| Akuaba doll | Ibeji twin figures | A'a god | Rao god |
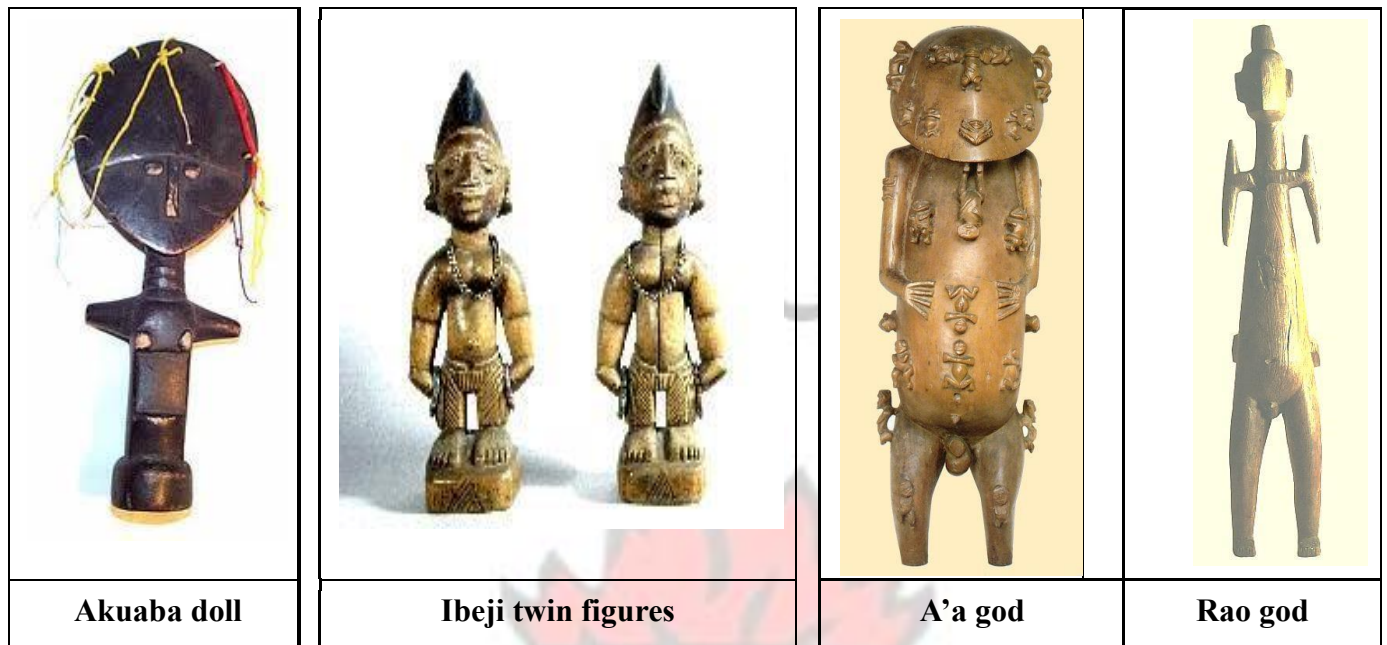
Plate 2.2 Some examples of Ancestral Cults. Accessed on 27/10/2012

The veneration of ancestral cults/dolls is practiced all over the world. These practices are deeply dependent on the premise that the soul of the dead, gods and goddesses visit their people to intervene and influence their lives. This makes it an unavoidable activity for the living to continuously communicate with these cults or dolls.
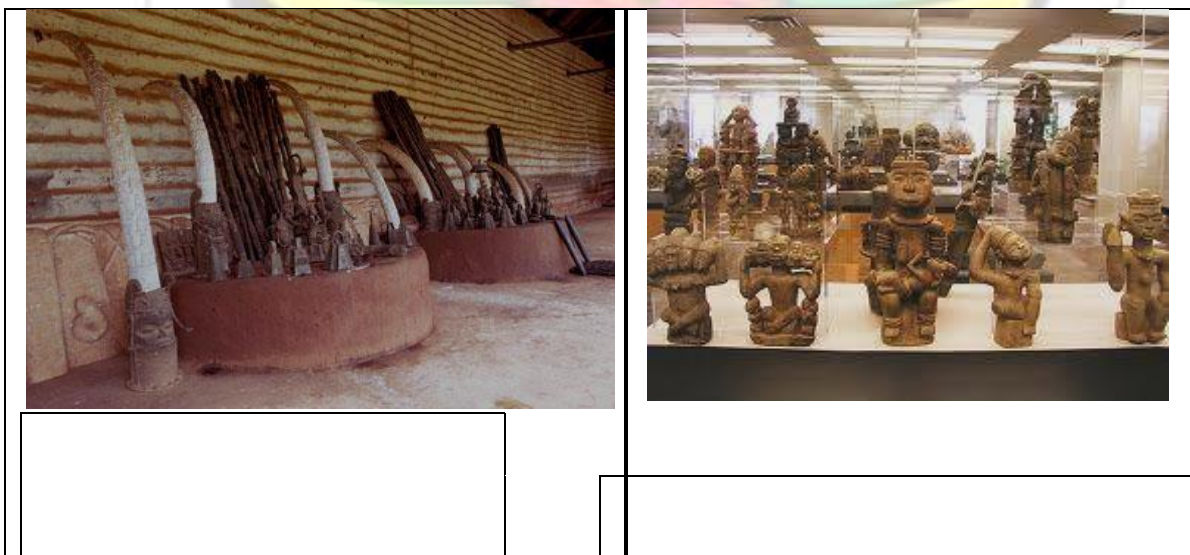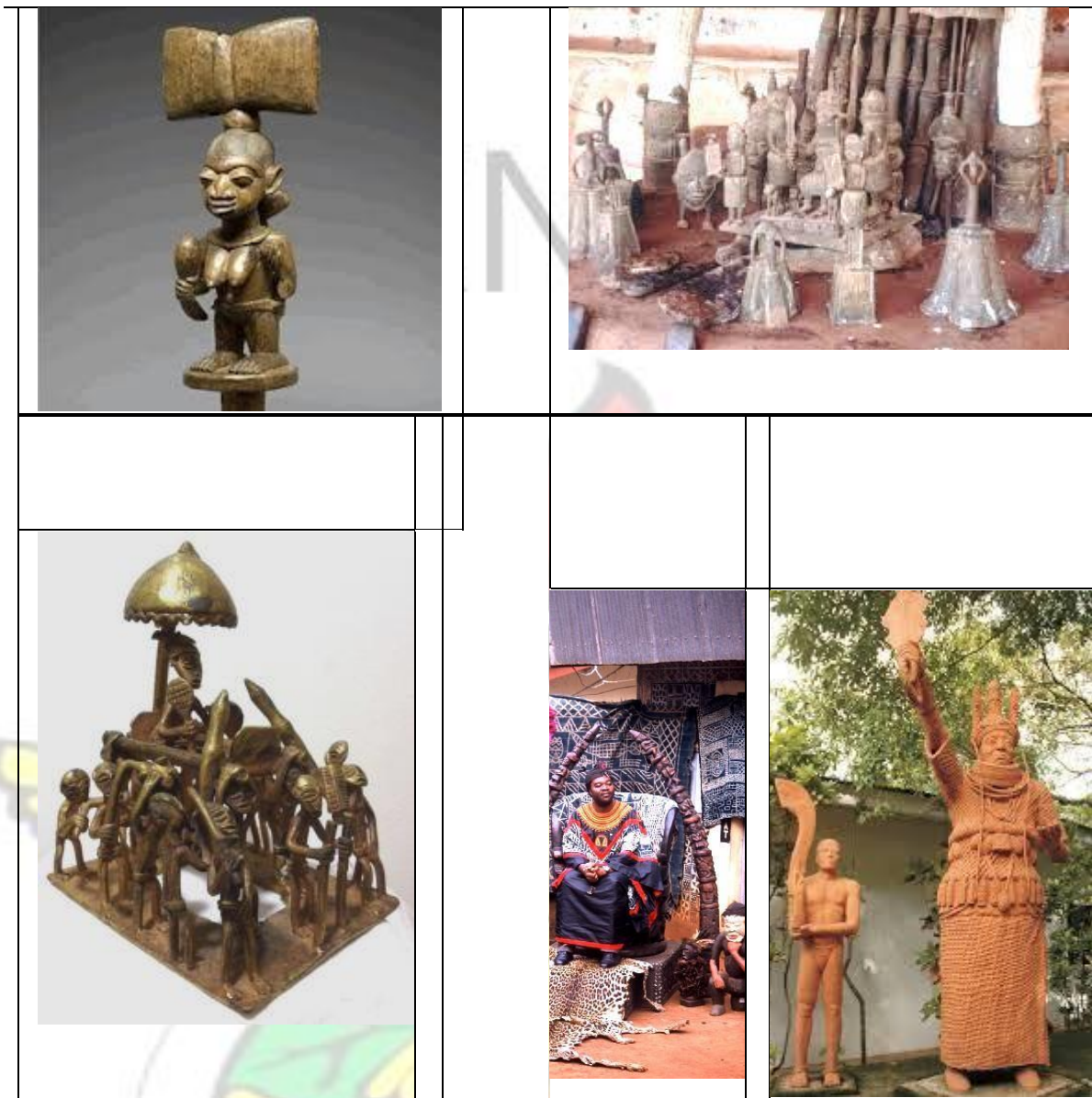
Plate 2.3 Ancestral Cults. Accessed on 27/10/2012

c) Linguistic Staff

A fixed finial or totem can be found on all linguistic staffs. These images are for public view. They are carried by the linguist who leads the chief to all social gatherings. It is owned by the said community. The totem is an embodiment of the history, philosophy and belief system of the people. It symbolizes the mouthpiece and voice of the people. In council or at a durbar, the totem portrays the rank and status of the chief. The presence of the linguistic staff in a gathering indicates the presence of the chief. It signifies the power and authority of the overlord. Staffs are used to summon people to the chief's palace or court.

Plate 2.4 Linguistic staffs on display at an African Durbar. Accessed from the internet on 27/10/2012
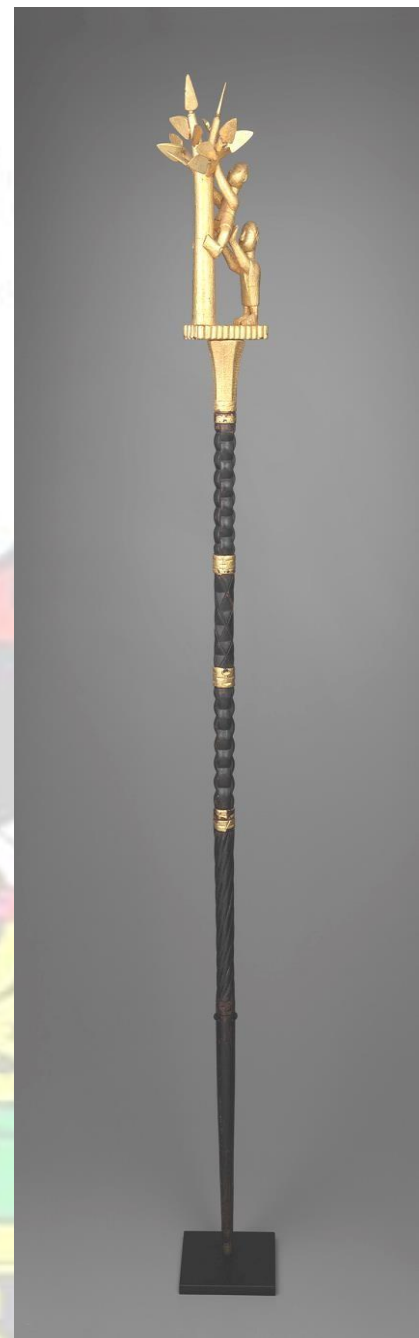
Plate 2.5 A close study of a linguistic Staff. Accessed from the internet on 20/10/2012

The chief's palace (which also serves as the community museum) is a space full of objects indicating the „presence of the absence". In an attempt to explain this claim, Law (2004) identifies and tries to distinguish between two forms of absence. These are manifest absence (what presence acknowledges and makes manifest; absence which is absent but explicit) and Otherness (absence that is not acknowledged and that cannot be brought to presence). Law goes on in his discussion to state: „Manifest absence goes with presence. It is one of its correlates since presence is incomplete and depends on absence". In both cases, the apparent absence of the departed leader or warrior, or the conceptualized image of the belief system: god, goddess or philosophy, and the meaning of the „things" (objects) used to represent them simulate the observer. The discussion here indicates that absence can be spatially located, has some kind of materiality (some kind of „stuff"), and has agency (it „acts" or „does" things). We will look at each of these features one after the other.

The chief's palace and the community provide spaces which are physical and exist materially. People enter, interact and leave these spaces every day. This material environment that embodies the concept of presence and absence is uninterrupted.

Theorizing the relationship between presence and absence is a task that is demanding. The community is characterized by a simultaneous presence and absence. The community „contains" absences; chief's palace, durbar grounds, family homes, play grounds, cemetery, forest reserves, shrines, beaches, caves etc. and if one physically enters these spaces he/she will be relating to absence. Hetherington (2003) argues thus, „the absent has geography – a surrounding that implies both presence and present". With reference to earlier examination of objects one can

strongly argue that absence has a material presence through the objects in these spaces: tombs, sculptures and plaques in the cemetery, regalia and paraphernalia at the chief''s palace, sculptures, patina and religious objects at the shrine, the scarifications, tribal marks and other forms of body arts etc. are visible examples that portray the presence of absence.

Plate 2.6 Regalia portraying the material presence of the chief in a procession to a durbar
Accessed from the internet on 27/10/2012

Plate 2.7 Body arts revealing the presence of spirits and deities. Accessed on 27/10/2012

Plate 2.8 Objects providing the social presence and existence of power and authority. Accessed 27/10/2012

Plate 2.9 Signifying the spiritual presence and powers of the gods by cleansing; for protection and fortification. Accessed on 27/10/2012

At this stage, regards the relationship between presence and absence, objects do at least three things: they activate a given space; create a social existence and provide possible „life‟ for absentees living elsewhere or dead. In the case of King Tackie-Tawiah, the songs, dirges, appellations, etc. manifested his presence, bringing him close to his people though he was

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physically absent. The song below was composed and sung by the Ga people to remind them of the presence of their captured and exiled king:

'Meele ni yaa eei, damɔ shi mashɛbo
'Meele ni yaa eei, damɔ shi mashɛbo
Kɛ oteelɛ yakɛɛ Maŋtsɛ Taki akɛ
Wɔ miibi lɛ eei
Kɛ nɛ gbɛ wɔyaa
Wɔ miiya Adabraka, Wɔ yaamɔ gbɛ ee'

The ship on voyage, stop and let me give you a message
The ship on voyage, stop and let me give you a message If
you go, tell King Takie that we greet him
We are going to Adabraka to secure a place

Plate 2.10: Statue of King Tackie opposite Rawlings Park at the central business centre of Accra

Plate 2.11 „Sese bulemɔ" and „jama" group marking some of the specific activities outlined for the „Homowo" festival to demonstrate the presence of power and authority. Accessed on 27/10/2012

Secondly, these objects draw their symbolic meanings and values from specific situations. These situations exert certain amount of control over the objects (Kirshenblatt-Gimblet, 1988). According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblet, these objects are inherently part of an absent whole.

