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Abstract- The use of beads in Ghana is a site for a robust cultural meaning-making. Beads have been very popular in the past and are growing stronger in popularity with modernity to the extent that their modern meanings seem to be eclipsing the traditional ones. This paper takes us back to their traditional meanings by examining closely their relationship with the wearer. Using qualitative instruments of research methodology basically through interviews and participant observation, this paper, by examining the bead as a cultural text, identifies two main relationships between the bead and the wearer: the synecdochic and the metonymic relationships. Using mainly linguistic theories to interrogating these relationships, the paper, relying on the entextualization theory of Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban and the performance theory of Richard Bauman, discovers that in addition to being objects of aesthetics as the modern meanings mainly suggest, the bead has very important traditional meanings. The paper also demonstrates that where the bead is placed on the body is a function of traditional meanings. Again, when the bead is used is also contingent upon traditional meanings.

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The Poetics of Traditional Ghanaian Beads

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Abstract- The use of beads in Ghana is a site for a robust cultural meaning-making. Beads have been very popular in the past and are growing stronger in popularity with modernity to the extent that their modern meanings seem to be eclipsing the traditional ones. This paper takes us back to their traditional meanings by examining closely their relationship with the wearer. Using qualitative instruments of research methodology basically through interviews and participant observation, this paper, by examining the bead as a cultural text, identifies two main relationships between the bead and the wearer: the synecdochic and the metonymic relationships. Using mainly linguistic theories to interrogating these relationships, the paper, relying on the entextualization theory of Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban and the performance theory of Richard Bauman, discovers that in addition to being objects of aesthetics as the modern meanings mainly suggest, the bead has very important traditional meanings. The paper also demonstrates that where the bead is placed on the body is a function of traditional meanings. Again, when the bead is used is also contingent upon traditional meanings. Furthermore, who wears which kind of bead is also circumscribed by the tradition and that even when the concept of aesthetics is being applied in the use of traditional beads, you are sure to know that it is only a secondary role. Finally, the bead sits on top of a huge mountain of traditional meanings unknown to the foreigner. This paper seeks to fill this knowledge gap on the part of the foreigner or the uninitiated to be able to appreciate fully the place of pride of the traditional bead in the Ghanaian cultural context.

Keywords: *entextualization, performance, aesthetics, metaphor, beads.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The poetics of Ghanaian beads, that is the non-discursive practices involving the use of Ghanaian beads, are located in the beads' cultural textuality worthy of linguistic analysis. Unfortunately, what a text exactly is still remains a debate. This was not the case in the past. Discussing what the text was in the middle of the twentieth century was quite an easy exercise. In the written literary tradition, the text was and still is the "permanent artefact, hand-written or printed" (Barber, 2003: 32). Even though there had been earlier literary traditions about what the text should be, that of the New Criticism, which was in line with the written literary tradition, was most popular around that time. In this

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tradition, the text was and still is a fixed artefactual sign on a paper. The New Criticism, following Crowe Ransom's (1937) style of literary interpretation of the text, commits itself to the study of literature on the basis that the text is an object which is self-contained, self-reliant and autonomous. The formalist tradition, which is the scientific approach to text, also sees the text as the most "objective" approach to the study of literature. No other meaning apart from what the text offers is valid. Indeed the philosopher Collingwood (1938) sees reading as limited by the text; the "truth" is intra-textual and nowhere else.

The concept of the New Criticism was countered by the Reader-response Criticism which gained unprecedented prominence in the 1960s and 1970s. The Reader-response theory, unlike the New Criticism, introduced the role of the reader in the construction of the text. Proponents of this theory argued and still argue that the completeness of the text was highly contingent on the role of the reader or audience who acted/acts as co-creator of the text. This tradition was and still is championed by scholars like Norman Holland (1968), Stanley Fish (1967, 1989) and Wolfgang Iser (1989). The text is no more self-reliant and needs the intervention of the reader for a fuller meaning. This, of course, demystifies the autonomy of the text. With the myth surrounding the autonomy of the text broken, another school of thought in the late 1960s emerged. Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction of the text in *Of Grammatology* (1967) seeks to present a Western philosophy of conceptual distinctions or "oppositions" which present binary or hierarchical pairs in a text. What is absent in the text, which is also very germane to interpreting the text, like certain aspects of Bakhtin's dialogicality which says that "the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word" (Bakhtin, 1981: 280) is seriously constitutive of the meaning of the text. The so-called "absences" resides in the context or the ideology of the text and these are in the mind as well.

This prepared the ground for the poststructuralists (Barthes, 1975a; Lacan, 1977; Kristiva, 1980) who also became popular in the 1970s around the same time when Derrida's concept was popular. It must be pointed out that Derrida himself was also a poststructuralist. They rejected the autonomy of structures in the text and saw a very strong association between the text, the mind and the culture (Silverstein, 1996, 2005; Urban, 1996, 2001). Again, the concept of

cultural materiality and expressivity of text and mind is also shared by culture theorists like Paul Willis (1977). Perhaps the most recent contribution of this associationist relationship between the text, the mind and the culture has been that of the conceptual metaphor theorists (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Fairclough, 1989; Lakoff, 1993; Kovecses, 2002, 2007) who are of the conviction that the text as a product of the mind is the function of the culture. The poststructuralists even consider the text as intertextual and postulate that the text is a mixture of other texts both within and without (Kristiva, 1969; Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). Ruth Finnegan's (1970) seminal work on oral literature in African also helped to confer literary status on orality and the oral of evanescence in nature also came to be known as text. Indeed, Roland Barthes (1970), even though not too confident about the independence of the communication of the image as a text, goes back to Saussurian linguistics of semiology and re-emphasises the importance of signs and symbols of images being an essential part of textual interpretation. The contribution of Finnegan, Barthes and other linguists at that time was ground breaking in literary history in the sense that, contrary to the written literary tradition's notion of the autonomy of the text, the text is now not necessarily a written or printed word but "any configuration of signs that is coherently interpreted by some community users" (Hanks, 1989: 95). This, of course, throws the definition of the text widely open to cover the definition proffered by anthropology which takes into account people who "establish and convey meaning through clothing, dance, music, gesture, and through complex rituals which often defy verbal expression (Barber, 2007: 3). Indeed, Barber's position is shared by critical discourse analysts (Van Dijk, 1991; Fairclough, 1995a, 2003; Wodak, 2004, 2006b; Van Leeuwen, 2006, 2007) to whom semiosis is a very powerful instrument in analysing social realities and social change. The contribution of CDA in feminist studies, for example, has been phenomenal (Atanga, 2012; Sunderland, 2004, 2006).

