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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

Akan Gold weights:
Values perspectives of a non-western cultural artifact

A thesis submitted as a satisfaction of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts

In

Interdisciplinary Humanities

By

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2018

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2018

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to "Mother Africa" the Land of Abundance, my birthplace and where the Akan gold weights originated and also to my dear lovely son, Koffi Kouadio Thierry Stephane for his patience and endurance.

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For my close family but away from my eyes, I said "Oseheee Yeah"

"Yeh La Gnamien- Onyakonkpon Asse," and finally for my parents: to my father Konan Michel who is now sitting at the counsel of the ancestors, you have been such a great inspiration and a hero, and to my mother Kouassi Affoue, you are the rock of my life.

Abstract for
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This thesis discusses the value and meanings of cultural artifacts from the Akan material culture known as gold weight. Before colonial contact, the gold weights were essential objects in the everyday lives of the Ashanti, also known as the Akan people of Ghana, West Africa. The weights were called *abrammuo* in the Akan language, made of brass alloy mounted with geometrical motifs and figurative symbols. The *abrammuo*, as a set of miniature weights, were kept in the *futuo*, a leather bag that also contains additional apparatus such as brass spoons, scales, brushes, feathers, gold pans, etc. According to Garrard (1980), “as long as gold dust remained a currency in Akan society, gold weights has been significant for weighing gold at the market or during social, and political arrangements such as birth, rites of passage, deaths, and funerals, during marriage or for state fines and toll purposes” (Garrard 1980,171-176). In other contexts, the gold weights played the role of an agent of social, economic and political stability among the Akan and within the gold trade system network. With the fall of the Ashanti kingdom to British colonialism, a significant number of weights lost their primary functions and found their way into a net of western art collectors, private art galleries, and museum collections. I argue that the value (s) embedded in the weights in traditional Ashanti culture were traded for a western canon of artistic and aesthetic values. My inquiry focuses on the changing meaning and significance of the gold weights through western museum representation and exhibition.

Keywords: colonialism, materialism, cultural artifacts, material culture, Akan, gold trade, gold weights and value theory, museum studies

Introduction

One day, a sailor visiting *Asoko* during a festival noticed an African dignitary covered with gold ornaments. Disregarding protocol, one of the white sailors immediately indicated that he wanted to exchange his pistol for the pendants, which the black dignitary was wearing. Angered by this behavior, the African chief refused the offer. Harassed and begged by the white, which clung to him, the African, after much reflection, offered him gold powder instead of pendants. The gold he provided was in a bronze box. When it was opened in front of the spectators, it was noticed that there were also little bronze figures of men, animals, plants and various others objects. Using a spoon of a type unknown to the visitors, the black man placed a certain quantity of the yellow metal in one of the pans of the scale. To balance, he put a figure of a crocodile with a fish in its mouth into the other pan. In this way, the old *Issinian* weighed the quantity of gold, which he deemed to be equal to the value of the firearm. The sailor was astonished and remained silent during the meticulous weighing operation. [Bouah: 1987, 22]

The scene described above is an example of the practice of gold trading and weighing tradition in the Akan society of Ghana, West Africa. The tradition of gold weighing in Ashanti can be paralleled with the embodied practice or “habitus” of gold mining. It’s also yields in return an elaborate network of economic exchange. This economic network or the trans-Saharan trade route, start from the western Sudanese seacoast all the way to the northern Maghreb coast crossing through the grass and hot desert lands. This scene is also a backdrop for the discourse on the colonial relationship with non-Western material culture and their circulation within a network of the commodities exchange. As merchants and explorers from Europe traveled to the Gold Coast to trade goods for gold dust, the *abrammuo*, or gold weights, were instrumental in the transaction process.

The bag that contains the *abrammuo* and other apparatus was namely present in every Akan family and state dealings. The family bag was named *futuo*, while the state bag was named *sanan*. In this thesis, my focus will be on the *futuo*. In Akan society, the *futuo* is

believed to contain the soul of its owner, therefore is well-taken care of. After the death of the head of a family, the son inherits the *futuo*. Similarly, the use of the weights and their functions are related to Akan linguistic expressions in the form of proverbial utterances, as the use of gold is linked to the gold weights. Therefore, it is common practice to find proverbs that express the notion of wisdom such as *nyansa nye sika na woakyekyere asie* (Wisdom is not gold dust that it should be tied up and put away), or the proverbs of trading gold dust such as *okwasea redi ne sika a, ose ne nsenia ye merew* (When a fool is squandering his gold dust, he says his scales are out of order) (Rattray 1916, 152).