Thirdly, these objects make the absent present. Inanimate objects, be it artifacts or mementoes left behind by past leaders and warriors become a medium for the expression or achievement of something. The totem of a specific animal becomes a spokesperson (Callon, 1986); it represents all other animals, those that are dead and those that are living (Meyer, 2007). These objects and symbols represent the absent dead, building a continuing physical presence for all those who have once lived before us. Death is therefore both absent and present in these spaces (Hallam and Hockey, 2001) and the presence of objects represents the absence of the once-living (Urbain, 1989).

In conclusion, it becomes evidently clear that absence occupies a space, and thus can be made present through material objects. This ideology fits well into Hetherington‟s discussion of the „agency of the absent‟ (Hetherington, 2003 and 2004). He reiterates „the absent can have just as much of an effect upon relations as recognizable forms of presence can have. Social relations are preformed not only around what is there but sometimes also around the presence of what is not …. Indeed the category of absence can have a significant presence in social relations and in material culture‟ (Hetherington, 2004).

In the community we can feel, see, and hear absence. We are confronted with absence in the loss of lives and the „world that once was‟. These conditions juxtapose the presence over the absence

through transformation, materialization, conjugation, delineation, performance, and remembrance (Roach, 1996).

Examining the community space has been one of the ways of moving the frontiers of presence and absence beyond the debate of whether „things make people" or „people make things", and whether or not objects have social lives, in order to focus on the way in which this happens (Pinney, 2005). This throws more light on how different objects and symbols tell different stories in making the sense of the absent present and materially different in different spaces.

2.3. How Artists Created the Presence in Absentia

Many high profile artists have made and exhibited works based on „presence in absentia", but Tracey Emin"s works provokes striking and exclusive feelings. In 1999, her exhibition titled „*My Bed'* was short-listed for the Turner Prize. This exhibit first appeared at the Sagacho Exhibit Space in Tokyo in the autumn of 1998. It illustrated Tracey Emin"s perfect disposition of a life lived by her. It portrayed how her lifestyle manifested in activities that stole the attention of the media and critics. It was a unique concept of **presence** of the past captured in **absentia**. Tracey displayed a base supporting mattress with rumpled bed spreads, pillows, panty-hose and a towel arranged on top. Jumbled alongside is a muddle of variety of bits and pieces from vodka bottles, slippers, underwear, cigarette packs, condoms, contraceptives, drawings and toys (see pictures on page 35 and 36). Her other exhibit captioned „*Every Part of Me's Bleeding'*, at the New York gallery Lehmann Maupin in May-June 1999 was also amazing.

During the Turner prize exhibition there was a debate on authenticity of Emin"s „*My Bed'*. Jacques Derrida opined that in western metaphysics of presence and absence the signature and title suggest the once present but now absent artist. Within this logic, the bed has a social life, its messy state suggests occupancy by figures that have departed or disappeared, its objects the possessions of the artist or left with her by other missing persons, perhaps the men who wore the underpants.

Plate 2.12: Tracey Emin"s „My Bed"

Plate 2.13: Tracey Emin speaking to the Press

The metaphysics of presence and absence was called to question by the action of two artists: Cai Yuan and Xi Jianjun. During Emin‟s exhibition in London in1999, these two gentlemen removed some of their clothes, jumped into Emin‟s bed shouting, springing and bouncing (see picture on page 37). They also had a fierce pillow fight. The London media saw their action as „fun‟. *The Daily Mirror* therefore reported as „Feathers Fly in Art hot Bed‟. Despite this impression created, the artist had a different agenda all together. It was a well-rehearsed performance orchestrated to send a message to the art community. It was designed to question the politics of art that has taken over the art establishment. The two artists acted as „artistic space‟ invaders, using Emin‟s exhibition space. According to Eduoardo Walsh (2000), this ironic and playful self-publicity was undertaken in order to:

- call attention to the presence of Chinese artists in the UK

- refute the desires for authenticity, as well as to expose the sensationalism of contemporary British art and its press.

Kennedy (1999) quoted the gentlemen thus 'we are not trying to shock; we just want to show how spontaneous art is superior to the institutionalized art which dominates the Turner Prize'. They announced a presence in absentia. During the performance, the ownership of the bed shifted from Emin and transformed it materially from feminine to masculine.

Another artist whose works promoted the concept of presence in absentia was Wodiczko Krzysztof. For three decades his works stretched public art to address political, social and psychological issues.
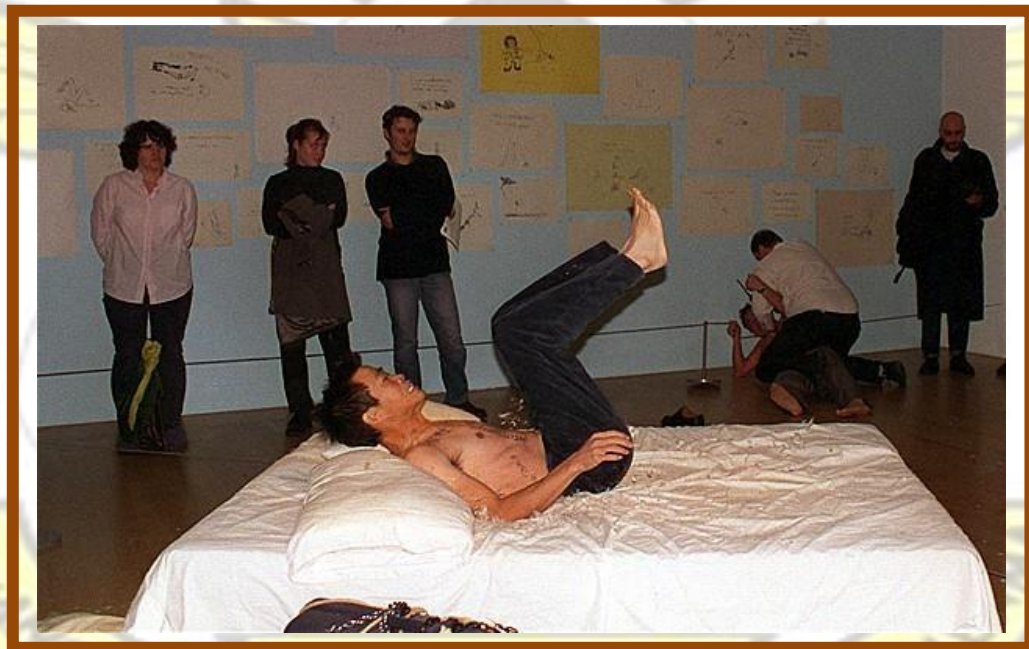
Plate 2.14   The momentary hijack of Tracey''s bed and the performance by
Cai Yuan and Xi Jianjun

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His innovative projects: from hybrid *Cart* or *Shelter* for *Homeless People* to a series of interactive immigrant operations, focused attention on what usually goes on behind the scene or ignored. His

project themed *'The Veterans'* exposes stories and images based on chaos and confusion that remained in the shadows to Iraq civilians using their shared experience, thus creating absentee activities in the present (www.icaboston.org) (see pictures below).

Plate 2.15: Krzysztof's Cart for Homeless People

Plate 2 16: Homelessness during Bitter Cold by Krzysztof

Olafur Eliasson a Danish artist who could be considered a phenomenologist, cannot be left out when it comes to the discussion of artists whose works explored the concept of „presence in absentia". He investigated complex intersections of human perceptions and natural phenomena. He used geometric and crystalline forms as well as ideas from nature to design and make atmospheric scenes that shift the viewer"s sense of consciousness (www.ngv.vic.gov.au) (see pictures below)

Fig 2.17: Olafur Eliasson's 'Unilever Series' at The Tate Modern.
The artist is silhouetted by The Weather Project.

Plate 2.18: Olafur‟s Installation of Crystalline Light

One of the most amazing creative works on presence and absence was the group exhibition curated

by Dave and Debra Tolchinsky, Radio and Television Film Professors, at the Hairpin

Arts Centre in Logan Square, Chicago themed „The Presence of Absence". It was from May 8 to

June 2, 2013. The exhibition featured many renowned and few emerging and established local

artists. The Presence of Absence exhibition focused on that which should be there, but isn"t, and

that which shouldn"t be there, but is still felt, seen or heard. During the gathering of works for the

exhibition the Tolchinskys had the opportunity of meeting and interacting with many artists who

have been exploring the concept and phenomenon between that which is and that which is not

using variety of media: videography, installation, sculpture, drawing and painting). The

Exhibition featured the following artists: Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle: MacArthur and Guggenheim

Fellowship winner, Documenta participant, Northwestern University faculty member,

Christopher: a new Media Artist, several YouTube Artists, announcing themselves to the world;

Melika Bass: filmmaker and installation artist, Professor Laurie Palmer; internationally recognized

sculptor, Paola Cabal: well-known Colombian/Chicago painter, Katarina Weslien: an installation

artist, Robert Chase Heishman and Brendan Meara.

The curators „statement" for the exhibition was:

'Awakening from a deep sleep and the dream begins to fade.
Trying to hang onto a particular image, an evaporating face A
face that belonged to a person whom the dreamer loved The
person has passed. What remains?
Dust and bone and something even less tangible . . . absence.

According to the curators, the initial concept for the exhibition came from a dream and countless

contemplation based on the fact that issues that surround or constitute the absence of a person, an

action or an idea more often than not affects people more directly than that which may be concretely present.

Plate 2.19: Samples of the Works that featured at the Hairpin Arts Centre in Chicago

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CHAPTER THREE

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND FORMS THAT CREATE THE PRESENCE

3.1 Preamble:

Every Ghanaian community has an established and valued traditional institution which dates back to the evolution of Ghana as a state. Long ago communities decided to come together to achieve shared goals and objectives such as promotion of trade and commerce, fight against famine, and wage wars against common enemies such as slave looters and invaders. The composition of most traditional institutions in Ghana include the chief, „okyeame‟ (linguist), family heads, queen mothers and „asafoatsɛmɛi kɛ asafoanyɛmɛi‟ (i.e. warriors), just to mention but a few. One success that has been chalked by the traditional institution which make many people marvel, is how it has survived several attempts by governors and political institutions from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras to undermine its existence and activities. This survival story can be attributed, among other factors, to the legitimized symbols of the institution. This section of the thesis is to interrogate the various art forms: songs, dirges, folklore, dance movements, libations, drama, appellations and artifacts that are legitimized to symbolically represent the presence of a traditional leader in his/her absence.

3.2 Absentee Chief

Reports gathered from oral tradition and written records indicate that some traditional leaders during their tenure of office have the unfortunate incidence of finding themselves away from their jurisdiction voluntarily or involuntarily.

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Historical records reveal that some traditional leaders were captured and exiled by colonial masters. Some were attacked by their own people; others became captives of war; some had to flee from war fronts etc. King Prempeh of the Ashanti Kingdom and „Mantsɛ‟ Tackie Tawiah I of the

Gá State were victims of colonial abduction. Oral tradition discloses that due to the love some communities have for some of their leaders, when such predicament befell them arrangements were made to conceal their absence or use symbols to create their presence in absentia. In the case of Nana Prempeh and Nii Tackie Tawiah I, no chiefs were installed in their absence until their return. Their stools remained vacant. With Nii Tackie Tawiah I, during the time of his abduction: 1880-1883, the Gá traditional council declared a state of emergency and ideated his presence through composition of songs, dirges, appellations and choreographed dance movements. His seat remained vacant during meetings held by the other members of the traditional council throughout the period of his exile. Vigils were held on Monday evenings. Oral tradition reveal that the major occupation of the Gá people during those days was fishing, and the fishermen do not go to work on Tuesdays, so Monday evenings provided the opportunity for them to meet and entertain themselves with „Kpanlogo‟ and „Gomé‟ music and dance. During those period lectures about „Mantsɛ‟ Tackie Tawiah I and what he stood for were organized. Series of community-based activities to perpetuate the stance, resolve and belief of the leaders about the ideals and persona of Nii Tackie Tawiah I were planned and executed. This made the presence of Nii Tackie Tawiah I absolutely, unequivocally and incontrovertibly real. This put pressure on the colonial authorities to halt or reverse the trend. Unfortunately, according to oral tradition, all the attempts made by the colonial authorities to stop the lectures and vigils in honour of Nii Tackie Tawiah I failed to yield any good results. It rather strengthened the stance of the people and the volunteers for the vigil kept on increasing and the psychological presence

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of Nii Tackie Tawiah I was felt everywhere. The song that echoed in resonance of his presence and gingered the people was:

'Meele ni yaa eei, damɔ shi mashɛbo
'Meele ni yaa eei, damɔ shi mashɛbo
Kɛ oteelɛ yakɛɛ Maŋtsɛ Taki akɛ

Wɔ miibi lɛ eei
Kɛ nɛ gbɛ wɔyaa
Wɔ miiya Adabraka, Wɔ yaamɔ gbɛ ee'

The ship on voyage, stop and let me give you a message
The ship on voyage, stop and let me give you a message
If you go, tell King Takie that we greet him
We are going to Adabraka to secure a place

Philosophically, the chief is believed to be universal and ubiquitously omnipresent. He is perceived to be everywhere in the community and his eyes see far and near. In practice, when any act of abomination is committed the news gets to the chief and he swiftly acts on it. An agent from the chief's palace is sent to invite the lawbreaker. The agent carries a legitimized symbol that ideates the present of the chief wherever the symbol is carried. The members of the community know and respect the authority of the symbol.

3.3 Capturing, Purification and Coronation of a Traditional Leader

Before a person becomes a traditional leader he or she has to go through legitimized rituals. These rituals are performed using articles of art which signify the presence of spirits, deities and ancestors. The process begins with what is termed „capture".

The qualified person nominated for the vacant position is captured in a public place. Among the Gá people a symbol traditionally called „kɔmi" is put around the neck of the initiate. „Kɔmi" is

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made out of date palm leaves dyed red. It signifies a solemn act of dedicating oneself to and serving his/her people (Carl Christian Reindorf, 1889). This symbol is used for capturing and giving identify to persons nominated for various traditional leadership positions. These include positions such as „mantsɛ" (chief), „wulɔmɔ" (high priest), „Naa Afieye" (wife for the wulɔmɔ), etc. The art

forms used to herald the event of „kɔmi ŋmɔɔ" (capture) are singing of dirges, chanting of appellations, pouring of libation etc. As a result of the cultural dynamism, in the absence of the date palm leaves, „nyanyra" (a climbing plant called cerasse) is put around the neck of the initiate (see plate 3.1). After the capture the initiate is confinement for purification

rites.