Clearly, the text is more than the sign artefact we call writing or printing and Barber (2007: 1) is emphatic on this, arguing, "writing is not what confers textuality". The Ghanaian beads, as art work, therefore, also have the precipitates of the text because they have the "configuration of signs that is coherently interpreted" (ibid) by the Ghanaian community users. The position of linguists who belong to the critical discourse analysis (CDA), conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), semiotics and even other pragmatics traditions facilitates a study of Ghanaian beads as textual enquiry that draws from the concept of interdiscursivity, that is, the hybridity of various genres, the mental, the physical and the arts (Wu, 2011: 98). This is not the first of its kind in the Ghanaian rural art literature. The seminal work of Kofi Anyidoho et al (2008) on the poetics of the Ghanaian

kente fabric still remains a ground breaking study on Ghanaian art work. Perhaps what gives their work the prominence it deserves is the interdisciplinary scholarship they bring to the study of Ghanaian rural art, introducing the combination of linguistics, cultural studies and rural art theories.

The theoretical consideration of this paper are mainly the linguistic anthropological theory of entextualization by Michael Silverstein (1996, 2005) and Greg Urban (1996, 2001) and the performance theory of Richard Bauman (1977). Urban (1996: 21) presents entextualization as "the process of rendering a given instance of discourse as text, detachable from its local context". The Ghanaian bead as a text is not just an object, but a cultural configuration that constitutes a detachable text that can be re-activated and re-embedded in a new context of artwork, thus it possesses the dialogic force that allows it to communicate the language and content of the culture across time (transmittability) and space (Shareability), at both diachronic and synchronic levels. The Performance theory also treats the bead as an object of performance which has its own conventions to be evaluated by the Ghanaians. These conventions construct meanings which bring about certain cultural behaviour unique to certain cultural groups in Ghana.

Through a qualitative research that uses ethnographic instruments like participant observation and interviews, the research gathers data on the use of beads in Ghana and draws on linguistic theories on entextualization and semiotic approach of sign systems which identifies the various units of each system of signification and establishes the relationship between them. By looking closely at the relationship between the units in the system of signification, the paper offers interpretations or coax out meanings using the principle of plausibility.

II. DISCUSSION

a) Connoisseurship and collection of Ghanaian artefacts; past and present

This section introduces the discussion on poetics of Ghanaian beads by taking a broad view about the historical antecedents that preceded the popularity of Ghanaian beads and also by providing an overview of connoisseurship and collections of African artefacts, the past and the developments leading to how the beads became a public culture in Ghana.

The work of Kofi Anyidoho et al opens a new chapter in connoisseurship and collection of Ghanaian artefacts and artworks. To put this new chapter in the right perspective, we briefly need to look back at the contribution of social anthropology to connoisseurship and collection of African, and for that matter, Ghanaian artefacts from the colonial times to today. Anthropologists who spearheaded most of the collections of African artefacts and artworks were

guarded by political considerations (Moore, 1994). Indeed, most of these anthropologists and connoisseurs were colonial administrators. Northcote Thomas was to work in the Ibo and Timne regions in Nigeria from 1913 to 1914, Rattray (1923, 1929) worked on the Ashantis of Ghana and Meek (1937) also went to Nigeria to work on the Nigerian culture, a development that seasoned anthropologists like Branislav Molinowski were not very comfortable with for the simple reason that their positions as political activists compromised their collections and findings. Indeed, social anthropology at that time saw African culture and artefacts, including the Ghanaian beads, even though it was brought in the country in the C15th, as a heritage culture, untouched, a closed system, and repetitive patterns of motifs, thought and behaviour; the anthropologist from an "advanced" culture collecting artefacts from a "backward" culture (Moore, 1994). The work of some French anthropologists like Marcel Griaule (1938), who collected Dogon artefacts, were even more geared towards collections believed to provide a reading of the African thought, civilization, philosophy and religion. Again, such information was for the benefit of the colonial masters. Moreover, one of the motivations for these collections was to show how human beings shared common concepts in artistic presentations, a notion that fit neatly into the colonial master's definition of "tribe" (Moore, 1994: 24). Another significant motivation, apart from the political consideration, was the promotion of African aesthetics – quality, authenticity, style, nuances of forms and patterns – through these artefacts. This fantasy or escapist value of the collections did and still does not so much take into consideration the intricacies that these collections present as cultural categories.

The independence of Africa in the late 1950s and 1960s came with new attitudes and approaches to collections and changed the landscape of connoisseurship of these African artefacts, including the Ghanaian beads. Indeed, these changes also came with new theories in social and linguistic anthropology that are used to frame the analysis of these artworks. There is no gainsaying the fact that with the advent of the African independence, the artefacts now generate broader meanings and consumer bases because the epistemics of the artefacts or artwork that supported colonial rule has now lost its essence. The more new consumers become stakeholders, the more new connoisseurs and collectors of diverse intentions join this cultural enterprise. In fact, one question that some academics ask is about the role of African academics in all these developments. What meanings do African art creators and scholars make out of these artefacts? To what extent can these artefacts play a role in the globalization of Africa? It has indeed been suggested elsewhere that African academics have to "repossess control of scholarship concerned with their own

societies" (Moore, 1994: 19). This paper sees such a suggestion as rather extreme viewed against the fact that the social and linguistic anthropological theories being used in studying these artefacts still remain Western. That notwithstanding, the intervention of African academics in studying these artefacts still remains very crucial because they present the perspective of the people who produce and at the same time consume them.

This is where the work of Kofi Anyidoho et al becomes very relevant so far as their interdisciplinary approach is concerned. We need such an approach to subject these arts and artefacts to academic scrutiny aimed at teasing out the exegesis that take care of their use by Ghanaians, consumers whose culture produce them (Barber, 1987) and whose interpretation of the cornucopia of signification these beads present. Such a study could further help to put the Ghanaian beads on the world map of the beads industry. This is very significant for the simple reason that art forms now form part of the expressivity of the liberation philosophy with all its embeddedness in the notion of the African personality, a philosophical branch of pan-Africanism. Heads of state and government officials advertised and still advertise their identity in local fabrics and wears, including, quite significantly, beads of all kinds. That the first president of Ghana, Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah and his political affiliates wore the kente cloth (Kofi Anyidoho et al, 2008: 39), even to the General Assembly of UNO meetings was not just for fashion. They were making a case for the Ghanaian identity: it is not only a material liberation but a mental one as well. Even in recent political sphere, some members of parliament and ministers follow this practice of branding themselves Ghanaian through their wears and they are not only seen in local fabrics but they are seen using the beads as accessories to these fabrics. Mention can be made of recent women politicians like Mrs. Kunadu Agyemang Rawlings, the President of the 31st Women Movement during the PNDC (1981-1992) and NDC 1 (1992-1996) and NDC 2 (1996-200). Women ministers like Mrs. Gladys Asmah, the Fisheries Minister in ex-President Kufour's regime and even Mrs. Theresa Kufour added a lot more glamour and currency to the use of beads, even at the state level. Gifty Anti, a very popular presenter on GTV redefines the quintessential African beauty through her wonderful blend of beads and African fabrics. We cannot leave out Abla Gomashie, the Minister of Tourism in President Mahama's governments whose love for beads is clearly demonstrated on every occasion she has to grace. Almost all chiefs and queen mothers have both a cultural, spiritual and ritual affiliation to beads. Today, it is a widespread fashion that provides expression for Ghanaian femininity. It is not only Ghanaian politicians who pass through the UN corridors in their resplendent African wears and beads but that it is now a fashion