The *abrammuo*'s value was then negotiated through its performativity as their cultural biographies, social lives and artistic representations were part of the tradition and culture of the Akan people. Since the *abrammuo*'s function and use-value were concerned with the domain of commerce in broader use, it functioned in the past, before colonial contact, as linguistic object as the fulfillment of an oral tradition practice, which served as the guardian of the Akan collective and social memory. Together the weights' function and use are regarded with a well-established agency endowed with social, economic and political capacities. For that purpose, still today, a yearly festival of purification and cleansing ceremony is held for the *futuo* during the *adae Kese* festival, sacrifices are conducted in a ritual of ancestor's celebration.

In the context of museum representation, the gold weights enter a different mode of usability and performativity. Their use and function are negotiated within the setting of an "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983) construct that engages in the practice of cultural production around art objects and cultural artifacts. As such, the objects' weights use value, and social lives follow a well-designated pattern of circulation that involved art brokers, middleman, private galleries, art collectors and museum administrative agents. Once the objects are in

circulation, they move quickly through the commodity exchange market while reinforcing their historical narrative.

At the museum, the display of objects is a political affair resting upon the museum director, curator with oversight by the board of director's authority. They are displayed following the International Committee for Documentation of the International Council of Museums (CIDOC) guidelines. These guidelines incorporate a definition that is used when recording and documenting objects, the format, and convention that governs the categorization of captured information and the terminology applicable to these categories. This aspect of definition will be discussed in the case study section as the objects are described according to the museum guidelines. As a matter of representation and cultural production, the Akan gold weights have been displayed in museums in the West since the late 18th century as the result of a flourishing interest in African art. The fundamental research questions I address in this thesis are these; what types of value does the Akan gold weight have regarding their symbolic representation? How are they represented in museums in the West?

In this thesis, I argue that the Akan gold weights symbolism is misrepresented by museum practices. From that approach, the representation of the weights suggests less about their original cultural meaning, instead focusing on an institutional ritual of knowledge production and displays of power. During the gold weights exhibition, the narratives that accompany the art objects lack a description that discusses the symbols themselves and their importance in Akan society. My experience in visiting three museums in the US revealed that their labeling system for the weights does not indicate an existing relationship between the symbols and proverbs as part of the Akan cultural knowledge. Although the gold weights have a social and economic value that is common in the circulation of art objects, they also have a

linguistic value that cannot be mitigated and negotiated. To address this problem, I have cross-referenced the weights' symbols with the Akan proverbs in order to unpack their meaning as related to their linguistic value. The end result incorporates the weights' symbolic and linguistic value into a labeling system as my ultimate goal.

This thesis divided into four sections will use a methodology based on empirical theories and descriptive survey through a fieldwork-based case study. The first section will introduce the literature reviews about the theory of value, colonial theory and museums studies. The second section discusses the gold weight literature reviews, the gold weights, and the Ashanti cultural context. The third section will describe an exhibition case study at the Brooklyn Museum of Arts, and the last part will be the discussion and conclusion. The goal is to mobilize and expand understanding of material culture as a mode of colonial knowledge production in the case of the colonial encounter with Akan people and method of representation in American museum contexts.

I - Theories of value

The discussion of value in this section informs the theoretical perspective within the field of anthropology that tackles the theory of value. As such, this review of the theory of value is indispensable to study the objects from an anthropological perspective with emphasis on the study of material culture. Central to anthropology, this review of methods of value draws from Marcel Mauss (1925), Arjun Appadurai (1986), David Graeber (2011), and Fred Myers (1995). David Graeber outlines the anthropological consensus that defines a unified paradigm as follow:

In anthropology, the long debate about a theory of value has come to light with some groundbreaking works. Many anthropologists have long felt there should be a unified theory of value, one that seeks to move from understanding how different cultures define the world in radically different ways to how, at the same time, they represent what is beautiful, or worthwhile, or significant about it (Graeber 2011, ix).