Plate 3.1   Nii Kwei Obuadaban Odametey I, with „Nyanyra" around his neck during his capture on Friday 8th May, 2015, for the po ition of „Akwas ontsɛ of the Abese Quarter of La in the Greater Accra egion

In line with Gá tradition, the initiate is confined in the ancestral home and at mid-night taken to the beach for purification rites. This is done in privacy. The initiate in his/her nakedness is bathed in the sea to wash away all his/her sins. On his/her return to the ancestral home, after the purification rite, a sheep is slaughtered and the initiate made to walk through the blood as a symbol of cleansing and purification that metamorphoses the him/her to the status of divinity to be able to communicate with the ancestors and the spirit world. (See plate 3.2). This activity (art performance) is accompanied by chanting and libation. The next activity is coronation of the initiate in public where he/she is made to sit in state.

Plate 3.2
Purification Right for the Initiate: Sheep is slaughtered and the
blood spilled on the feet of the initiate as a symbol of cleansing

The initiate is clad in royal paraphernalia for coronation. Before this, the initiate is served with a special meal (otɔ) made from yam and palm oil with boiled egg. Special beads are worn or tied at specific joints of the initiate. The „beads" on the wrist reminds the wearer of nobility and dignity

in life. He is not expected to raise his hand on anybody despite the level of provocation. The hand is now a symbol of divinity, benevolence and kindheartedness. (See plate 3.3).

Plate 3.3
A traditional leader wearing beads of identity and authority: a symbol of divinity, benevolence and kindheartedness to all those who come your way irrespective of race, gender or status

The legitimized symbols (art works and forms) of the various traditional institutions in Ghana, according to available literature: oral and written, are highly respected, revered and venerated. These symbols are carved, cast and modeled, constructed, woven, stringed, assembled, painted and decorated to create articles such as the stool (black stool), ceremonial sword, linguistic staff, body ornaments and body extensions. Songs, appellations, dirges and dance movements are composed, choreographed and performed to commemorate historic, sacred and special events or occasions to ideate the *presence in absentia*.

Plate 3.4
Coronation of Nii Kwei Obuadaban Odametey I, „Akwashontsɛ" of
the Abese Quarter of La in the Greater Accra Region

**Coronation of Nii Kwei Obuadaban Odammetey I: Akwashontsɛ of Abese
Divisional Council of La, Accra in the company of
Asafoiatsɛ Nii Okufo and Asafoianyɛ Naa Okufo on Saturday 9th May, 2015**

CHAPTER FOUR

IDEATING MATERIAL CULTURE

4.1. Preamble

To ideate is to form a mental picture of something which is not present or not the case. The concept of my thesis fits perfectly into this philosophy. In this section I will focus on the basic theories of „ideation" and „material culture" and link them up with practices that perpetuate these ideologies with reference to King Tackie Tawiah I.

4.2. Ideation

As people set goals for themselves and thrive to meet their target, ideation becomes the major wings on which they conveniently fly to reach their destinations. Ideation plays an important role in concretizing one"s concepts, by developing potential solutions and devising strategic plans for meeting targets. Ideation, according scholars, is the process of generating or conceiving ideas and concepts that may be useful for attaining some desired outcomes. In ideation theory, meanings of words or images are subjective. In my works, I relied on visual images using the Unified Modeling Language (UML) theory, which I believe, clearly represents the semantic of the theory.

According to the ideational theory, the meanings of words and/or images are subjective. They are the ideas within the presenter"s mind and communication is achieved when the words and/or images the listener or observer hears or sees stimulates the same sense concept or ideas that the speaker or presenter wants to send. The meaning of an expression as explained by Lyons (1981) is the idea or concept, associated with it in the mind of anyone who knows it. This opinion has

been defended extensively by Locke (1996). He explains the ideation theory by first defining „idea". To him „idea" is „whatsoever the mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding". He categorizes ideas into two: simple ideas and complex ideas. To him through the process of composing, comparing and abstracting, new ideas can be derived from existing ones. Locke's theory focuses exclusively on semantic features. The term „semantic" is the relationship between words or images and ideas. Locke stresses that words and/or images „in their primary and immediate signification, stand for nothing, but the ideas in the mind of him that uses them". For instance, after the following images were placed in the public arena, it stirred a lot of interpretation and debate based on the viewer"s cultural belief, background and experience.
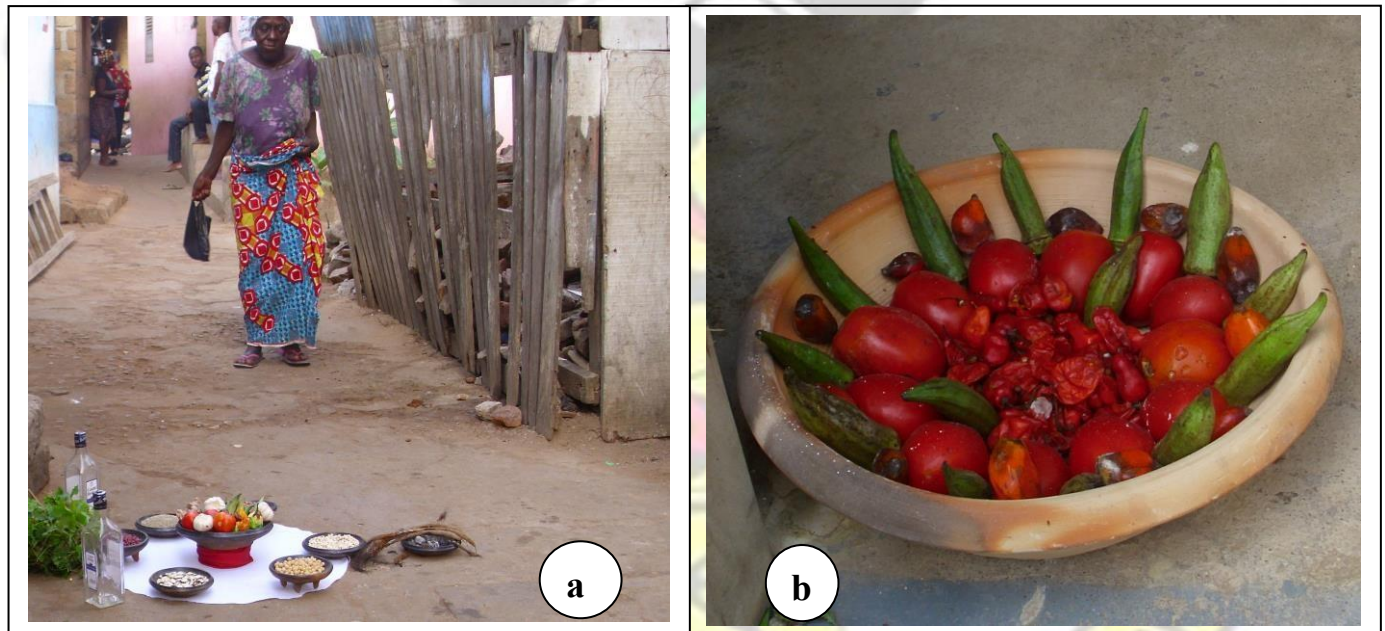
Plate 4.1: **'a'** Sample of the exhibits mounted within the La community at „Abese Blohum".
'b' Details of the arrangement of food ingredients in the earthenware bowls for the exhibits.

One major challenge of the ideational theory is that questions are not settled about the meaning of ideas by looking for it. The public opinion, the public court or general consensus about the meaning of a word or image settles it. Having had a feel of the concept of ideation theory, let us now turn our attention to the materiality of the concept.

4.3. Material Culture

'How do things and materiality at large relate to human beings and 'social life'?

This question was asked by Bjornar Olsen in his article „Material Culture after Text: Re-Membering Things" published in the Norwegian Archaeological Review, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2003

This section of the thesis would be addressing the issue of material culture and its significance in the life of a people:

The term „material culture", scholars agree, emerged during the twentieth century in the disciplines of archeology, socio-cultural anthropology and anthropological archaeology. To Daniel Miller (1987), material culture is „a surprisingly illusive component of modern culture", which „has consistently managed to evade the focus of academic gaze, and remains the least understood of all central phenomena of the modern age". About a decade after the lamentations of Miller, Michael Schiffer (1999) opines that social scientists have „ignored what might be the most distinctive and significant about our species: (that) human life consists of ceaseless and varied interaction among people and myriad kinds of things".

Though these concerns expressed by Miller and Schiffer, some critiques acknowledged had some elements of bias, the fact still remains that the materiality of social life has been marginalized, if not stigmatized, in scientific and philosophical discourses. How objects or the material world in general, relate to social life and make the absent present is the centrality of my thesis. Schiffer (1999) also makes some important observations. He observes that material culture projects conventional ontology and theories into new empirical domains, treating human-artifact interaction as secondary to processes of culture. To him the conception, creation, acquisition and use of artifacts is one key way in which a people interpret culturally constituted meanings.

The assertion by Schiffer provides some bases to further interrogate material culture. To this end material culture can therefore be described as a group of artifacts of a particular people or society at a given time that embodies their beliefs, values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions. It constitutes the primary data for the research into cultural history of a people for a particular period within time and space. It is the material evidence of the life and activities of the said people. Through these artifacts, social scientists are able to identify and appreciate the mindset and developmental processes of the people. The understanding of the concept of the materiality of the culture of a people has the capacity of providing a foundation for a scholarly study and interpretation of their thoughts, ideologies, acquisition, development and dissemination of their culture. Material culture provides the researcher with factual evidence of man-made objects as the bases for a conclusion on the extent to which the human intelligence and its attempt to finding solutions to problems that affect his/her utmost survival within his immediate environment. The underlying premise is that objects made or modified by man reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of the people who made,

commissioned, acquired, or used them, and by extension the beliefs of the larger society to which these objects belonged. Societies over the years have expressed their beliefs through the objects they have acquired and revered. It is worth noting here that the objects that constitute and fuels the concept of the material culture of a people have integral values that influence and stimulate the acquisition, patronage, preservation, storage and use of these revered objects. This ideology moves us into the discussion of inherent and attached values of material culture facilitating their survival through time and space.

4.4.   Inherent and Attached Values of Material Culture

Objects that constitute material cultures are associated with some kind of values. These inherent or attached values differ from one society to another. They are central to the fabrication of the object or material itself. These ideologies are established or based on the following:

1. Rarity of the material used: There are some materials that are not common. They are rare and exceptional. For example, gold, silver and cowry. The people who originally created them placed some firm and fixed values on them. Such value continues to make people patronize the use the said objects as long as the said material continues to enjoy their valued status.

2. Utility of the material: Some objects are valued because of their utility. As long as this utility status remains the said object continues to be valued.

3. Aesthetic value of the material: Some objects are assigned some kind of integral values because of their aesthetic appearances.

4. Spiritual (iconic) value. By nature some materials are believed to possess some spiritual values. For example, trees, leaves and leather. As long as these beliefs persist, the value

placed on the aid object continues to persist accordingly. Most of these objects are used as cult objects. People prefer using spiritual materials in their natural condition than reshaping them.

It is however, very obvious that these objects do embody and reflect the beliefs of the people who made and used them. They thus constitute distinctive cultural expressions as they continue to exist in the present. Material culture provides us with the opportunity to experience the events and concepts of the past at first hand for interpretation. This situation is captured explicitly in an observation made by Henry Glassie (1999). He observed that only a marginal percentage of the world's population in the past wrote literature, documented events or kept diaries. To him material objects provide us with a more representative source of information and further offer us the possibility to understand the past, thoughts and cultures of large majority of people.

CHAPTER FIVE
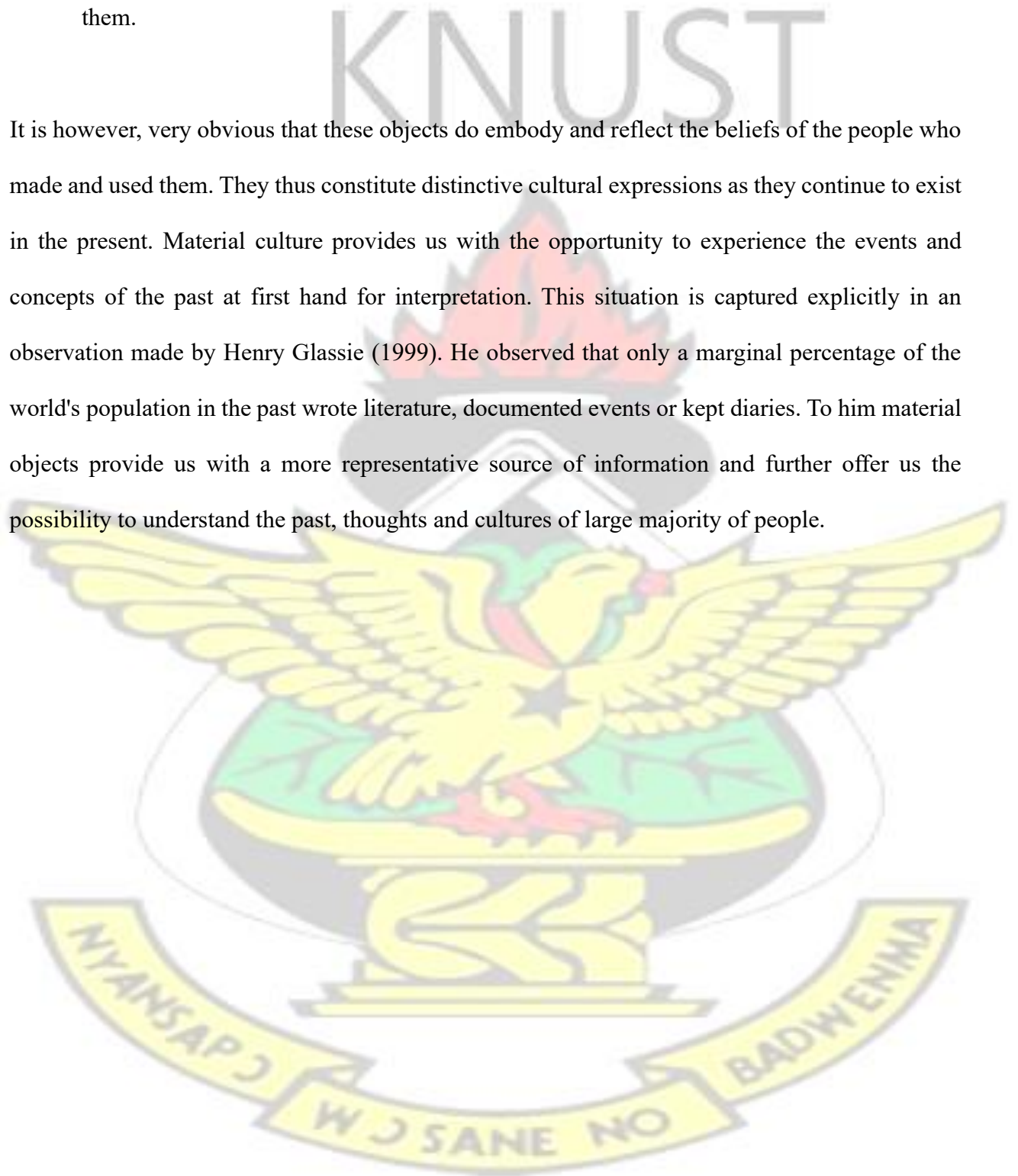
HOW OBJECTS CONSTRUCTED THE CONCEPT

Everyday objects or items such as plants, vegetables, beads, cowries, leather, etc. that has passed through the hands of many people hold and tell volumes of the history of a people through time and space. They manifest the thoughts, wishes, aspirations and beliefs, account for the progress and development, and provide evidence of the culture of the said people. In my attempt to interrogate the extent to which objects found in the immediate environment relate to the people and influence their journey through life, space and creativity I investigated the concept of material culture and its use and significance in connecting the mind beyond the real in the recontextualization of the complexities of life. Since my study was focused on King Tackie Tawiah I of the Gá people I relied on objects that are common and familiar with the Gas as a people and the Gá state in general.