among Ghanaians outside the country, especially to brand their afropolitan status (Selasi, 2005; Mbembe, 2006) using the Ghanaian beads. Thanks to tourism, a lot of foreigners come to the country to patronize local beads. Clearly, the Ghanaian beads have become globalized. The question about how Ghanaian academics help to coax out meaning from the local beads within the global context to make non Ghanaians appreciate cultural significance of these once again beckons, and the invitation to this call is too strong to resist. This paper sets out to interrogate what lies beyond the aesthetics of the traditional Ghanaian beads and attempts to provide reasons foreigners should even be more interested in them.

b) The rhetoric of traditional Ghanaian beads

Ghanaian beads “made of seeds, pieces of wood, shells, stones, bones, tusks or modern materials” (Hagan, 2009: 14) can be grouped into three categories. We have the traditional beads, beads that represent the Ghanaian heritage culture, the traditional culture, untouched by modernity; the modern beads, beads that represent modern Ghana and, quite interestingly, the political beads, beads in Ghanaian party colours. They are all material culture that provides cultural texts that are of interest to social sciences, especially in the area of meaning-making. The focus of this paper, however, is the meaning-making enterprise of the traditional beads, cultural detachable texts instantiated in various contexts over time and space. We are speaking of the beads as class of artefacts that fall within the brackets of the definition of what the text is, the product of the craftsman or the beads-maker, just as the written text is the product of the writer. The difference however is that the writer’s work finds validity in written literary theory, the text being a “fixed” artefactual sign meant to make meaning (Barber, 2007), whereas the beads-maker also looks for validity in his work as a text in the performance theory of Richard Bauman (1977: 11), the “interpretative frame within which the message being communicated are to be understood.” This theory goes beyond the textual analysis of the written text and extends analogous analysis, using different linguistic tools, to performance and objects of performance. Examples here are practices that straddle both analysing the performance of a musician in a live show and the lyrics of a song played on a “lifeless” CD player or any other performance of analogous nature. The performance theory, unlike the written traditional theory, also takes care of performances or objects that are fluid, improvisatory and emergent and provides a locus for their signification on the basis of their dialogicality, a position that enables them to engage the imagination of the viewer/consumer who possess the same shareable culture with the beads-maker, when the meaning is collectively constructed and interpreted by a cultural or linguistic community (Urban, 1996: 39-40). The

relationship between the object/the bead and the viewer/consumer, in the context described above, cannot escape certain questions. What is the process that governs the relationship between the bead and the viewer/consumer? To what extent do the bead serve as a cultural narrative of the Ghanaian? Is the epistemology of the beads confined to aesthetics, the Parnassian cannon of arts for art’s sake, as believed by certain Ghanaian cultural scholars or is aesthetic a secondary function of the bead? In order to investigate the epistemology of Ghanaian beads following the questions posed, we need to look at the ontology of the bead as a corporeal expression, the relationship between it and the personhood of the wearer; to what extent it forms part of the personhood of the wearer and to what extent the personhood of the wearer forms part of the bead. It is also important to look at how this seeming contradiction disinters cultural subterranean meanings of the bead. We therefore divide the analysis into two sections: section one deals with the bead being part of the personhood of the wearer and section two also deals with the personhood of the wearer being part of the bead.

c) The Ghanaian bead and the wearer

In traditional rhetoric, synecdoche and metonymy may be interchangeable in meaning, both representing part for a whole (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 36). In this work however, there is a dichotomy between them, and a lot of literary theorists also believe same: synecdoche stands for part for a whole, pars pro toto, and metonymy is whole for a part. If the bead is the part of the personhood of the wearer, when the wearer represents the whole, which is the culture, then we have synecdochic relationship between them. If the bead is the whole, the culture, and the wearer is just a part of this whole, then we have a metonymic relationship between them. The concept of personhood may also differ in different cultures. The Western concept of personhood is about “how persons are defined, how they are socially constituted (Barber, 2007: 109) and they “are not given but made, often by a process of strategic and situational improvisation” (Barber, 2007: 104). The Ghanaian philosophical perspective of the personhood is offered by Kwame Gyekye (1992: 101) as the “metaphysical and moral status of a person”. The two cultural traditions are not too different and what draws them even closer together is the fact that personhood is not a fixed entity, thus the personhood of the wearer can move in and out of the beads just as the beads can also move in and out of the personhood of the wearer. By implication therefore, when you wear the Ghanaian bead, your personhood is distributed “beyond the body boundary” (Gell, 1998: 104). A Whiteman or woman engaged in political, economic or social activities in Ghana looking resplendent Ghanaian bead is therefore making a statement of not only an affinity for

the Ghanaian culture but being part of it. His or her personhood has gone beyond the European or American culture and is making a claim for Ghanaian cultural share ability and that predisposes the indigenous population to see him or her as a “Ghanaian with white skin”. This practice by non-Ghanaians helps to remove suspicion and brings about trust on the part of Ghanaians. Such a practice also easily helps non-Ghanaians engaged in some political, economic or social activities with Ghanaians find their way into the hearts of Ghanaians and this facilitates communication and interaction between the two groups of people.

The methodology of using part of an artefact to represent the culture it comes from is not new. The prolegomenal practice by French anthropologists and collectors are well recorded. For example, Marcel Griaule (1938) is reputed to have used ethnographical mode of “parts to wholes to more inclusive wholes” (Clifford, 1988: 57; quoted in Moore, 1994: 17) and even though criticised by Clifford (1988: 65), we can go back to that methodology, counting on the reliability of the performance and entextualization theories which were non-existent during his time. For a deeper understanding of how the bead, representing part of the personhood of the person on one hand, and representing the totality of the culture with the personhood being part of this totality on the other, we have divided the subsequent discussion into two sections: the first section is on the synecdochic relationship with the wearer and the second is on the metonymic relationship with the wearer.

d) *The synecdochic relationship between the bead and the wearer*

The synecdochic relationship between the bead and the wearer presents an interesting analysis in the study of the textuality of the bead. The bead, in the context of being used as a corporeal expression, plays a representational role (Tonkin, 1992: 7; see also Connerton, 1989); a sign post to a destination rather than a destination. The ontology of the bead, all the beauty and culture inhered in it are associated with the wearer; the logic that once the bead is beautiful the wearer is also beautiful; the beauty of the bead pointing to the personhood of the wearer. Here the beads have something to do with the culture but the emphasis is on the person wearing it rather what he represents in the culture. Meaning-making in this context is multifaceted and this space may not be enough to exhaust the various meanings that the bead generates in the Ghanaian context. We will therefore concentrate on the bead as an expression of cultural communities in Ghana.