From that perspective, these theories of value have surfaced in the literature of anthropology with four significant works of the 20th and 21st centuries. These four works offer a wide range of insights that covers the lives of things engaged in a commodity exchange market that utilize money and politics to create value. From their original contexts, objects are engaged in timeless traffic across economic, social and political boundaries that frequently omit their histories and meanings.

Marcel Mauss (1925), one of the founding fathers of modern anthropology, was interested in the question of gift exchange as compared to market exchange, a way to counter the perceived irrationality of economic transactions in small scales societies. He inquired about the legality and self-interest of non-Western cultures to investigate the forms, meaning, and

structures of gift giving across a range of cultures. Mauss observed that the notion of gift giving and receiving follows strict customs in societies without monetary exchange, a stark contrast with the financial system of modern societies.

The principle of this behavior, according to Mauss, lies in "forces" or "the spirit of the gift" which Mauss, combining ethnology, history, and sociology, effectively addressed the establishment of gift exchanges in a wide contextual scheme by answering the central question of what is a gift? He emphasizes that most cultures see gifts as obligatory and mutual. He also locates gifts in an enormously complex social phenomenon that encompass everything from the creation of relationships to reciprocity and obligation. Similarly, influential anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1926) sees "the binding force of financial obligation that lies in the sanction that either side may invoke to severe systems of reciprocity." Malinowski (1926).

Mauss' inquiry into the tribal customs of the Maori, Samoa, and the people of Melanesia reveals that such societies possess highly developed and symbolically elaborate markets for the exchange of economic goods and gifts, as well as a connection to economic, moral, aesthetic and religious aspects. In such societies, the gift exchange involves groups, such as families, clans, and tribes in what can be called the "whole presentation," for which Mauss notes, "to give something is to give a part of oneself. In this system of ideas, one gives away what is, in reality, a part of one's nature and substance, while to receive something is to receive a part of someone's spiritual essence" (Mauss:1924,12). By investigating gift exchange in various societies, Mauss also mirrored his finding to reflect on his community, providing insights about the industrial society of the early 20th Century. He advocates for morality which stems from the city "a group of men with feelings and minds wrapped in flesh and blood that at all times spring into action and that have acted everywhere (Mauss:1925, 89). The system, in which individuals and groups

exchange with one another, argues Mauss, constitutes the most ancient system of economy and law that we can conceive and forms the basis from which the morality of the exchange-through-gift. Therefore, according to Mauss, “from one extreme of human evolution to the other, there are no two kinds of wisdom” (Mauss:1925, 91).

Mauss compares Western society of his time to the "archaic" society, elaborating on the notion of consumption and expenditure that turns the modern man into an 'economic animal' with a utilitarian inclination. Although this seems to be an outdated perception, it serves as a landmark for the explosion of new impressions that follow.

Following Mauss' discussion of the gift, Arjun Appadurai (1986) expands theories of value to incorporate a new perspective on the circulation of commodities in social life. His argument is a composite work about the value influenced by theories espoused by Marx (capitalism), Georg Simmel (subjectivity) and Marcel Mauss (gift economy). This perspective informs an aspect of the commodities' lives tied to consumption. Whereas Mary Douglas (2010) inquires, “why do we consume?” (Douglas: 2010, 3). Mauss specifically inquires about the Melanesian practice of gifts exchange. Appadurai's contribution thus informs us about commodity circulation in consumer networks and uses a multidisciplinary method that involves ethnography. In this matter, anthropology and economics converge to propose an aspect about objects, which Appadurai argues as “a new perspective on the circulation of commodities in social life (as an agency of consumerism)” (ibid, 1). In this emphasis, Appadurai (1986) focuses on the notion of the value of "the things that are exchanged, rather than simply on the forms or functions of exchange" (ibid, 76). He suggests that he inquiry into the social lives of objects is well captured through Simmel's statement about "the judgment made about (them) by subjects" (Simmel 1978:73). Appadurai argues that Simmel's theory of value exists in a mental state