My works explore the beliefs and realities of life with special emphasis on where the two issues intersect. They reinvent the activities that characterize the symbolization of power and authority as well as traditional luminary. I am drawn to luminal spaces that are evidenced with the passing of time and the reconstruction of ideas situated in the belief system of a people through the investigation of material cultures. The works ideate the viewer''s past experience and, in turn, elicits his/her response either voluntarily or involuntarily.

In achieving my goals, I used the installation art form to express my concepts. Installation art describes an artistic genre of three-dimensional works that are often designed to transform the perception of a space. Generally, the term is applied to interior spaces and the works can be

either temporary or permanently installed. It involves the incorporation of everyday and natural materials. The works were constructed and organized mainly with resin, wood, cowries, metal,

fabric, leather, clay, calabash, yarn and vegetables. The installed images blur the distinction between what is seen with the eyes and what is perceived or seen imaginarily with the mind''s eye. Now the exhibits:

5.1.   Expo No. I: 'Beyond the Eye'

„Beyond the Eye'' was the theme for my first exhibition. This exhibition was not advertised because it was to cause stir and surprise. It was held in the inner room of the sculpture department. I created an exhibition area measuring 12 feet x 12 feet. The exhibition contains seven segmented eerie tableaux enacted by units of interactive shrines and locus. Each of the units conveys a unique message.

„Beyond the Eye'' engages the viewer''s past experiences and thoughts in a passionate but frenzy mood making him see beyond the real. It offers the visitor the opportunity to move and interact with the works in various ways he thinks or finds appropriate and convenient. Let us now take time to walk through the exhibits as captured by the lens of the camera.

A walk through the exhibition

a) 'Oyɛ Mli Ni Aye'

This is the first of the seven units. The installation is made up of the following: earthenware bowl (ká), palm fruit, okra (okro), tomatoes and pepper. The title of the work is „Oyɛ mli ni aye''.

Plate 5.1.1 Details of „Oyɛ mli ni aye": unit one of the exhibition dubbed „Beyond the Eye" held in the inner room of the sculpture department, KNUST.

„Oyɛ mli ni aye" is a Gá phraseology which literary means „you took part in the eating". This

parlance reminds me of my childhood and adolescence days. I was involved in sporting activities.

I played „juvenile soccer" in the late 1970s and „playing cards" in the early 1980s. I recall vividly with nostalgic feelings the connection between sports excellence and spiritualism. „Oyɛ mli ni aye" was an oracle that was consulted by sporting teams for assistance during sporting engagements. It barred clients from eating certain types of „food" for a period not less than three days to the day of the contest. Disobedience of this directive was a recipe for defeat. I chose this title in remembrance of the ordeal we had to go through before contests and the excitements and euphoria that characterized our actions and inactions when victory came.

The image above is an example of practices within the indigenous Gá communities. Food and other items believed to have religious interpretations are placed at junctions, cross roads, shrines („otutu" or „gbatsu"), banks of rivers, ponds and lagoons, entrances to forests and grooves, cemeteries and other places considered sacred, where people customarily congregate, etc.

Symbolically, the images are used:

a) to remove a curse: „musu kpamɔ"

b) for body cleansing: „hetsuu"

c) for restoration of family bonds: „weku kpaa tsamɔ"

d) for breaking of family bonds with the gods: „aagba wɔŋ koo"

e) to pacify the gods: „wɔjii afaikpamɔ"

f) to appease the gods: „wɔjii akpatamɔ"

g) to feed the gods: „wɔjii anihamɔ"

7059

h) to perpetuate a curse: „wɔbɔɔ"

In „Oyɛ mli ni aye", as exhibited above, all the items arranged in the earthenware bowl contain seeds. Seed symbolizes continuous life. They are used to perpetuate eternity, multiplicity, plenty, wealth and fortune. These items are therefore used to appease the gods, atone for sins, seek for prosperity etc.

The work symbolizes protection, exorcism, fidelity, psychic powers, love, transmutation and purification. I selected this idea because of its significance in the life of the Gá people. The earthenware which is crafted or made out of clay (soil) symbolizes the direct contact of the unseen spirit to mother earth. It further portrays the creative prowess and potency in achieving targets and goals: creating form from formlessness. The palm fruit; „ŋme", represents the holiness and medicinal powers of the unseen spirit. The palm three has played important roles in the lives of mankind throughout history. It has been used by many cultures as a symbol for victory, peace, and fertility. Today, palms continue to enjoy respect and patronage in spiritdom. The seeded items further symbolize multiplicity of the powers of the authority that are perceived in absentia.

„Oyɛ mli ni aye", the first exhibit of „Beyond the Eye" concept that the visitor encounters as he/she walks through the exhibition, is quite strategic. It symbolizes the cleansing of the visitor of all past crimes and iniquities. It appeases all spirits that have been wronged by the consultee or visitor to the exhibited shrine. It exorcises, purifies and provides him/her with newness of life and fidelity to go through the exhibited shrine.

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The presence of „Oyɛ mli ni aye" at the entrance of the sculpture section created pandemonium, scare and tension among passers-by. Respondents were very skeptical with mixed feelings. I therefore replicated the exhibition of this unit within the La community. I did three exhibits: in the indigenous settlement, an abandoned cemetery and a dump hill. (See images on pages 73-75)

b) Submissivism

From „Oyɛ mli ni aye" the visitor is engaged with the concept of self-submission themed „Submissivism". Submission is the manifestation of obedience and compliance. It is the second unit of „Beyond the Eye". „Submissivism" is the doorway or entrance to the *inner room* (pia mli). At the entrance is a white fabric, an old broom, a climbing plant and three feathers. The items are composed into a unit and displayed in a hanging pose. The broom with the feathers attached are enveloped within the climbing plant and superimposed on the white fabric. The entrance is made low compelling every visitor to bow in submission before entering. (See pages 76-77)

The white fabric connotes purity: The cloth is draped in the middle of the entrance creating a dual way of entry and exit. It is a myth concocted that everything in spiritdom is sacred. All shrines and „ututus" in the Gá state appear in white. This portrays the extent to which they are revered, admired and celebrated.

The broom at the entrance of the exhibit represents unity and cleanliness: in almost every household in the Gá community there is a broom. It is used in maintaining cleanliness. It is believed, as a result of its daily use, to have had several contacts with the spirit world.

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Plate 5.1.2

The exhibit in the La community at „Abese Blohum" along the corridors in front of „Tunma We"

Plate 5.1.3
The exhibit at the abandoned Presbyterian Cemetery at La Emmaus near St. Paul's JHS

Fig. 5.1.4
The exhibit at La Wireless Dump Hill, close to the African Union (AU) Village

7564

Plate 5.1.5
The entrance to the exhibited shrine having a two-way; „in" and „out"

As captured from far

6576

Plate 5.1.6
The entrance to the exhibited shrine having a two-way; „in‟ and „out‟ A
close shot

6677

Plate 5.1.7
Afrimi Otutu of the Abese people near „Nii Sowah Kwade We", La in Accra

7867

Plate 5.1.8

Osabu shrine of the Jrasɛɛ clan near „Nii Adjeiŋkpa We", La in Accra

7968

The ancestors who visit during the night, the gods and other spirits that stopover at dawn etc. leave their unseen footprints in the households which are cleaned or removed by the broom during sweeping relieving the household of any bad omen. Because of this activity it is a taboo to hit

someone with the broom. It can attract the penalty of excommunication or ostracism. The old broom used in this composition has passed through many hands and has also come into contact with wide-ranging surfaces. „**Submissivism'** welcomes the visitor who bows as a sign of respect to the cleansing power and protective influence of the broom. As a product from the palm tree, it also has the power of fertility and spiritual potency.

The climbing plant symbolizes divine ascendance: Various traditional cultures and societies have assigned symbolic meanings to plants. Though some of these symbolisms are no longer commonly and largely understood by the current generations because of generational gap and westernization, some have survived. It is also very interesting to note that, some of these meanings are alluded to in written and oral literature; folklores, dirges, appellations, songs, poems and stories.

Are you aware that in recent times new ideas and symbolisms for plants have been developed? One of these new developments is the „red poppy". It is used to symbolize the remembrance of the fallen heroes in warfare. The eleventh minute of the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month has been set aside by the United Nations for the celebration and remembrance of the fallen heroes of the 1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ World Wars.

8069

Sacred plants and trees play crucial roles in art and folk literature of many societies. Some of these plants are metamorphosed forms of human beings and animals. In some cultures climbing plants are classified as holy. Mythical archetypes of climbers influence many cultures in their adoption and use of such plants. Climbers symbolize divine ascendance. Among the Gá people a particular climbing plant „nyanyra": cerasse, (see Plate 5.6 on page 68) is certified as holy and divine

cleansing and enthronement. „Nyanyra" is used for purification, installation, recognition, honour etc. Any august visitor is adorned with „nyanyra". The climber in this composition therefore cleanses, purifies and recognizes the presence of the visitor to the shrine. Metaphorically, it is same as the „rosary" (from Latin rosarium meaning crown or garland of roses) used by the Catholics, or „prayer beads" in other religions. .

The three feathers symbolically represent ascension and spiritual elevation to a higher realm. It also symbolizes communication with the spirit world, and the expression of celestial wisdom, protection, recognition, attraction, aerodynamics and insulation. Feathers represent the power of the gods of thunder, air and wind. The number „three" stands for vitality, energy, motion and completion. It denotes the period of incubation, the rise of consciousness and the rediscovery of unity with the authorities above.

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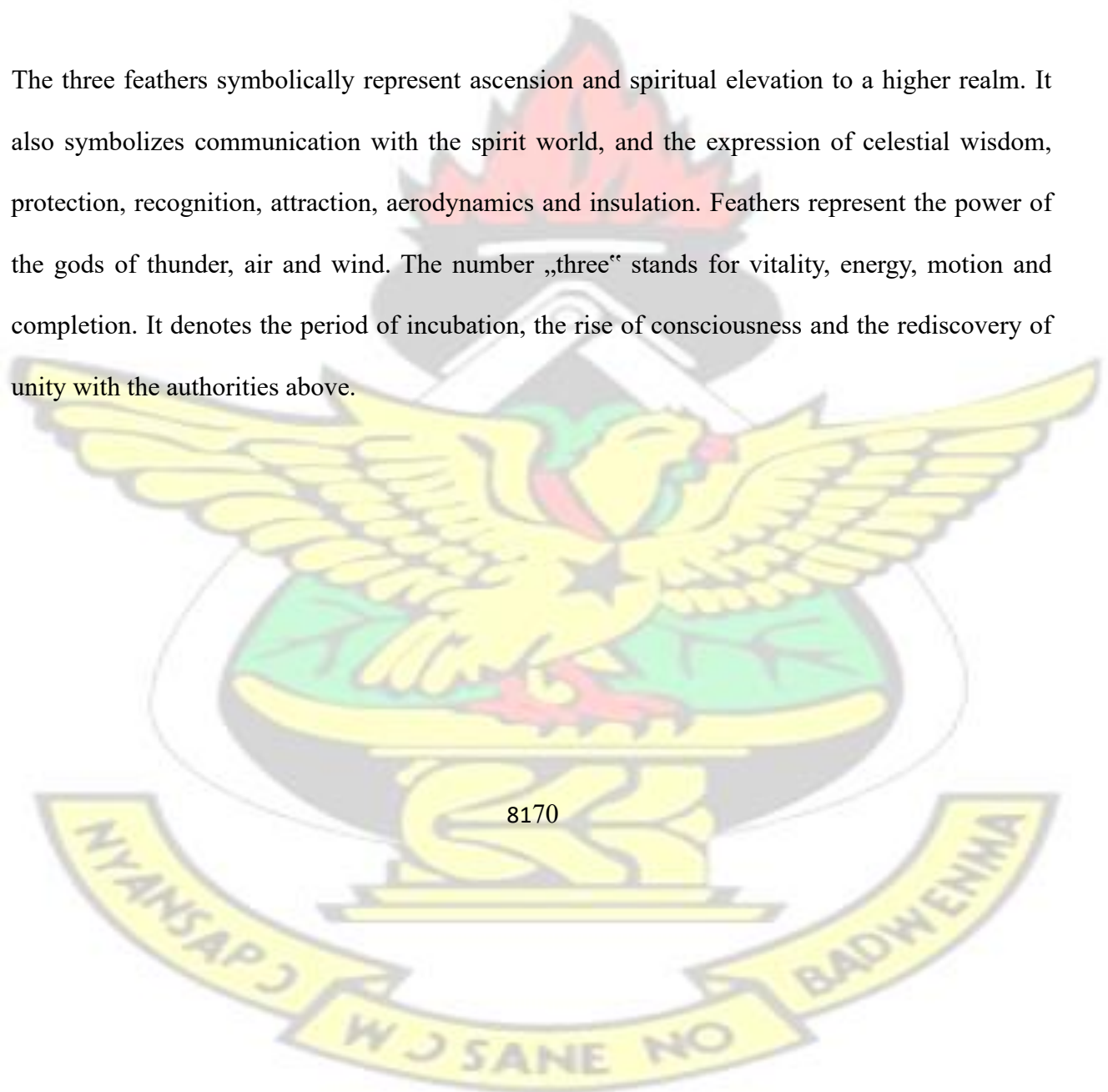
Plate 5.1.9

A man with „nyanyra" around the neck

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The number three is sacred to most religions. it combines the numbers one and two and so

includes all life and experience. It is:

- birth, life and death;

- mind, body and soul;

- past, present and future;

- father, mother and child

The three feathers in the composition, therefore, symbolically elevate the spirit of the visitor; bring

him/her closer to the gods in readiness to enter the „**pia mli**‟ for consultation. It identifies who the

visitor is; mind, body or soul.

Inside the shrine, the consultee is engaged with five units of spiritualism named as follows:

- Shrinism Consult

- Purified Sanctity

- Spatial Coherence

- Intra Locus

- Renewed Surveillance

c) Shrinism Consult: 'Nibimɔ'

People visit shrines for consultation. As a growing young boy in the extended family house at La

in the Greater Accra region, I had the opportunity of witnessing series of consultation sessions.