The first idea that comes to mind talking about the synecdochic or representational relationship between the bead and the wearer is aesthetics (Pater, 1980). The concept of aesthetics might be universal all

right but its nuances in various regions around the world can also not be denied and it is the considered opinion of this paper that we take care in transferring complete Western thought in describing African objects of beauty. Our discussion will show that the Parnassian concept of art for art’s sake belongs to a Western thought and that beauty in the African sense in most cases goes with a particular social function or contingency.

The concept of aesthetics of Ghanaian beads is a function of the ideology of fertility. In Ghana, especially the southern part of the country, the symbol of fertility is “the Akuaba’ (fertility and play dolls)” (Antobam, 1963), a doll of the figure of a woman with round shoulders, neck, behind, waist and calves. The culture thus invests the concept of beauty in these parts of the woman for the purpose of promoting the ideology of fertility, considered to be the very foundation of generational continuity. No wonder, Ghanaians’ concept of a beautiful woman is the full-figured one, as promoted even in old highlife music like “YaaAmponsah” by Jacob Sam who celebrates the beauty of the woman saying, “wokōn mu ntwitwaeyi” (the lines on your round neck), “w’nantuyi” (your round calves) and comments, “edzeakye m’adwen” (you have charmed me with them). Even modern musical arts like hiplife use this concept. An example is a song by 4X4 in “World Trade Centre” manifestly celebrating the “Big body girl”, of course the round-figured woman. If we go back to the symbol of fertility, the *ekuaba*, where the round shapes are found on the body of the woman are where Ghanaian women wear traditional beads – around the neck (and this includes the shoulder), the waist, the calves and the ankles. The bead is playing two functions here: to draw attention to these parts needed for fertility and to help develop that part into “rounded wholes to give rhythm to movement of a girl” (Hagan, 2009: 16). Thus shape and rhythm conjoin to construct beauty.

Every part the woman wears the beads on has its own significance. When women wear the beads in the neck, it draws attention to the round shoulder and neck. The beads draw attention to the lines on the round neck and the succulent round shoulder of the woman. These images are redolent of sexual meaning, primarily a link to fertility and secondly an appeal to aesthetics. It must be stated that male traditional leaders put the beads in the neck but quite clearly, there is nothing there to suggest aesthetics; the beads are the symbol of office. When the queen mother however puts the beads in the neck, it is more than a symbol of her office because she has round neck that matches her round shoulder, often uncovered to allow viewers to appreciate these parts. It is when the beads are put on the waist that the ideology of fertility is well projected. The women wear the waist beads and not the men and the reason is not too difficult to understand. First, the beads on the waist are believed to have the magic of developing “the

buttocks into two rounded wholes to give rhythm to the movements of a girl” (Hagan, 2009: 16). Second, the Krobodipo custom and nubility rites of many ethnic groups in Ghana put beads on the waists of initiates, young women undergoing puberty rites to signal the adult male in the community that the girls are mature for marriage. These beads are also meant to solicit admiration for these young women. Third and more interestingly, beads on the waist are traditionally meant to enhance the act of making love between a husband and a wife; the beads are said to “enhance foreplay and erotic excitement in the sexual act” (Hagan, 2009: 16). Indeed, in the Akan tradition, if a man touches the waist beads of the wife of another man, he is literary accused of cuckolding the other man and is made to pay a fine. All the three points raised in connection with the beads on the waist have to do with the woman’s ability to have children and the beads help to advertise the primacy of the agency of such a social value. On the calves, the beads are supposed to enhance the curvaceousness of not only the calves but the whole body since round calves are seen as being in synch with a round body as a whole. These parts, the round neck, shoulder and calves are believed to act in consonance to construct a graceful body rhythm. So important is this concept in the Akan tradition that Ama Atta Aidoo, the famous Ghanaian writer, in “The Girl Who Can”, presents Nana as complaining that “Adwoa has legs...except they are too thin. And also too long for a woman” (Atta Aidoo, 2002: 29). Nana regrets that the granddaughter lacks round calves, that which is prescribed by the mental script of the culture. Nana, as the custodian of the Fante culture in Adwoa’s family, is only making allusion to the Fante mental script, the detachable text of the body of the woman, in other words, what the body of the woman should be in the Fante culture.

Allusion to Ama Atta Aidoo’s “The Girl Who Can” further clinches our analysis from the point of view of the theory of entextualization and the synecdochic relationship between the beads and the wearer. Nana, who is old, possesses the mental script of what legs should be in the Fante tradition. By implication therefore, the text of the legs have been “abstracted or detached from the immediate context and re-embedded” (Barber, 2003: 325; see also Urban, 1996: 21) in a new context, that is, detached from the mental script of the old, the broad culture, and instantiated in a single person, Adwoa. Nana is worried because Adwoa’s legs do not complete the process of entextualization; the legs are not in conformity with the detached text. Indeed, in such an instance, even though Ama Atta Aidoo does not mention this, the normal practice is to put beads around the calves to enable them develop “rounded wholes to give rhythm” (ibid) to her movement. Thus the personhood of the wearer is influenced by the presence of beads on it. The beads in this instance are a sign post to the woman wearer in a patriarchal culture and

the “male gaze” in the feminist theory assumes primacy here. The beads in this synecdochic relationship with the woman reduce her to objects of scopophilia and voyeurism, objects meant to generate pleasures to men (Mulvey, 1975). The patriarchal culture constructs the beads to have titillating effect on men who cast flirtatious glances on women wearing them, obviously to satisfy the sexual desires of the dominant group, the men. This offers a hint that the so-called traditional concept of beauty is the construction of patriarchy. In this analysis, the bead, being a signpost, directs attention to the body of woman in a patriarchal society. Of course, there is a cultural undertone here but the focus of discussion is the body of the woman and this has greater significance in gender studies because the beads in this context socially construct women for subordinate roles.