where psychological elements inform the use of judgment in tastes based on consumption and politics. Appadurai's introduction to commodities in a cultural perspective provides a path toward a theory of value that encompasses a multidisciplinary approach. He interplays commodities exchange and commodities social lives: "it is possible to argue that what creates the link between exchange and value is politics, construed broadly" (1986, 1). As Appadurai articulates, the implication of cultural and social systems, he argues, "values through economic exchange, social, things, commodities, perspectives, and politics are duly mandated by knowledge under the umbrella of politics" (1986, 57). This argument also resonates with Foucauldian conceptions of power, where the idea is that knowledge is duly mandated by institutional power such as "the educational institution, with its meticulous regulations that govern its internal life... constitute a block of capacity-communication-power" (Foucault 2000 [1954] 338). Appadurai borrows from Simmel's systematic account of how economic value is best defined, and drawing also from Mauss, discusses the notion of distance and sacrifice as part of the economic exchange network. He states that: "by overcoming distance, which requires sacrifices, desire becomes an important element to enjoy pleasurable things, therefore, therefore, the exchange of sacrifices in an economic life brings the exchange of values", however, the exchange is addressed as the source of the mutual "valuation of objects" (1986, 80). Appadurai's reading of Simmel sets the stage for a discussion that explores the conditions under which economic objects circulate in different regimes of value in space and time (ibid.,4).

In doing so, Appadurai recalls the notion of exchange, from "two aspects of the mid-nineteenth-century episteme" elaborated by Marx; such as the shift from product to a commodity where problematic of production meets the movement to commodity production (ibid.,7). From that perspective, Appadurai focuses on the question "What sort of exchange is commodity

exchange?" rather than ponder "what is a commodity." This choice leads the author to enunciate on the "two kinds of exchange that are conventionally contrasted with commodity exchange: barter and gifts exchange" (1986, 9). Most importantly, he locates things in motion as they circulate in different regimes of value or commodity situation, and accounts for the constant transcendence of cultural boundaries by the flow of products. As related to the regime of value, Appadurai understands culture as a limited and localized system of meanings in which desire and demand, reciprocal sacrifice and power interact to create economic value in specific social situations. As such, he introduces "the commodity spirit" as a prime factor that lies at the complex intersection of temporal, cultural, and social factors, and consequently, responds to three layers of consideration: the social life of anything, the candidacy of anything, as well as the commodity context in which anything may be placed (ibid.,6 -15).

Expanding upon Appadurai's theory of value, the work of George Marcus and Fred Myers (1995) develops the concept of the social life of things through systems of networks, where objects circulate in and out of the commodity status. Their collection of essays is groundbreaking for establishing a new relationship between the discipline of anthropology and the study of art. The resulting impact is the exploration of the boundaries and affinities between art, anthropology, representation, and culture, and casts a critical, ethnographic light on the art worlds of the contemporary West and transitions in non-Western objects. Before this collection of essays, the anthropology of art was concerned with mediating non-Western objects and aesthetics to Western audiences. Marcus and Myers argue the need of mediation and propose a renegotiation of the relationship between art and anthropology.

According to Myers (1995), the need for renegotiating the relationship between art and anthropology stems from the acknowledgment that anthropology itself intersects with every

subject matter that it wants to make its object of study, and precisely to art worlds. Art practices in which anthropological conceptions of culture and difference have been so heavily entangled with the methods of museums, collectors, and markets favor a long history and a hidden presence in anthropology's complex identification with its subjects and its cultural authority between concerns about ethnocentrism and sustaining the "native point of view". This stronghold of anthropology has consequences for "the critical ambivalence" (ibid.,2) today towards subjects who have been people who were marginal, colonized, and otherwise peripheral to the standard narratives of world histories produced in the West.

Myers challenged certainties about unique, bounded communities and the boundary between observers and observed because anthropology and its traditional subjects are increasingly involved in the production of art and the institutions upon which art production depends. From a more global approach, Myers navigates the various forms of negotiation that pertain to the lives of art objects. He unpacks the characteristics in which acquisition, authenticity, ownership, and representation intersect with a particular cultural and moral traffic of knowledge. In short, Myers establishes a relationship with the extended embraced dialectic in anthropology's taste for "primitivism," "tribal art," or the token of "otherness" which paradoxically has been a central figure in modernist art practice and factors in the equation that validates money and aesthetics. According to Myers, the fact of monetary value is more apparent and undeniable than it ever has been; it has become impossible to talk of aesthetics without speaking of money. Therefore, mainly its economic aspects condition the life of things through a network of exchange.