My mother‟s father‟s (grandfather) second wife; (a classificatory grandmother) „Aawɔŋ

Aanaanyo‟ was a fetish priestess. People from all walks of life, far and near came to her for

spiritual guidance, protection and assistance.

Plate 5.1.10: One of the five units of „spiritualism" termed „shrinism consult that engages the visitor

On many occasions, some of us (the grandchildren) who were „perceived and classified as innocent and holy (because of our ages) were sent on errands, or made to sit in or asked to perform some rites during the consultation processes. As I look back to those days in emotional and

reflective moods, I do remember some of those activities vividly. However, memory some of these activities, I must confess, are blurred and others completely forgotten. Shrinism Consult is a re-creation of my past experience. I tried to recapture traces of those past memories and situating them in the present.

Shrinism Consult is composed of a granite stone, an egg, powder, bottle tops, cowries and food items – palm fruits and okro.

The granite stone is revered by many cultures because of its appearance. The chemistry of its formation goes beyond the ordinary mind of the time. It is a plutonic igneous rock with visible crystalline textures. It is generally composed of feldspar, mica and quartz. Because they are deeply rooted in the ground and very difficult to dig-out or removed they were revered and worshipped. (See Plate 5.8 for examples). Their abode are therefore classified and designated as sacred.

8574

Plate 5.1.11 Sample of granite rocks that are worshipped as gods
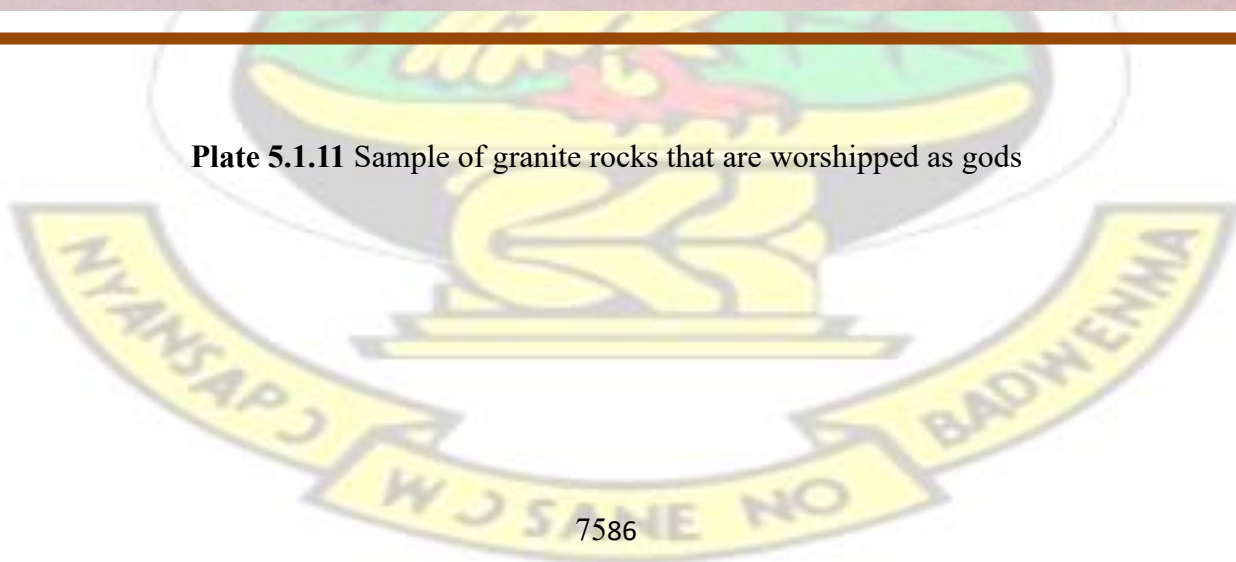
Plate 5.1.12
Sample of granite rocks that are worshipped as deities
The original „**Nyɔŋmɔtsaa Wɔŋ'** in La

d) Purified Sanctity: 'Hetsuu'

Purification is a ceremonial cleansing or an act of purging of guilt: moral or spiritual defilement by the performance of appropriate rites.

Purified Sanctity is composed of a circle, an outline drawing of two footsteps, four eggs (three standing and a broken one in the calabash), a calabash bowl (akpaki aloo tsene), seven feathers, leaves, water, palm flower (ŋmatsu). The calabash with water, leaves, feathers and the broken egg is placed in the center of the drawn circle. The other three eggs (standing) are arranged to form a triangle superposing on the circle. (see Plate. 5.1.1 2 on page 89)

A circle is composed of a line with no definite beginning or end. According to Mandala, a circle encloses space, strengthens and delimits whatever is inside. It is a widely accepted symbol of eternity. Amenuke et al (1993) describe the circle as a symbol of the presence and power of God, purity and holiness. The triangle formed as a result of the imaginary lines linking the eggs symbolizes dynamism: an attribute of deities. These two geometric shapes: the circle and the triangle, sanctify the calabash of leaves, feathers and broken egg immersed in water ready for purification of the consultee. If you doubt the potency of „Purified Sanctity" have a look at the scene on page 91.

The egg is widely used by many cultures. It is believed to have the power to superintendent over both life and death. The three eggs in the composition mean transfiguration through purified sanctity.

Plate 5.1.13

How „Purified Sanctity" was composed

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Drawn Circle

Standing Eggs

Imagined Triangle
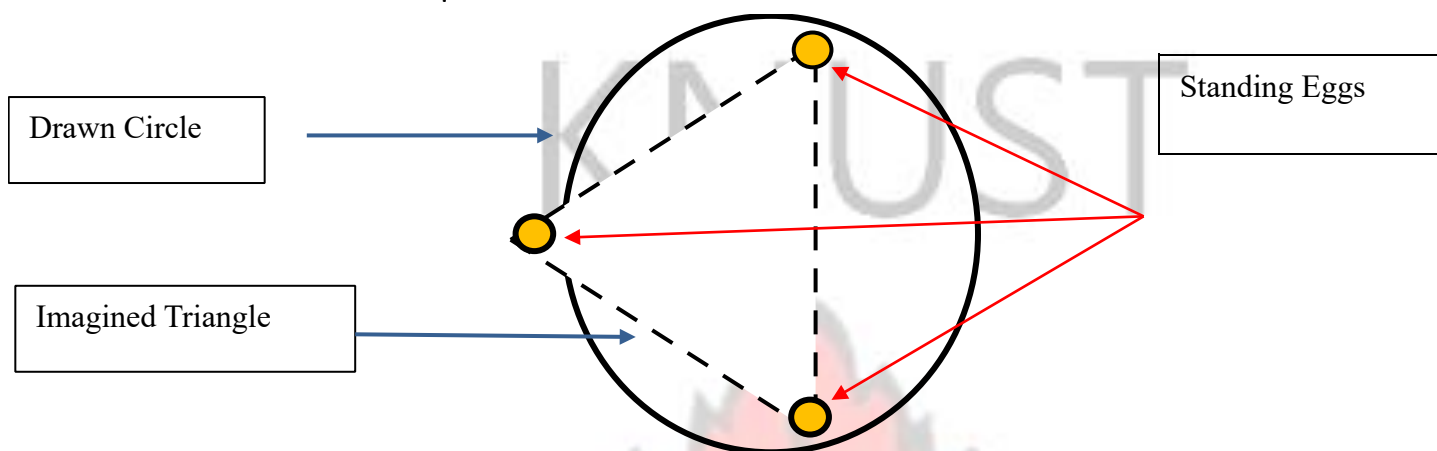
Fig. 5.1.1:

The layout of „Purified Sanctity"

9079

Plate 5.1.14

A consultee going through purification rites

8091

After the purification the visitor is engaged with „Spatial Encounter". The visitor comes face-

toface with the sentimentality of self-reflection. The visitor is captured in a state of transitional

intuitive emotional state momentarily with contemplative tension. Can we now look at the materiality of „spatial encounter"?

e) Spatial Encounter

This unit comprises a mirror surrounded by climbers hanging on a wall. Underneath the mirror is a stool tied in the middle with a white fabric. On top of the stool are cowries. The mirror is to reflect the image of the visitor who is to be confronted with the physical and illusive space before and beyond the mirror: the state of illusionism.

In practice, the mirror is an entrenched metaphor in traditional religion, fetishism and shrinism. Images of targeted persons are summoned to appear in mirrors or pots/calabashes filled with water. These objects express social psychological tensions of appearance versus truth (Schroeder and Borgerson 2003).

The mirror is an object which reflects the truth, discovers the true self, and echoes both the personality's secondary role and the resolve of his/her presence. Freedman (1993: 157) maintains that, „when the mirror announces its identity, it shows an active speaker and it is not a passive reflector anymore and is rebellious to the traditionally assigned roles" (Freedman 1993:157).
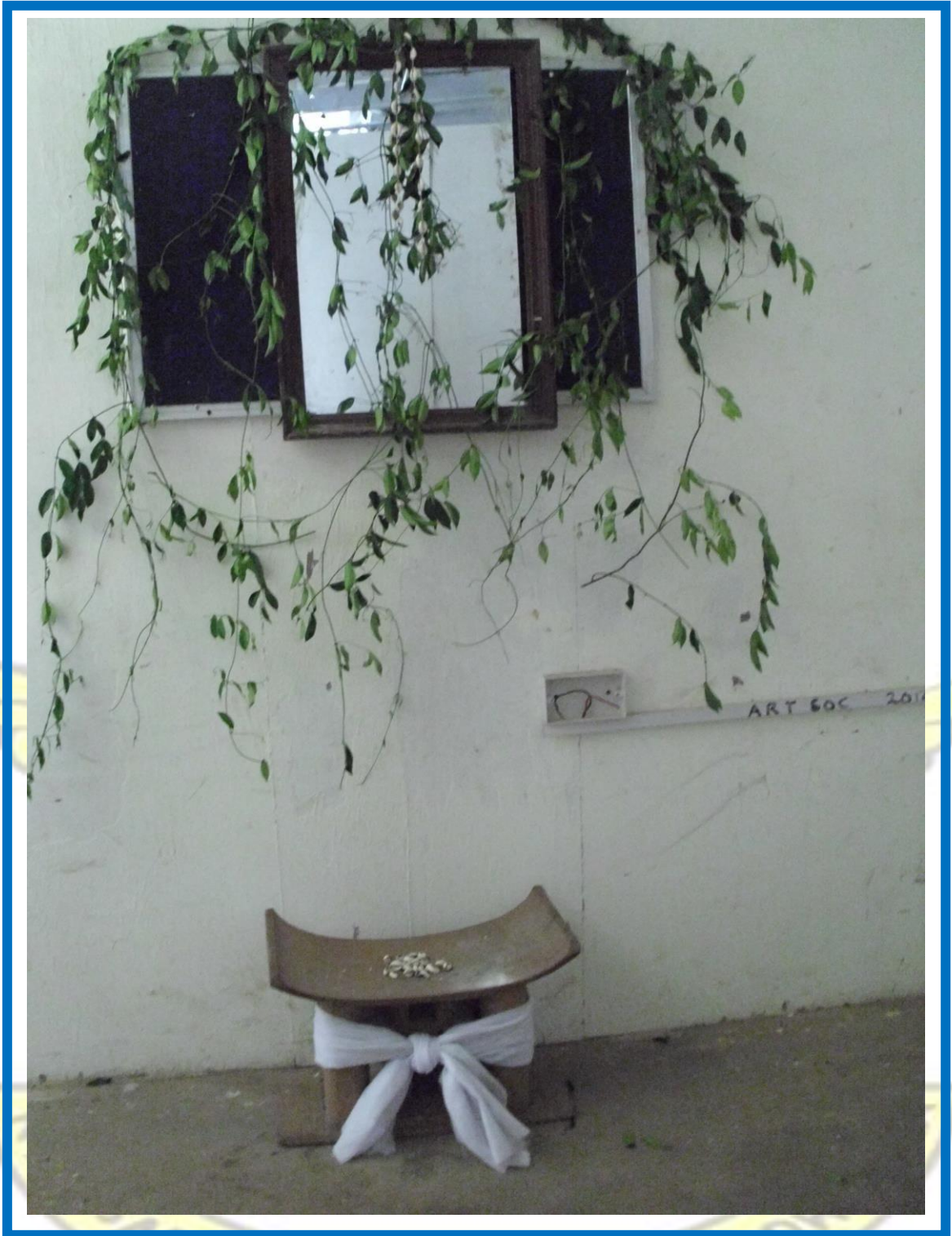
Plate 5.1.15
How Spatial Encounter was organized in the shrine.

The next unit of the exhibit was the „Intra Locus".

f) Intra Locus

'Wɔbɔle kutu wɔkpe
Wɔyɛ nu wɔnu wɔ kojii anɔ ajɔ wɔ'

'Kɛ nakutso kɛ nakutso kpe lɛ
Tɔtɔɔmɔ baaa'

Literary the quotations above mean „in conference we resolve our problems".

„Intra Locus" is the title given to this unit. The unit portrays a sitting arrangement of seven stools. The setting is based on mysticism of numerology. The number seven symbolizes a sense of respect and sanctity. It stands for the highest stage of illumination and therefore the coveted goal of all aspirations.

Seven is considered as the sacred Number by the Pythagoreans. According to Peter Gravigger (1998), seven takes its root from the Ancient Greek word ≪σεπτάς≫ **(septas)** which means „the respected one". The number seven symbolizes the Monad. It is the Initiation and the Sacrifice. The ancient mathematician: Theon, classifies seven as the only number among the ten counting numbers (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10), which cannot be a product of multiplying other members of the set and if multiplied with another number it doesn"t give a result included among the ten except itself. This makes the number „**7**" so unique and very special numerology.

The number „7" is very significant in the philosophy of traditionalism. In Ga mythology one hears of „jeŋ kojii kpawo" (seven corners of the world), akutsei kpawo (seven clans) etc.

in this exhibit a central stool is set for the king or luminary. He is flanged by two deputies; one on his immediate right and the other on the left. On both sides are seated two supporting elders. The seven stools represent the „seven clans/quarters‟ (akutsei kpawo) of the Gá state.

The three stools in the middle symbolize the **triadic** imagery or metaphorism of leadership in consultation: the father- the supreme God (okplejeŋ); the son- „apical ancestor‟ and the spirit world (jemawɔjii)

The triad is the Archetypal Idea completed. This is a concept at the center of the Theology of various religions; thus, in Hinduism we have the Trinity of Brahma, Visnou, and Siva while in Christianism we have the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The number „three‟ symbolizes vitality, energy, motion, completion: beginning, middle and end. The trinity (also virgin, mother, crone) is a period of incubation during which the hero is transformed.

Above the stool, in the middle of the arrangement, hangs a broom with a climbing plant. This symbolizes ascension, fertility and potency. The combination of the climbing plant and the palm tree symbolizes divine ascendance.