Clearly, from the above analysis, what we may refer to as aesthetics of the beads goes beyond the Western concept of aesthetics. Aesthetics is a “by-product” and a secondary function. That the bead is of robust artistic merit, there is no doubt about that and whether for aesthetic or cultural communication, it confers effulgence and effervescence on the woman wearer and Hagan (2009) handles this aspect of the bead with magnificent poise, even to the extent of wrongly comparing it to the Parnassian concept of art for art’s sake. It is against this background that this paper is not in consonance with Hagan’s position that beads are “arguably, one item of material culture that comes closest to giving us what might be considered art for art’s sake” (Hagan, 2009: 14). Let us compare what he says with other cultural practices to be able to put the concept of aesthetics in Ghanaian traditional culture in the right perspective. The Asafo songs of the Akans certainly have aesthetics in them but are primarily meant for war, when somebody risks his life for the nation. The songs used in harvest festivals in Homowo by the Gas, Ohum by the Akyems and Elluo by the Sewhis certainly have aesthetics in them but they are primarily for celebrating the beginning of the harvest season. Again the primacy of the Feok festival among the Builsa people of the Upper East region is to serve as a community memory for the gallant men who fought the slave raider Babatu (Brigandi, 2014). In all these examples in the Ghanaian traditional culture, just like the use of traditional beads, there is no reason to say that aesthetics is for its sake. Clearly, the Parnassian concept of art for art’s sake is a Western thought and might not be sufficient to account for the details of the Ghanaian traditional culture as we have seen above.

Another synecdochic relationship the Ghanaian beads have with their wearer is that they act as community memory. The bead, as a part, points to the whole, this time not the body as we have above but the culture. The beads are bearers of social or community memories, mnemonics that evoke past memories. Such memories help to preserve the traditional standards of

the culture; a call to the past attitudes and values that create emotional attachment to a cultural past. Thus beads serve as instruments to manipulate memory to (re)shape perceptions to construct a social whole, a cohesive social order in which all individuals willingly accepts their positions and play their respective roles, roles which aggregate to form a cohesive socio-cultural order.

Text and memory is very common in most Ghanaian cultures and this includes finials on the *ōkyeame's* staff, recounting a whole clan history; the edinkra symbols of the Ashantis, a memory of ancient religion, art and history; gold weights, the symbol of wealth and the rich history of a whole clan or family. These cultural materials indicate group mind. Memory has to do with time and Kwame Kyekye (1987), in opposing Mbiti's argument that the African lacks the future tense and opposing Christaller's position that the Akan lacks the abstract notion of time, posits that in "Akan philosophy time is regarded as a concrete reality". This reality is marked by concrete symbols as memory cues just as the gold weights or the edinkra symbols mentioned above. The beads are also primarily

used as memory cues for the history of a community, a clan or a family. Aesthetics is secondary in this context too.

One important area the beads serve as a community memory is in design. The design of the beads serves as the metaculture of the beads, the "other culture" behind the culture of the beads (Urban, 2001). The design is itself mnemonic of the past and it plays two major roles here: it is either co-textual with other corporeal expressions or contextual. When the design is co-textual with the design of other wears or other texts, the two are collectively establishing a version of the past and when contextual, the bead expresses a cultural symbolic communication without the association of any other artefact or wear. An example of the co-textual meaning-making of the bead design is the one we had during the fieldwork. We presented images of beads to a very popular chief in Mampong in the Ashanti region, the *Sanaahene* of Kofiase and who holds his masters in drumming from the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Nana Baffour, to interpret it from the point of view of the tradition.



Figure 1 : This was taken from *the Mirror*, 24th October, 2014

The leg in this image has both beads on the ankle and the *ahenema*, a traditional footwear, on the feet. The beads are embellished with gold and the *ahenema* has the symbol of *obaapa*(the ideal woman) and *ōhene aforo hyīn* (the king is on board the ship¹) on them. Nana Baffour had this to say about the image "If you wear gold (beads) it means you are at a certain status and if you are an ideal woman, you are not an

ordinary woman"². He took a second look and added "she is either at a festival or at a durbar or a naming ceremony or at a victory ceremony after war, kind of thing. That is why she is wearing gold nuggets tied in a knot; it signifies unity and victory. And the colour of the sandals tells celebration"³. Here the meaning of the *ahenema*, both from the point of view of pattern and colour are in co-textuality with beads embellished with

¹ This is in reference to the history of Nana Sir AgyemangPrempeh the First, who was forcibly taken by the British to the Seychelles Islands.

²See interview with Nana Baffour, 25th and 26th November, 2014, Asante Mampong.

³See interview with Nana Baffour, 25th and 26th November, 2014, Asante Mampong.

gold to indicate celebration. Nana therefore concludes that “So you see, it goes hand in hand”⁴, confirming the concept of mutuality between the two texts. The co-textuality of the beads and the *ahenema* speak of the wearer, a sign-post of her status. Of course, both the *ahenema* and the beads narrativise the wearer but the beads as a single artefact can even more significantly play the same role and that is what we call the contextuality of the design.

The contextual design of the beads are informed by cultural and social history and in this instance the beads serve as objectifying the past, materiality of the past. First, there are repeated lines which constitute “the rhythm and the rhyme” (Hagan, 2009:15) of the beads. Indeed, there is enough grounds to believe that rhythm serves as the intersection for most Ghanaian arts and the rhythm of the beads like “weaving, like drumming and singing, ... a rhythm-based aesthetic performance” (Anyidoho et, 2008: 34) is an example of such intersection. These repetitions indicate continuity in genealogy and dynasty; that the wearer inherits the beads from his or her ancestors and it is his or her duty to make sure future generations use the same beads. This practice problematizes the Fantes’ concept of *egudze*, trinkets and beads kept by a family to indicate a long history of wealth. The object bead thus sustains the detached text of the unwritten history of the family across time (Urban, 1996) and it, in this context, points to the rich and glorious past of the wearer and her family. It is therefore the duty of the women in that family to pass on this history by keeping the beads well and passing them over to the next generation in the family. So enduring has this beads praxis of keeping family history been that “in the African diaspora, some groups have used stories associated with certain kinds of beads in the family to retrace where in Africa their forebears might have been enslaved from” (Hagan, 2009: 18). Indeed, in the Akan tradition, any member who sells such beads is believed to incur the wrath of the dead who can even kill the offender. A story that occurred in the 1970s is told by Adwoa Fosuwah of Bodomase, Ashanti region, who also claims to have been told by her grandmother, Nana Ama Nkrumah Adasa, of one Kweku Mosi from Bekwai Bedumase, also in the Ashanti region. The story goes that Mosi had easy access to the trinkets and beads associated with the stool of the town. He stole them and had to suffer calamity the rest his life; all his children died at birth, the only sister went mad and all the in-laws staying in his house in Kumasi died mysteriously.

Another contextual design is the size. The size of the beads is indicative of the status of the wearer. For example, chiefs wear big size beads to make them conspicuous. The presence of the chief, especially

during a traditional occasion, comes with a lot of protocol and rules. The beads therefore construct boundaries for the subject. In the presence of the chief, the subjects know their limits. The size can also express the mood of the wearer, a sign post of the wearer. When asked about smaller beads, Nana Baffour (NA) had this to tell the interviewer (PA):

PA: Over here, the left is having gold, the left is having the krobo type of beads and the right is having smaller beads.