The discussion of this aspect of value from how things circulate to how much they are worth arises in the following analysis of David Graeber's (2001) theory of value. Among other

things, Graeber explores the interrelation between two forms of economic exchange: the capitalist mode of commodity exchange and the non-capitalist mode of gift exchange. He proposes an anthropological theory of value that takes at its roots how the social theory has historically dealt with the issue and how the philosophy of neoliberalism has shaped underlying assumptions about the human condition. Like Appadurai, he draws inspiration from Marx and Simmel's work.

Graeber's "action theory of value" (2001, xii) is exhumed from the social theories three largest streams of thought that are social, economic, and linguistic. According to Graeber, these three streams of thought encompass the moral, psychological and linguistic construct of what is desirable in human life, that can be related to the idea of profits and gain regulated by the government at the political level (ibid., 14). He situates his theory around object's value as they circulate in a commodity market to yield maximum profits. He borrows from Clyde Kluckhohn's (1951) attempt to localize a theory of value while incorporating the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure (1966). While neoliberals see a global market that subordinates everything into a single standard of value, Graeber's analysis of value production originates from a system of different assumptions. "Value can best be seen in this light as the way in which actions become meaningful to the actor by being incorporated in some larger, social totality" (2001, xii). This incorporation of actions by the actors in a broader social totality unveils the problematic of power and knowledge across social and economic boundaries. For instance, how do small scale societies define value? despite of their exclusion in the global financial market exchange? Did non-capitalist societies entertain a similar abstract notion of value? What has been the role of the African continent in the shaping of the modern, postmodern and neoliberal

system of thought and values? Graeber's theory of value can inform these inquiries viewed through the lens of the Akan gold weights.

Graeber invests much energy into the economic aspect of value by re-examining the discipline of anthropology and ethnography through discussions of Marx and Mauss. While Marx critiques capitalism and commodity production system, and Mauss's work ultimately is interested in the fruits of comparative ethnography, Graeber takes a turn to broaden his analysis of values to anthropology and ethnography in a very light of how the others see a value. Thus, systematically engages capitalism against traditional society's economic models. In this aspect, the description of how Trobriand, Maori, and Kwakiutl gifts economies works compared to the capitalist economy. This attempt to project a normative (i.e., capitalistic) view as universal while anthropological and ethnographic portraits illustrate how subaltern societies practice gift economies as another form of non-mediated approach to value. However, they stand classified as second in the ladder of performativity and importance vis-a-vis a capitalist mode of market exchange.

Although value has long been an ambiguous term to define from an anthropological and economic perspective, it has serve to identify a set of behaviors that are important in people's lives. As such, a value can imply the measure of a set of behavioral attitudes that range from what a person or community deemed as good, or harmful in the acquisition of things or the establishment of the social institution. In this sense, the desire to obtain an item grows from its usefulness, its worth of exchangeability, and its demands. In the context of commodity exchange and circulation, value tends to address the importance of objects and things from a material culture perspective, though some others approach also need thoughtful examination.

Thinking beyond the circulation of multiple system of values, Warnier (1999) argues that some scholars would go so far to say that a theory of material culture cannot work unless it succeeds in articulating the apparent links between the object as a sign and the object as material (1999a: 28). Knappett (2005) stresses that "mind, agency, and material are codependent" (2005, 62). As such, material culture as a field of study calls for meaning about and understanding of the objects of research, but also of the person who makes them. Thus, material culture demonstrates the link between objects and persons and the signs that artifacts depict. The idea of meaning prompts one to ask, what are they? Where do they originate? What are they usability? Who made them? What is their significance?

In the field of philosophy, axiology has been primarily concerned with classifying what things are good, and how good they are. As such, the concern of axiology is whether the objects of value are subjective psychological states or objective states of the world. This perspective understands value as a mental affair that materializes in the objective. Before Graeber's anthropological approach, the discussion of value(s) was regularly present in the disciplines of philosophy, economics, and sociology. Some social scientist and philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Weber have raised the question of value as being related to what is "good fair, legitimate" or rather "bad, unfair, illegitimate." They left a legacy that inspired modern French writers. According to Raymond Boudon (2013), the views of Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx have influenced modern writers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Pierre Bourdieu, as they have in common the viewpoint of seeing value as an "illusion" (Boudon 2013, 3).