Plate 5.1.16
Cross-section of the seating arrangement in „Intra Locus"

9685

Plate 5.1.17

The „Triadic" as composed within „intra locus

9786

Plate 5.1.18

The symbolism of divine ascendancy

9887

g) Renewed Surveillance

Surveillance is closely monitoring or observing a person or group of persons. It is used in controlling social order. Recent world events following 9/11(September, 11) have triggered a surge interest in the interdisciplinary field of surveillance studies. This has spurred scholars to revisit acknowledged and undoubted metaphors, tropes and models for understanding the character and significance of modern surveillance. The idea of the „Renewed Surveillance" resonates Foucault"s Panopticon. The panoptic structure symbolizes the sense of feelings individuals go through in institutions such as prisons, hospitals, schools, workplaces, and families etc. to determine life within their confines: the sense of nowhere to run and to hide. The panopticon idea hides the supposed viewer. To the one being seen, being unable to see the viewer carries with it an uncertainty that becomes a source of anxiety, discomfort and terror.

Questions such as: „Who is watching? Why are they watching? What will they do? etc. run through the mind.

In most cultures „spiritual surveillance" underpins the actions and inactions of the people. The supreme God, the ancestors and the other unseen spirits monitor and oversee the activities of the people. The people believe that they are being seen by the powers that be and can be punished for going wrong. This seeming combination of culturally, mentally and structurally imposed visibility (that one is always seen) and perceptual uncertainty (but one cannot see the seer) has led many critics to focus on the centrality of vision in the maintenance of social and political control. The concept of seeing or being seen controls behaviours, promotes self-policing and instills discipline. Once you become aware of the presence and power of surveillance the more one is able to conform.

Plate 5.1.19

Spiritual Surveillance

5.2.   Expo No. 2: April Full or April Fool

My second exhibition was held on 1ˢᵗ April, 2014 along the „Mecca Road" to the central classroom

blocks. It was themed „April Full or April Fool". Many people wondered why I

selected that date and the choice of theme. (Sample of the advert for the event is on page 96)

1ˢᵗ April is touted as **'April Fool's Day'**. It is widely remembered for its tomfooleries, swindles,

jokes and witticisms. Information about its origin is quite obscure. There are many schools of

thoughts but most seem to agree that it started in 1582 in France. According to history ancient

cultures, including those of the Romans and Hindus, celebrated New Year's Day on or around April

1, which closely followed the vernal equinox: March 20th or March 21st.

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII introduced the Gregorian calendar, changing the celebration of the

New Year"s Day to January 1. France adopted the new calendar and moved the celebration of the

New Year's Day accordingly. Documentary evidence indicates that some people either refused to

accept the new date, or did not hear about it, and thus continued to celebrate New Year's Day on

April 1. This attitude triggered the „branding of „April Fool". The conservatives or traditionalists

were labeled and sent on „fool's errands". They were tricked into believing falsehood as real and

the truth. Eventually, the practice spread worldwide.

I selected this day because I wanted to observe the other side of humanity by testing their belief

systems and cultural experience. Though a notice advertising the exhibition was made, only limited

number was posted at obscure but very important places within the faculty of art.

Students of other departments never learned about it. This was very intentional so as to catch them unaware. The exhibits were mounted at dawn and by 6am it was ready for public view.

The venue for the exhibition was also strategic. Most students of KNUST attend lectures at the Central Classroom Blocks. Every morning large numbers of students and workers move along that lane towards the central classroom blocks to attend lectures and other official duties. The large numbers of human movement resulted in naming the place „Mecca Road‟ in synonymous with the Hajj or Pilgrimage to Mecca by the Muslims.

The choice of the location is to:

- engage the attention of many people: students and workers,
- observe how the people will naturally relate and react to the arrangements of the exhibits ⯀ interrogate the reasons for their behavior.

Ironically, majority of the people who move along the „Mecca Road‟ most times of the day do so to pursue „power‟ through the acquisition of knowledge.

The venue also presents a natural spectacle to the concept. The evergreen scenery; big trees, creeping plants and climbers, presence of birds and „Wewe‟ stream over which the students cross to the central classroom blocks ideates very well into the concept. Societies have accepted the axiom that forests provide convenient dwelling places for different powers; both good and bad. Forests have played very important roles in the cultures of people globally since the times of ancient civilization. Sacred plants: huge trees, leaves, climbers and creepers, revered birds:

10291

eagles, hawks, falcons and vultures, and animals: lion, tiger, antelope, elephant and bear, have been associated with deities and religious rites, symbolisms of great achievements and power etc. Forests have played crucial roles in the arts and folk literature of many societies

Another reason was the question of „interplay" of power. The forest represents the habitat of power linked up with plants, leaves, food items, birds, animals and dwarfs. The stream „Wewe" is also associated with the powers of „Okomfo Anokye" of Asanteman history. He is believed to have passed through the KNUST forest using the course that incidentally led to the birth of the river. The students that use the „Mecca Road" daily do so in pursuance of knowledge which is the key to power in recent times. Close by is the „Paa Joe" stadium: a battlefield to prove one"s prowess, power and superiority in the game of sports (popularly referred to as friendly hostilities)

Finally, I also considered the serene atmosphere: the evergreen canopy of the trees, the spots of sunlight that beam through the woods and leaves, the climbers and creeping plants as well as the direct linkage to material culture.

Plate 5.2.1:

Poster for the April Full or Fool Exhibition

10493

Plate 5.2.2

How the location accommodated the exhibits

Having acquainted ourselves with the reasons for the choice of the day, date and venue, let us try

an interrogation of the theme „April Full or April Fool". The word „full" also means „filled" or

occupied. By the way a person reacts gives an indication of his/her experience with similar situations, occurrences or arrangements. The „full" is a testimony of one"s past encounter or experience and the knowledge gained. Against this background the person in question is either described as a „full" or „fool".

A walk through the exhibits

For a safe walk through the exhibits, it would be ideal to know the items exhibited.

The „April Full or April Fool" Expo saw the display of the following items:

- Earthenware bowls

- Beads

- Cowries

- Food items: beans, ground-nuts, ginger

- Traditional food „kpokpoi"

- Mirror

- Traditional stools,

- Sculpture in the round: „odom sanfee" cast in resin

- Backdrop; made from jute sack, cowries, leather, bamboo

- Cloth: White and red

 (The meanings and significance of most of these items have already been discussed in the previous chapter: „Oyemli Ni Aye")

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The visitor is first engaged with the arrangement of whitewashed earthenware bowls from the beginning of the „Mecca Road"

KNUST

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Plate 5.2.3
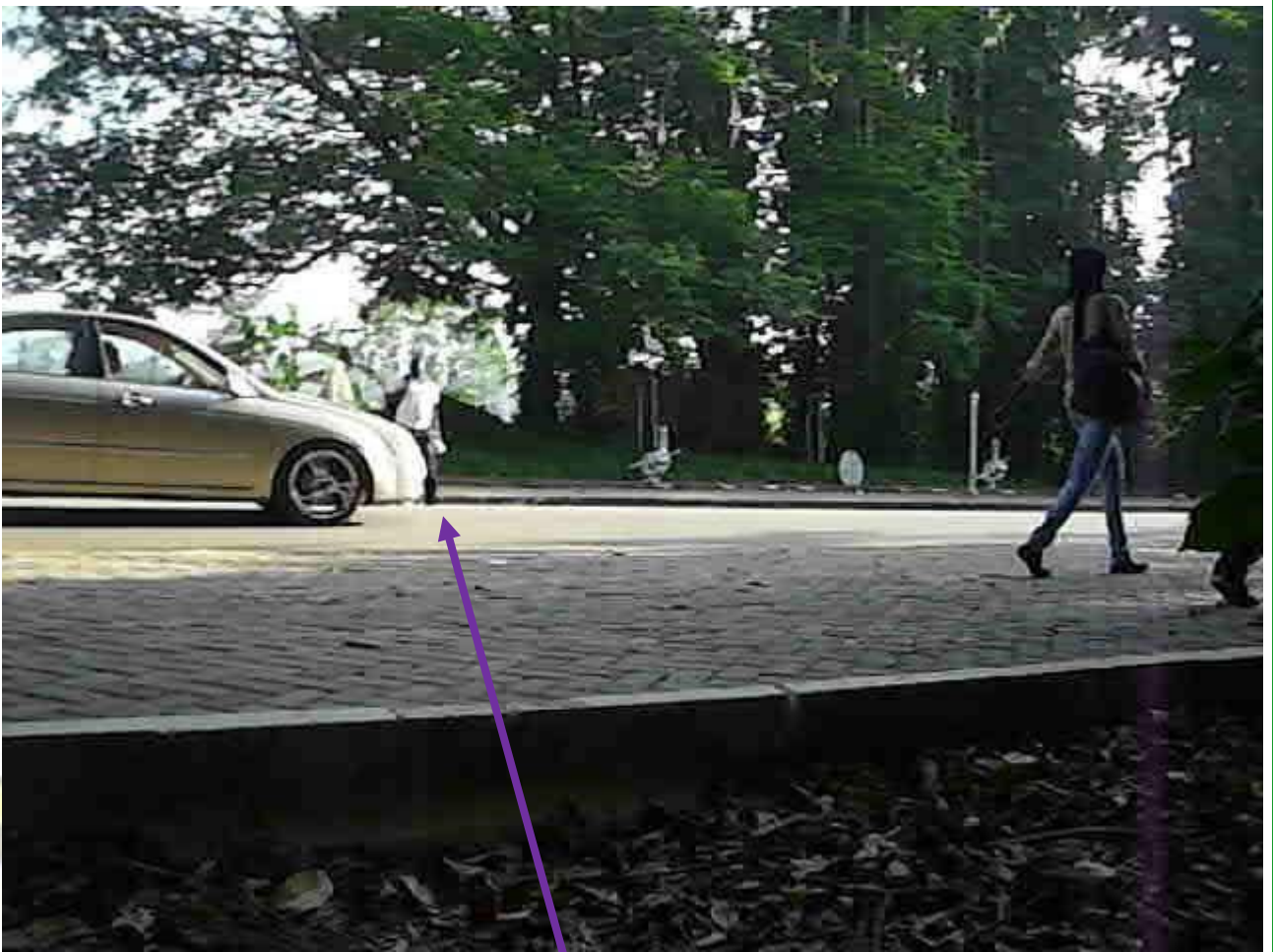The Sacred earthenware bowls that welcomed the viewers to the exhibition

Plate 5.2.4

A student in an attempt to avoid the exhibits was nearly hit by a vehicle when he
attempted to cross to the street to the other side.

10998

Plate 5.2.5 The chamber or back stage of the „April Full or Fool‟s‟ Expo as captured through the lenses of the camera

'Odom Samfee'

This is the symbol of the „Abese" Clan or Quarter of La Dadekotopon. The term „Abese" is corrupted pronunciation of „abɛ nase" meaning under the canopy of the palm tree. The „Abese" quarter is one of the seven sub-divisional councils of the La Traditional Council („akutsei kpawo") of the Greater Accra. It is the „Abese" quarter that leads the entire La Dadekotopon with the „Adonten" flag under the command of the „Abese" warrior „Asafoatsɛ Shipi" in times of war. The „Odom Samfee" symbol was chosen by the clan to indicate that they hold the „key" to the future of La.

The „Odom Samfee" is a clinched hand holding a key with the index finger pointing up. The symbol means „Abese is number one holds the key to the success and exploits of La.

Exhibited in front of the „Odom Samfee" is an earthenware bowl painted white with „kpokpoi"; the festive food of the Gas that is sprinkled during the „Hɔmɔwɔ festival (see plate 5.2.6).
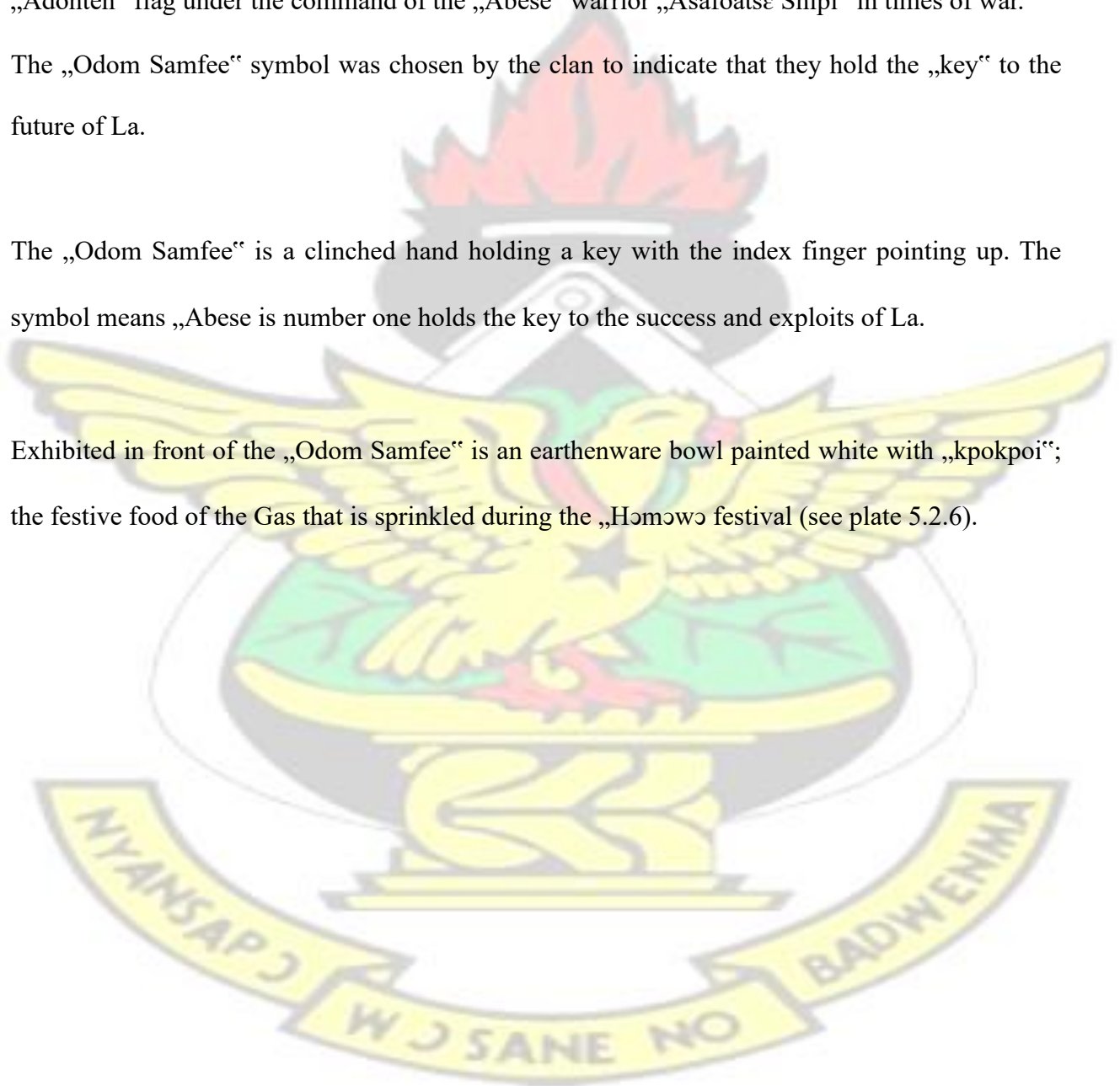
Plate 5.2.6