NA: These beads (the smaller beads) symbolize sacrifices or rituals; when rituals are being performed... So you can see that this outfit is fit for Akwasidaeñ when chiefs perform rituals and sacrifices to pacify their gods and their people. So you see that this is not embellished; it is pure; clean to pacify his gods. They are different. Look at them. It tells you “I have a lot to say!” It is a spiritual exercise so you have a lot of meanings. Communications with the ancestors or God comes with a lot of ideas or that sort of thing.

The shape is another design that serves as a contextual signpost of the wearer. We have two main types: round and oval. The round shape in the Ghanaian tradition signifies perfection and full life. No wonder the fertility concept of the Akan revolves around the round shape. It is against this background that babies use the round shaped beads and the cultural meaning is for the babies to have full life and to appreciate the Akan philosophy of life being a perfect phenomenon. The oval shape is mainly used for the adolescent because it signifies growth and it is even more significant for a young woman who is growing up into a specific social construct by way of her shape.

Again, the place of colour in the design of beads is located in the Ghanaian colour symbolism. Again, colour communicates the mood of or the situation in which the wearer finds him/herself. Red and black beads are for sombre occasions like funerals. Bright colours for celebratory occasions, festive and joyous occasions, and they are co-textually used not only to match the bright colours of traditional wears for the occasion but also to indicate the station and the status of the wearer as well. The white beads are mainly for religious occasions. When asked about the significance of the green colour in figure 2, Nana Baffour (NA) had the following conversation with the interviewer (PA):

NA. This one? Well, the colour green, anything green in our community, you know, signifies calmness, new, she is coming out [SIC] maybe something new. So it tells you she is naming a baby or something.

PA. Or maybe she has just been...

NA. Installed, installed as a chief. So anything green tells us that there is a turning point.

PA. It is a point in the circle of life?

⁴ See interview with Nana Baffour, 25th and 26th November, 2014, Asante Mampong

NA. That's the point, that's the point. I spoke about the white, something which calls for celebration; green

tells you he's been newly enstooled or he is celebrating yam festival or something.



Figure 2 : This was taken from the Mirror, 24th October, 2014

These designs or characteristics of the beads make them unique and depict their speechless and unwritten poetics (Lord, 2000: 129-131). In other context, we may consider them as aesthetics but what we may refer to as aesthetics may be an “unspoken reference to history” (Gilbert, 2010). These unique characteristics are formulas that constitute the stock in trade of the beadmaker and they are also conventions in the performance theory by which the art could be judged (Bauman, 1977). We are able to see that these are the beads for chiefs, queen mothers, the descendants of great warriors, the descendants of great achievers and so forth (Hagan, 2009: 17). Thus the beads constitute a narrative of the hierarchical order or the social stratification of a society and a form of socialization, especially among the living and the dead, a very convenient way of a re-union with the ancestors.

The manner in which the beads make the personhood of the wearer decontextualize from the main culture and entextualize in successive instantiations, reconfiguring meanings in each instantiation, (Urban, 1996; Barber, 2003, 2007) leaves us with the question as to how much is the personhood of the wearer an instantiated text of the detached cultural text being represented by the beads. In other words, considering the manner in which the cultural meanings of the bead keep looping out and corralling in the personhood of the wearer, there is a difficult balance to strike between how much of the self goes out to the culture and how much is held intact because the meanings we are analysing are normally intuited and not calculated by members of the community. That notwithstanding, how the beads help to define the self is an exercise worth undertaking.

First, the beads offer the wearer a sense of identity. We have already said that beads as a memory cue for the community helps to identify the social stratification and hierarchy of a community. We distinguish the queen mother from the other elderly women around thanks to the kind of beads she wears. We can also tell who the *ōkyerīma*, the chief drummer, is by the beads on his hand and the list goes unremitting. In addition to this role of identification, beads of a particular make and provenance offer the wearers a group feeling. This group is identified by the kind of beads they wear. We have Krobo beads, Ashanti beads, Fante beads and so forth. Nana Baffour gleefully looked at figure 3 and said “So if you ask me where he comes from, I will guess right that he comes from Barekese area where beads are so common”⁵.

⁵ See interview with Nana Baffour, 26th November, 2014, Asante Mampong.



Figure 3 : This was taken from the Mirror, 24th October, 2014

The beads which represent the group mind offer the wearers a manifestation of collective identity. We dare say that this feeling can result in ethnicity “an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of the other group” (Erikson, 2002: 12). Indeed, the bead which makes the Fante says that he or she is proud to wear a particular bead because it is the shibboleth of the Fantes is certainly an ethnic marker that has the power of constructing a symbolic representation of “commonness” among Fantes, a potential primordial feeling of “attachment that comprise loyalty for many are not whimsical but are generally basic to the individual’s definitions of themselves” (Druckman, 1994: 44). Indeed, such sense of group pride and loyalty could be so strong that the group markers, such as the beads, are regarded as rarefied objects. Fortunately, thanks to globalization, the modern concept of aesthetics, a Western thought, that has found its way in Ghana, has helped to strip off such ethnic colorations from traditional beads and just like a

Fante could find Ashanti Bonwire kente attractive and buy, so can the Ewe find the Krobo beads beautiful and buy. These days, people buy beads more for reasons of the aesthetics it offers than out of ethnic considerations and the beads have now moved out of their ethnic boundaries and are seriously bridging cultures in Ghana.

We have to emphasize here again, that all that we have said about the synecdochical relationship between the bead and the wearer centres on how the detached text of the bead is culturally manipulated. The detached text of the bead allows bead to travel through time, that is, the bead as an aspect of lived experience from generation to generation, and space, that is, an aspect of lived experience practised by a group of people in a specific area at a specific time. Of course, the theory of entextualization explains both how the bead travels through time and space but in this analysis, it throws much more light on how it travels through time because the detached text is instantiated in various occasions of performance, when performance here has got to do with a cultural object integrated in cultural public performance, and yet it carries the same meaning. For example, in the olden days, golden beads among the Akans and most ethnic groups in the country indicated wealth. Among the Ashantis, a subgroup of the Akan ethnic group in Ghana, it was believed that no one was as wealthy as the Ashanti King and therefore no one was allowed to visit the King in golden beads, a gesture that was interpreted as contesting the wealth of the King. Nana Baffour (NA) resorts to the meaning that goes with this detached text and re-embed it in a modern context as he interprets the beads in figure one.

PA: So you are telling me no other person can wear these?

NA: Everybody can use beads but you can’t use gold lining. If a queen mother wears this before the Otumfour, she will not be permitted. She will be asked to take them off.

PA: Why?

NA: Because traditionally she might be seen competing with Otumfour. Once she wears it then she is meeting her own people, her own community where she rules.⁶

What Nana Baffour said was confirmed by most of the Akan lecturers in the Rural Art Department of KNUST, Kumasi. Nana Baffour is only having recourse to community memory to interpret the images presented to him and the ownership of meaning he provided was not exclusive to him but it belongs to all Akans, including the lecturers in the above-mentioned department of KNUST. The next section deals with the alternative

⁶ See interview with Nana Baffour, 26th November, 2014, Asante Mampong.

development of meaning-making by traditional Ghanaian beads. This is the metonymic relationship between the bead and the wearer.

e) The metonymic relationship between the bead and the wearer

As seen in the above analysis, the Ghanaian traditional beads have become a site for an interesting cultural expression. In this section, we look at how the entextualization theory helps to disinter meaning of beads from the perspective of the beads being the whole, the culture, and the personhood being a part of this whole. In this section, the concept of metonymic relationship with the wearer offers us another opportunity to look at identity construction by beads from another angle; the beads as a symbol of office, the protection of the wearer by the beads, the beads as charm and how we find words to summarize cultural values expressed by the beads.

The traditional beads give the wearer an identity of an office holder. This is similar to the beads as a community memory except that while in the community memory the beads are pointing to a broader cultural history, this time the beads are not pointing to the culture but are the broader culture itself which subsumes the individual who wears them. It is the destination and not the sign post, the general and not the specific. The office is a detachable text that the individual takes upon himself on certain occasions. For example, when we say somebody is a chief, he has several selves; at one time a father, at another a husband and when it matters a chief. All these are different roles (Goffman, 1959) but once the one who is enstooled as the chief puts on the beads they signify his office, he is no other than the chief and every role he plays or the responsibility he has is that of the chief. Indeed, the beads are the symbol of an office which goes beyond the atomistic individual self to the society at large. The ownership of that office belongs to the community which provides the slot the individual occupies. Therefore if the beads signify that office, then the beads stand for the community at large. Once the individual puts on the beads, he ceases to be an individual and becomes the "whole" and again the personhood of the individual wearer of these particular beads is distributed "beyond the body boundary" (Gell, 1998: 104; quoted in Barber, 2007: 104). An example of metonymic relationship with an object is that of the Triobriand Islanders. They "see their own attributes or personality manifested in the yams they grow" (Barber, 2007: 104) because the yam is seen as cultural material that stands for its owner so how the yam looks like is a reflection of the status of the owner; the state of the yam subsumes the status of the farmer or the farmer is seen in terms of his produce, the yam. There is a similar development when the beauty of the bead reflects that of the wearer except that the bead in that example does

not subsume the wearer. One of the writers of this paper had the opportunity to discuss with Karin Barber, the author of *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics* who cited the example about the Triobriand Islanders in her book that the experience of the expanded personhood could be equated to the way people own property, especially cars, in Ghana. Here is an example to support the conversation between this writer and Barber. Peter Arthur had this story to tell. He had been using Opel Vectra for more than ten years. In 2014, he bought ML 320 Mercedes Benz. Many people in his community and even in the university community saw him in the benz and expressed surprise. He went on to explain that their behaviour did not stem from the fact that they thought he could not buy a Benz car but since he had changed his car for a more expensive one, their attitude towards him changed: they looked at him differently, spoke to him differently and they had become more courteous towards him. Obviously something accounts for this change and it is the new car. Clearly, the new car has covered his personhood and he is now enjoying a new persona (brand). In fact, the influence of this car is even weaker as compared to that of the beads which symbolizes the entire office, an office that signifies the entire people and their culture. The wearer of the beads designating this office is therefore a point at which a variety of cultural codes intersect (Barthes, 1977).

Once beads that signify offices are worn, they go with rights and responsibilities. In that sense, it is your right to act as the position holder designated by the beads and whatever you say or do is not from you as an individual but from the collectivity of the people the occupancy of whose slot you have. Nana Baffour explained that certain types of beads confer certain positions, postures and responsibilities on the wearer, adding, "So this outfit (beads) it is just not like all the others. It is celebratory and it is for a social function like maybe a durbar, a festival or sitting in state to receive homage, that kind of thing."⁷ This intertextuality between you and the beads is very interesting because it communicates authority to your subordinates, who by the cultural definition of your office are part of you – you are the whole, thanks to the symbolic meaning of the kind of beads you wear. They are supposed to accord you the respect a traditional leader of your stature deserves. Indeed, any individual who treats you with disrespect, even when you are apparently at fault, faces punitive sanctions from the community because it is believed that any act of disrespect against any office holder, as designated by material manifestations like beads, are considered a breach of social order and an affront to not only the living but the dead as well. In the Fante and Ashanti traditions, you may be free with a war

⁷ See interview with Nana Baffour, 26th November, 2014, Asante Mampong.

leader, *safohen*, and may say whatever you want to say to him so far as he is not holding his staff or whiskers of office. The material manifestation of the office is so important that all the leaders in the Ghanaian tradition have to swear the oath of office in their full regalia, including the beads and Fantes would say, “ewia mu o, nsu mu o, wõfrñ me namamma a moto” (whether rain or shine, I owe my people certain responsibilities, failure of which I go against the law). The personhood of the wearer’s embeddedness in social relations through the symbolic communication of the beads and through this metonymic relationship in which the beads instantiate the cultural detached text of who a chief should be, is part of the “technology” by which culture is produced (Heath, 1982; quoted in Bennett, 1990).

The next metonymic relationship the traditional Ghanaian beads have with their wearers is when the beads are believed to possess magical powers. The beads, with their magical power, are supposed to be the “whole”, a bigger power which takes care of a smaller power, the wearer. The wearer in this case is re-configured as a part of the bigger power, the beads, a development very similar to the text of the beads and the identity of the wearer. Hagan (2009, 17) observes that in some cultures,

The first-born child would be marked with a special string of beads. The third serial male or female (Mensa or Mansa), the tenth born child, (Badu) , twins and the child born immediately after twins, would wear special strings of beads. These have some mystical status in the community.

Furthermore, beads are worn by both office holders and ordinary folks for the sake of protection against evil spirits (Rattray, 1927). This use of the beads involves both human beings, who use them on traditional occasions and even in their quotidian life, and non humans during rituals. Even though charm beads can be worn on any part of the body, including those erotic parts of the woman, they are usually worn on the wrists and ankles, two parts of the body that are not necessarily connected with the concept of Ghanaian fertility. Males usually wear the beads on the wrist and believe they are spiritually covered by the magical powers of the beads. Females wear them both at the wrists and on the ankles, thus traditional priestesses who dabble in such magical powers put the beads on their ankles and queen mothers who seek the protection of these beads wear them on the wrists. Beads can also be used to “decorate” objects like traditional drums, hats, footwear and other traditional wears to ward off evil spirits who are believed to have the propensity of using these objects as agents of attacking humans. In all these instances, the superior magical text of the beads, under whose protection the wearer, the less superior text, is, forms the detached text and the wearer only instantiates this magical text on him or herself when

he or she wears them. The whole therefore represents the part.