„Odom Samfee‟ the „Abese‟ Symbol cast in Resin

Plate 5.2.7: The forefront platform of the „April Full or Fool‟s Expo 2014
'**a**' Details of the mirror and food items. '**b**' The fore view

How the Exhibits Engaged the Attention of the Viewers

Plate 5.2.8: Students returning from morning lectures

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Plate 5.2.9: Students going for morning lectures at the central classroom block
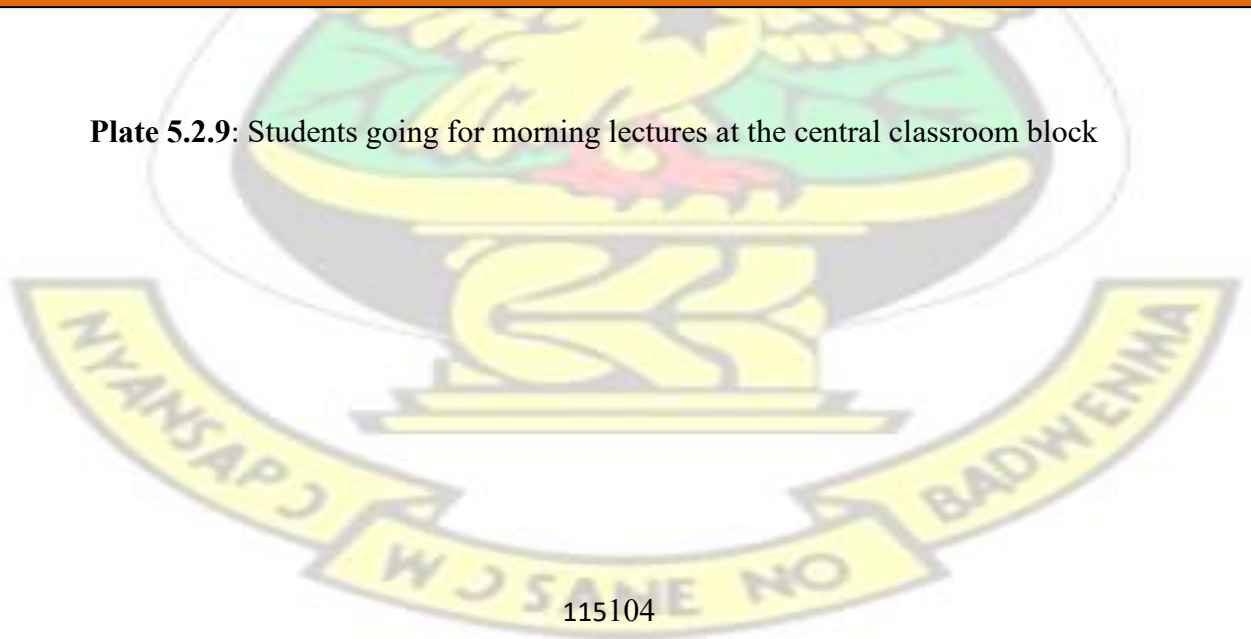
Plate 5.2.10: Students returning from lectures in the evening

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How the Viewers Responded

This concept of presence and absence was interrogated by the audience as they engaged the exhibitor in pragmatic questions and answers, sharing of experiences and expression of mixedfeelings, apprehension, reservations, nervousness and anxiety etc. As some of the viewers

were ready to engage the exhibitor in discussing the works and the philosophy behind the exhibition other were very incredulous, unprepared and unwilling for any form of discussions. In general the response and interaction was very good and worthy. Below is the outline of the questions that the viewers responded to:

- Name, Hometown and Place of residences

- What went through his/her mind when he/she first saw the items/arrangements

- Whether he/she has seen or heard any stories about such an arrangement of „material culture"

- If „yes" what were they meant for?

- What does he/she think is the purpose of what he/she is currently seeing?

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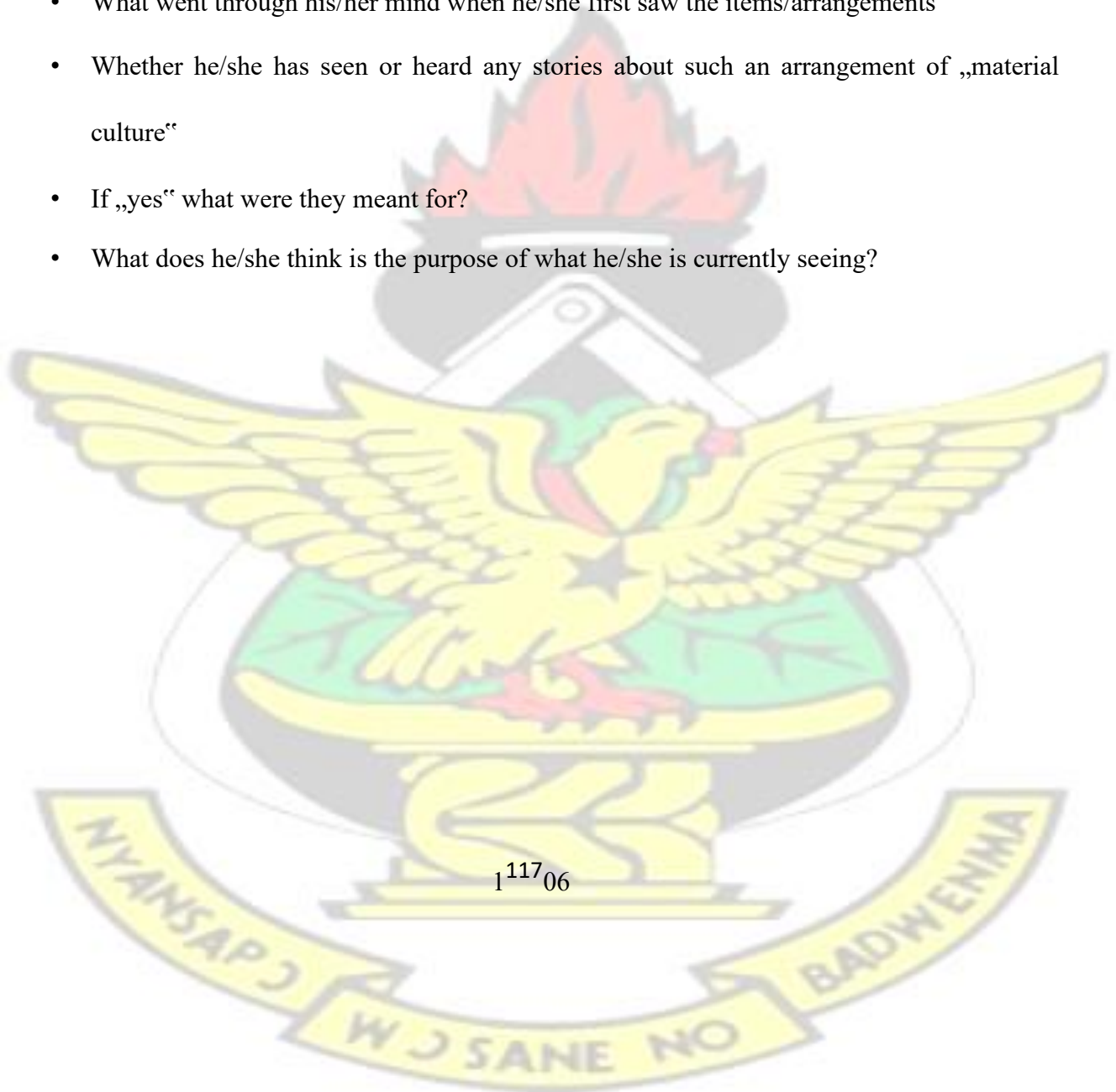
Plate 5.2.11: A Katanga student responding to questions from the exhibitor

Plate 5.2.12: Female students sharing their experiences with the exhibitor
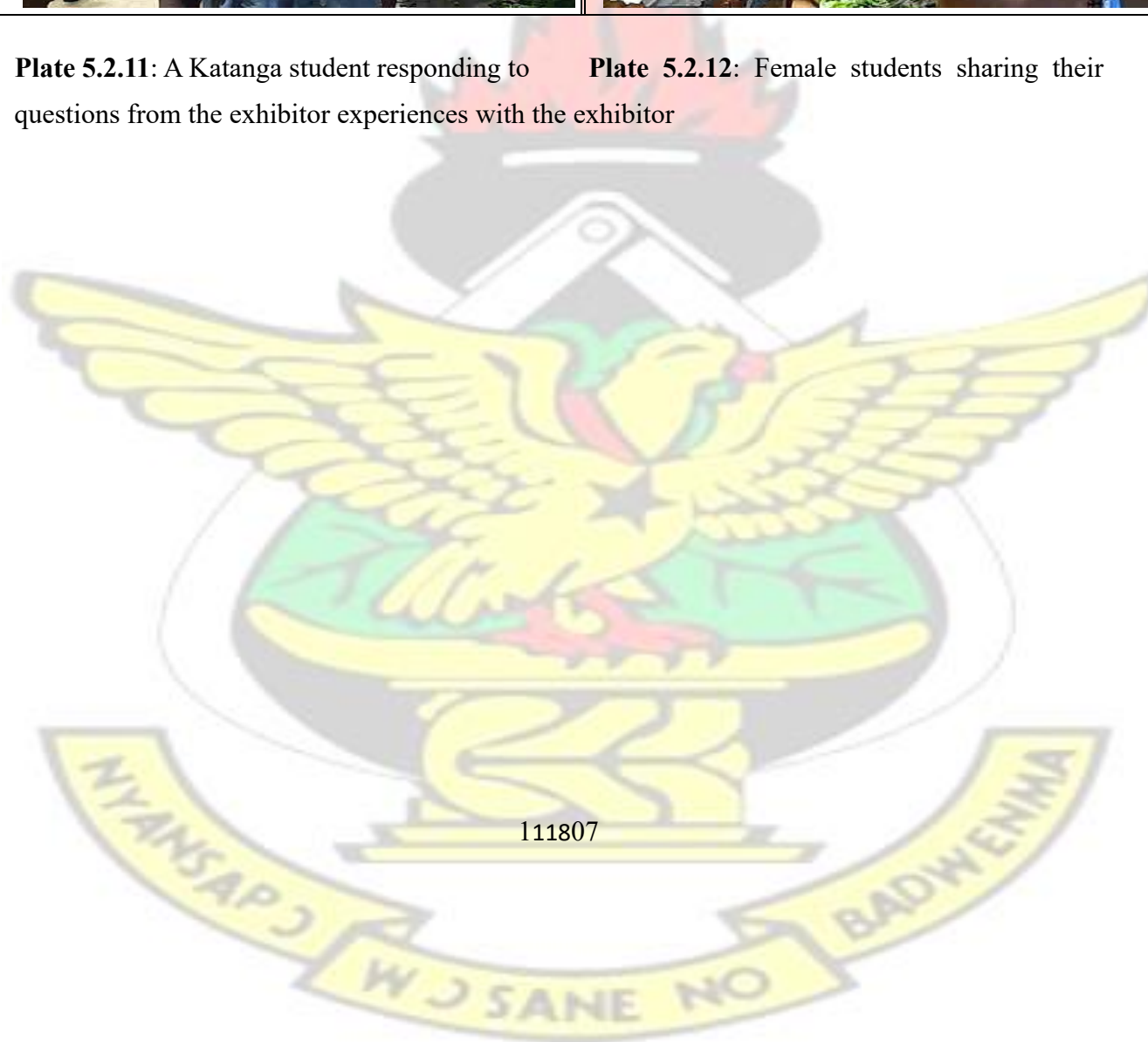
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Plate 5.2.13: The exhibitor explaining the concept of the exhibition to some students
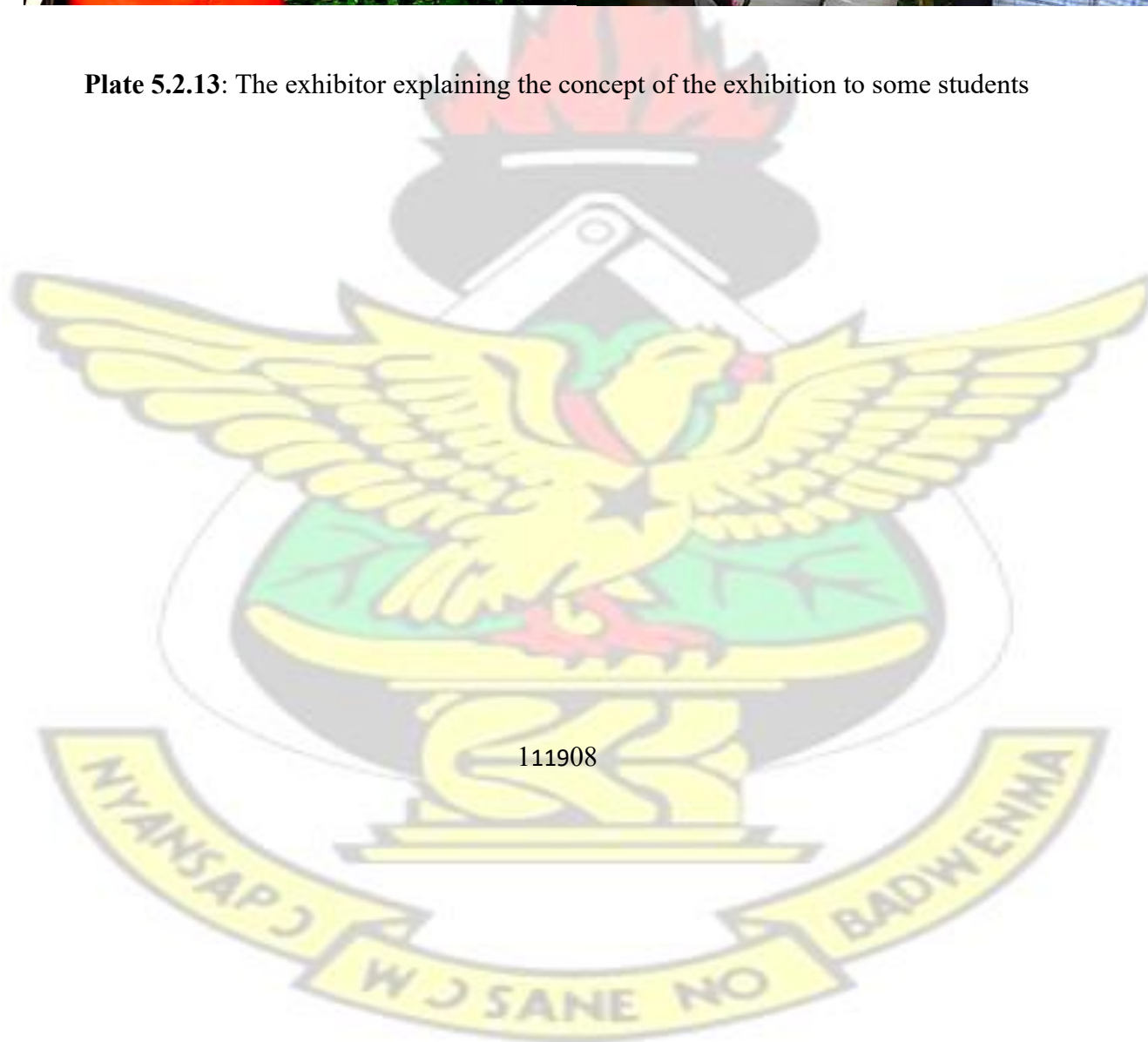
111908