Finally, proverbs about beads serve as linguistic alleys through which we navigate a complex web of traditional knowledge. The beads represent the broader culture and the proverbs help us to select which meaning out of these broad cultural meanings is appropriate for the occasion. The epistemology of the Akan culture is not always what meets the eye on the first instance. There are certain aspects of the culture that are summed up in proverbs because the Akans say “obanyansanyi wobu no bñ na wõnka no asñm”, the wise are spoken to in proverbs and not in plain language. Even though certain critics are suspicious of proverbs in cultural studies, Kwame Kyekye (1987) and Kwesi Nyankah (1994), the former, a renowned Ghanaian philosopher and, the later, a famous Ghanaian linguist, have insisted that proverbs have the power of encapsulating meanings in culture and proverbs about beads do just that. The materiality of beads triggers a cascade of meanings. What these proverbs do is something similar to Roland Barthes’ concept of anchorage which postulates that, “all images are polysemous; they imply, underlying their signifiers, a ‘floating chain’ of signifieds, the reader able to choose some and ignore others” (Barthes, 1977: 156). The beads become a site where a lot of cultural meanings intersect and the proverbs help to create precision on the “floating chains” of cultural meanings. The exegesis Barthes offers for the role of the proverb in this context is that “in every society various techniques are developed intended to fix the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs; the linguistic message is one of these techniques” (Barthes, 1977: 156). When the Akans say “ahwendze pa nkasa” (quality beads are silent but self-expressive), quality beads here represent good works that need no mentioning. The Akans believe empty barrels make the most noise and good people do not boast of their works. This may seem trivial to a non-Akan but for the Akans who are mainly oral in expression, speaking is the main instrument of diverting attention, explanation and evaluation (Barber, 2003: 327) to oneself but the idea of being represented in this proverb is that if it has to do with a good work, then speech is not enough, the image itself is very fluent of what it stands for. This philosophical approach to the world view of the Akan is experienced in almost all facets of life; in religion, in chieftaincy, in social life, in traditional life and so forth but we use the proverb, objectified in the beads to summarize what happens in all these stages of life in the Akan. As it stands, such a proverb provides its own context and the listeners know exactly which context is being referred to. Again, the Akans say, “ahwendze nnyew wõ panyin eyim” (beads cannot get lost in the presence of elders), they are equating the art of making and stringing beads, a very complicated one, to the

traditional knowledge of the elders. This is what Hagan (2009:15) says in connection with what is said above.

The elders, with their experience, can tell which order or sequence the beads should have. They can thus tell which bead should follow which; and using the colour rhythm and rhyme, indeed determine whether all beads on the string are in place

Indeed, the arrangement of the “colour rhythm and rhyme” are all messages on their own and since the elders have knowledge of the order being referred to in the beads in question, they can always go to the detached text or the mental script and re-embed it on different occasions. In all these examples, the beads constitute a site for interesting cultural discourse that communicates message that may not be understood by the uninitiated. Proverbs about beads do not only help us to make meaning but also tell us that the beads can signify the broader culture which the wearer comes under.

III. CONCLUSION

It is obvious from the discussion of the poetics of the Ghanaian beads that what we call the text goes beyond the artefactual sign or the written material that the New Criticism would like us to believe. Of course, the seemingly scientific approach to meaning by the New Criticism which restricts meaning to the text and nothing but the text appears very exciting on the surface but subsequent research in literature, has made the study of meaning-making even more exciting by bringing to light a huge potential in the enterprise of interpretation when the text is made to travel beyond the written word. Ruth Finnegan’s (1970) seminal contribution the study of literature in extending meaning of the text from the written word to orality received global applause in the world of literary studies. Other linguists and ethnographers like Albert Lord (1960), Walter Ong (1982), Dell Hymes, 1974, 1975, 1981, 1985), Joel Sherzer (1982b) have also worked on the artful use of oral language which we now refer to as oral literature. Similarly, Richard Bauman’s (1977, 1988) contribution to the study in oral and literature culture does not only extend the meaning of the text to oral literature but goes on to say that performance is also a text and Karin Barber (2003: 325) rightly adds that orality in this context is a performance of “of something. Something identifiable is understood to have pre-existed the moment of utterance. Or, alternatively, something is understood to be constituted in utterance which can be abstracted or detached from the immediate context and re-embedded in a future performance”. She is, of course, alluding to the contribution of Michael Silverstein (1996) and Greg Urban (1996, 2001) to the above debate but what she adds to this very debate is the fact that the text is not only the written or the spoken word but also “something” to be performed, an object or an action. Indeed, Bauman stresses that too and that

makes it easier for us to use the theory of Performance to analyse the Ghanaian beads and drawing on the linguistic theory of entextualization by Silverstein and Urban we are able to see the Ghanaian beads, objects that are mainly rural art, through the lenses of linguistics and this has enabled us to see how the Ghanaian beads have been travelling through time and space, thus we are in a better position to see the beads within the context of traditional or modern meanings.

The traditional meanings are seen through the synecdochical and metonymic registers of language which enables us to see the relationship between the beads and the wearers, the culture and the history of the wearers. First, the synecdochical relationship between the bead and the wearer, when the bead is part of the wearer and serves as a sign post to the wearer gives us the aesthetic value of the beads which in turn confers aesthetics on the wearer and in the women in particular, constructing the cultural definition of feminine beauty. Second, its function as a patriarchal instrument that allows the men to hold women in subordination by reducing women to scopophilic and voyeuristic objects has also been discussed. Third, as a sign post, the synecdochical relationship through the position of the beads on the body communicates the status of the wearer and therefore serves as a social boundary between one group of people and the other for easy political organization of the Ghanaian societies. Fourth, the synecdochical relationship between the bead and the wearer provides an opportunity for community memory which allows Ghanaians to relive their past not only for the purpose of social organization, stratification and mobility but also for the purpose of sustaining an age-old culture which gives the Ghanaians their identity. Finally, we also investigate the metonymic relationship, when the bead is the whole and the wearer is part of this whole. This relationship provides a better analytical position to examine how the beads serve as a protection for the wearer, constitute a charm for the wearer and how beads serve as a summary of cultural values.

The linguistic theories of performance and entextualization thus offer us a platform to analyze the poetics of Ghanaian traditional beads, the meanings of the use of beads that have since the olden days survived over the years and that are still being used on traditional occasions and for traditional purposes. Indeed, the findings of this study offer a wide range of opportunities for foreigners not only to appreciate aspects of Ghanaian traditional culture but to participate in them. It offers equal opportunities to even Ghanaians, especially the youth, who are referred to by Nana Baffour as “People of today” who “normally don’t go in to these things so when they see them, they just admire them without knowing what they mean”⁸

⁸ See interview with Nana Baffour, 26th November, 2014, Asante Mampong.

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