Plate 5.2.14: A young lady sharing her encounter with material culture
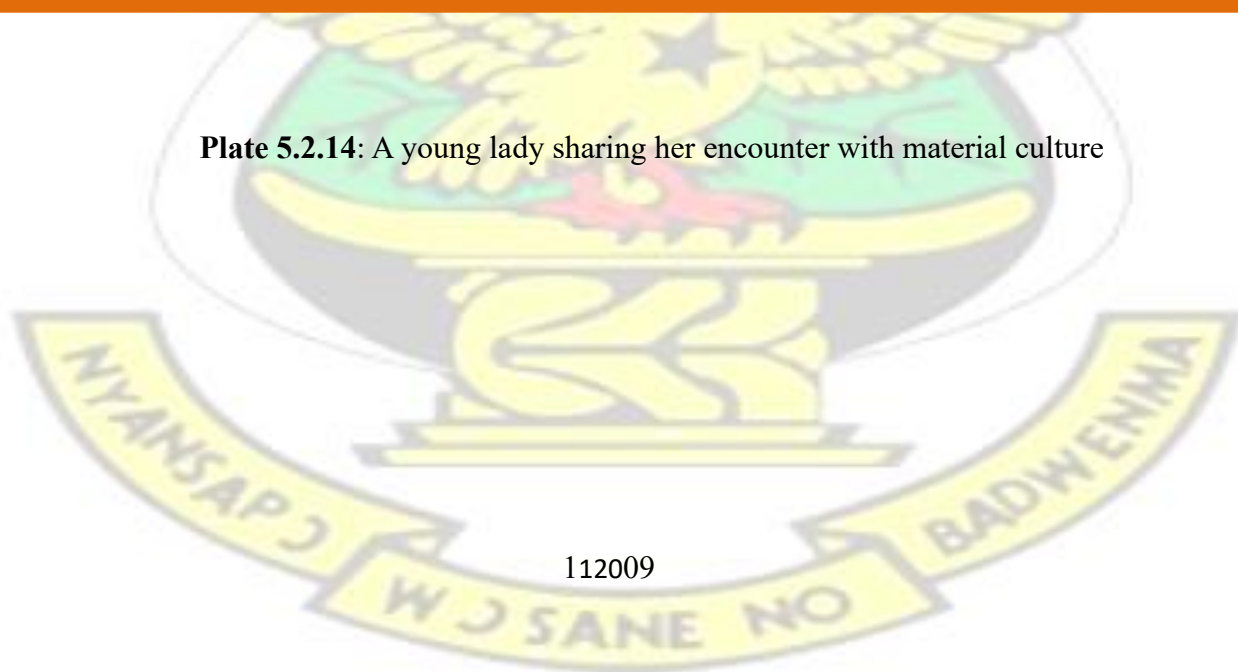
Plate 5.2.15: A session with those who opted for anonymity

Excerpts from the Responses

1. „When I first saw the white earthenware bowls from a distance I developed goose pimples all over my body and had to slow down my steps. In my ancestral home where I grew up, these things were very common. They were placed at junctions and cross roads. Our parents warned us never to go near them nor touch them because that may bring a curse to the family. I felt like I was dreaming and asking myself why an activity like this is going on in a higher institution like KNUST."

2. „My initial reaction was that „Katanga boys" (members of the University Hall) are at it again. We have had information about their pending hall week and I think this is a brainteaser. However, after a careful look at the items I realize there are more issues than Katangee Scare."

3. „I was scared at first sight but I gathered courage because I realized that other colleagues are moving on unperturbed. I was frightened because I have heard several stories from family elders. Food items, I was told, have been used to appease the gods, remove a curse and settle spiritual scores."

4. „I taught the „Kumawood" filmmakers and actors like Egya Koo, Akroboto and co are going to shoot a Ghanaian movie. It is only in Ghanaian and Nigerian films that I see such scenes more especially when people are going o consult the oracles."

5. „I love the scene. I felt at home because I"m from the clan responsible for the deity of the town. I"ve been participated in the organization and performance of some rituals for the gods that involve material culture. When I got to senior high school and joined the Scripture Union I stopped. Though I was queried and denied some opportunities I stood my grounds. However, sometimes I have nostalgic feelings of the past.

The presence of powers and authorities that are absent is an everyday event. In our homes visitors who meet the absence of their hosts place objects at the doorsteps as a symbol of their presence in their absence. Farmers design, make and install scarecrows on their farms to ideate the presence of human activities and to scare away birds and animals that feed and destroy farm products. Everyday objects; natural and man-made are organized and composed into interesting installations by men to validate the concept of presence of power and authority in absentia.

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CHAPTER SIX

'WƆGBEŊ KOME' (WITH ONE VOICE):

<div align="center">

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

'Tswa! Tswa! Tswa! Omanye aba! .... Hiao!
*'**Jeee wɔ gbeŋ kome**? ... Hiao! Mɛni*
eshwɛɔ wɔ? Eshwɛɔ wɔ shitee! Tswa
ni omanye aba!

</div>

'WƆGBEŊ KOME' (WITH ONE VOICE)

'Jeee wɔ gbeŋ kome', (literary meaning, „are we not with one voice?").

This is the concluding statement that characterizes the closing prayer (libation) by the chief, high priest (wulɔmɔ) or the person who chairs, administers or coordinates a meeting or conference of Gá traditional/opinion leaders. The statement is the seal of whatever decision has been taken at the meeting. By this pronunciation, every member of the council; whether present or absent, is obliged to abide by the decision taken. A council member whose action or inaction contradicts the decision arrived at faces sanctions. These sanctions range from verbal caution to excommunication, or destoolment.

The core of questions that primarily engage the attention of anthropologists hinges on culture and how it influences the ideologies, philosophies and way of life of a particular people through time and space. This thesis is an attempt to examine how the cultures of the Gá people influenced their thoughts and philosophies over the years to communicate symbolically.

The Gá people of the Greater Accra region in Ghana came from small migrant ethno-genetic groups in Nigeria: Ife, Boney and Benin. Their socio-cultural history has passed through a

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distinct discernible epochs with a progressive development of material culture. The continuous influx of other people with diverse cultures from different geographic and ethno-social backgrounds, each with their own social, political, cultural, economic and religious experiences

and institutions, has created unavoidable mutual interactions resulting in what I call Pan- Gáism or Pan-Gá ethnic identity. Records indicate that the distinct socio-cultural elements of the immigrants subjected the Gá culture through hybridization process. Through centuries of dynamic, ongoing and multifarious factors new dimensions to the Gá culture has evolved. The long period of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic interaction at various levels and fields of interactions accounts for the current socio-cultural identity.

During the period of my research I came into contact with a lot of people from varied and interesting backgrounds. While some were willing to share their experiences with material culture others were quite skeptical and cautious. It was also quite revealing and thought provoking to realize that relatively a good number of Gá indigenes have very little or no knowledge about how materials/objects: natural or man-made, symbolize or communicate ideas, concepts and philosophies. This clearly shows how the inflow of people from diverse cultural background and the level of multiculturalism in the Gá state have affected the Gá identity. In the midst of these scenarios how can the Gá people have „one voice?‟

One could understand why majority of the youth, who as a result of their upbringing and exposure were scared at the objects exhibited. Some deem it a taboo to even talk about what they see with the belief that the devil will visit them in their sleep. On the contrary, those who were brought up in the rural or indigenous setting where some of these practices are common, felt at

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home when given the opportunity to talk about what they see and share their experiences. They were very excited and enthusiastic in their responses and submission. Some gave astonishing revelations but pleaded for anonymity.

6.1 Summary

The life of the indigenous Gá has been characterized by concealment of vital information. This is to ensure security and protect the culture of the people. As a result most important information was communicated through symbols. They expressed their thoughts, ideas and philosophies through material culture. This made the institution very strong with uninterrupted activities until the arrival of the European merchants and missionaries. The activities of the missionaries buttressed by the colonial administration affected the hitherto uninterrupted practices of the indigenous Gá in many ways influencing their modus operandi of governance, leadership style, religion and art forms. It is on this note that I set out to research into this topic.

It is evidently clear from the information gathered that quite a good number of the people have lost touch with the cultural practices of their people. The indigenous Gá ethnic identity is gradually diminishing like a volatile material and if care is not taken in the not too long a distance this identity will be lost. One will also not be far from right to assert that the chieftaincy institution which in modern times has been characterized by intra and inter-conflicts and disputes, is slowly losing its hold and recognition.

The dynamism of culture cannot be sacrificed on the altar and ideology of progress and development. More often than not a section of the educated elites argue that the genitors of these

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cultural practices did not consider changing times and technological advancement. In a form of counter argument it could be comprehended that current spate of disputes concerning right to stools and skins in modern Ghana are products of changing times and technology. The symbolic changing of „baton‟ in materialism could not be duplicated. The realistic nature and form of symbols of office with their associated rites with some aspects shrouded in secrecy were the foundations for a

perpetuated continuity in succession. Most of these material cultures only communicated and served their inherent purpose and not for exhibition nor provoke any form of aestheticism.

6.2 Conclusion and Recommendation

'...the surf pounds the dusty beach.
A rusting bulk, long since pillaged of valuables, lies
grounded, disintegrating into the foam.
Long ago people of many colours bought and sold another here.'
Claire C. Robertson, 1984.

The text above is a description of Accra captured in a prologue of Claire C. Robertson‟s book „Sharing the Same Bowl‟.

Embarking on such an artistic exploration has not only been an academic experience but has broadened my horizon, as an artist. As people in academia there is the need to understand how human groups organized and sustained their social life; how they fused their individual experiences and differences to become functional members of a society, and how the nature of their experience shaped their personalities; how their differences and similarities in thoughts and

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perception across time and space; how lifestyles, values and standards shaped their behaviours etc.

Harris (1979) explains that we cannot understand or even adequately record events of a people without understanding their „internal models of reality‟. The internal model of the culture of a people tells us what kind of world the said people glorify, their activities, mindset, events, occupation, residential patterns etc.

This thesis set out to examine how materiality was used to create a metaphoric or symbolic naivety of the presence of power and authority in absentia as a philosophical system of expressing cultural authenticity in the context of chieftaincy, leadership and governance in Africa with special reference to the Ga state of the Greater Accra region of Ghana.

Having interrogated the issues of power and authority in the midst of diversified leadership and responsibility with colonial power scramble from the perspective of inter and intra culturalism, the thesis highlighted the role played by materialism and how it was used by Africans in constructing politico-cultural, religious and belief systems independently and uniquely to perpetuate leadership.

From the observations made herein, this thesis professes, in the light of the challenges posed by ethnocentrism, that the key to affirming and accommodating cultural diversity, which more than ever before is becoming increasingly difficult to wish away in this age of globalization, is the need to accommodate the tension and the violent outbursts which the domination of one culture

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by another could cause. The African Symposium: An online journal of the African Educational Research Network 113 Volume 11, No. 1, June 2011 declares that such violent eruptions are quite plenty in the present globalized world:

> *'A world in which cultures are related to one another on the basis of equality, in which they exist in mutual respect and recognition of*
>
> *one another's cultural identity and rights has remained a dream yet to be realized.'*

In this thesis, I examined intercultural principles in the context of Africa's colonial and decolonization experience. I looked at the intercultural approach to philosophizing by interrogating

why and how the colonial situation in Africa ran riot of its requirements. I also highlighted the role of interculturality in the decolonization process and argued the extent to which this philosophical orientation proffered great potentials for dealing with the challenges of the newly independent African states as well as the pressing issues in contemporary Africa such as peace and security, religious intolerance and development and how the roles of our chiefs are compromised.

I delved into the theories and arguments of power and authority as discussed by experts. I trekked into the forms of power and authority with special reference to the chieftaincy institution in Ghana and to a wider extent Africa. I examined the concept of materiality and how it assisted in symbolizing and communicating the concerns and questions of power and authority. The significance and use of these symbols were analyzed through exhibitions. The views and thoughts of people were sought as they engaged the exhibits. Their past experiences with material culture became the centrality of the discussion.

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The main reason for this research is to examine how the mechanisms of power have worked within the Ghanaian cultural belief system, and how the presence of absentee power and authority has imparted on the socio-economic and politico-cultural life of the people, using the case of King Tacki-Tawiah I of Gá-Mashie, Accra.

In pursuance of this agenda cultures are viewed as elements in complex cybernetic systems of humans-in-environments. This leads us to the concept of the ideational model of culture. This model enriches our understanding of change and helps us to correct overly simplistic ecological or adaptationist models. An observation by Homans led him to pose this question: „How does the

behavior of individuals create the characteristics of groups?" The behaviour of individuals is guided, channeled, and controlled by cultural principles and rules. However, it is the individual's making of choices, personal resolution of beliefs and values, desire for institutional principles etc. that generate the patterns of social life.

All the same, if in this modest exploration of the concept of culture and materiality issues are progressively refined, fundamentally reinterpreted, or gradually done away with, the strategic question still remains; „How would the otherwise hidden information on our cherished cultures been revealed?.

From the above conclusions, obviously emerge the following recommendations:

It is verifiably true that the rich ethno-history and culture of the Gá people is too vast to be fully addressed in this study alone. A further study therefore has to be conducted to document the rich repertoires of Gá ethno-history and culture. Areas that may need urgent further research include:

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- An inventory of the pre-Gá population groups to determine their ethno-genetic origins.
- Specific investigation on the age of some material evidences that depict myths of origins.
- Although, there are quite a good number of research reports on the shrines and historic sacred places within the Gá community, there is the need to take inventory of these shrines and sacred places, assess their contributions to the socio-economic development of the people, the effect of European activities, foreign religions and urbanization on the respect and patronage of these sacred objects across time and space.
- Many books and reports have made different claims with regards to chieftaincy titles, rights and access to various positions etc. within the Gá politico-cultural structure. With a modernist's approach and scientific mechanisms some of these claims which have been

adjudicated and ruling given can be collated and documented.

- Some of clans, lineages and splitter groups in within the Gá polity have unduly carried the burdens of marginalization and wounds that need to be healed. Although there is a promising level of social integration and decreasing level of marginalization in today"s socio-political arena, there is the need for further research into these issues and come out with long term solutions.

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