In anthropology however, Grabere notes that Kluckhohn assumed that values are 'conceptions of the desirable' and this also implies the idea about the desirable as a value which

is more oriented toward the things sought for in life" (Graeber: 2001, 3). Consequently, when the application of value combines with a society made up of individuals, it creates a chain of desires in the production of commodities and by extension a market of commodities exchanges. The marketplace, as an economic establishment, in addition to exchanging products, is the place that promotes a form of social and cultural exchange as well. While money often upholds the value of the economic transaction in the modern era, non-Western societies entertain a traditional notion of trade, giving and receiving gifts, or bartering. As such, Appadurai (1986) emphasizes that "economic exchanges create value which is embodied in the commodities that are exchanged" (1). Economic exchange is at the source of value creation and starts with the object in commodity situation. He implies that economic exchange is a network in which an object navigates its lives where their value changes. Consequently, the system in which objects circulate affects their commercial and social values.

Thus, from the production of the commodity, to its acquisition on the market, a dynamic arises where there are two points of view: the theoretical and the methodological points of view. While the first implies that human actors encode things with significance, the second address the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context. Although this inquiry does look at the value of weights from the Akan perspective, it also addresses the issue of culture and politics that erupts with the establishment of western civilization's hegemony of colonialism and consequently disrupts nonwestern existing societies' core values. For Appadurai (1986), Politics plays a vital role in bringing together the exchange of goods to various actors. Politics, in short, create a platform for dialogue to take place.

1.1 Power and Colonial knowledge production

Taking these insights about value into account introduce the association of politics and commodities exchange, in an socio-historical context in which the gold weight prior life and biography transforms as much as their values. Coloniality and materiality are two phenomena that walk side by side holding hands in postmodern and post structural academic scholarship. Although the one does not entirely associate with the other, there is both a dynamic and invisible power that seems to tie them together. Coloniality, displays an attribute of domination, borne out partly by the urgency of political and economic expansion of modern Europe while materiality stands as a marker of social status.

Coloniality as Mignolo points out "ought to be the other side (the darker side?) Of modernity" (2009, 172) explained as the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit and as the formation of the modern/colonial world in which we are living and bearing, leading to the global transformations that followed (ibid.). The designs of philosophers such as Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle whose work helps to fundamentally influence and cement and thoroughly supports the Western canon of rationality as well as its Cartesian value. Alternatively, the Greco-Roman church was establishing the development of value, ideas, science, laws, and institutions, which constitute the fundamental value of Western civilization. Nicholas Thomas (2005) notes that Western civilization stands indebted to the church for the university system, charitable work, international law" (2005,1). In short, building on Thomas' statement, there is a chance that the church created the western civilization that in turn imposed colonialism as a set of value structures upon the colonized.

An identifiable divide come to exist between modern and postmodern scholars, there is also a commonality to underline objects production, their presence on the commodity market that

largely, advertising and media outlets support. The discussion of value from modern and contemporary scholars involves any advertisement, which in return affects the value of objects. Whether, the value exhibits as an illusion, three categories are involved *vis-a-vis* non-Western objects or material culture, the same principle of selling an object for benefit persists. The search of authenticity, originality, and uniqueness in the acquisition or collection of material culture was the trend in European metropolis in the late 18th century, as it meant value encompassed taste and price, objects advertised as “authentic” and “original” would draw a considerable consensus from consumers about value.

The case of the European conquest of the African continent provides an example of how politics plays an essential role in the acquisition of goods or things: not only how politics infuse the lives of the objects, but also how the objects' value changes. At the beginning of the 16th century, with Europe coming out of the Middle Ages, the Dutch, German, Portuguese, Spanish and French successively entered the race to explore the world as the state became invested in world expeditions. The most notorious case is Christopher Columbus' voyage to India, but instead encountered the Caribbean island of Hispaniola (modern day Haiti and the Dominican Republic). Before 1492, Columbus was sailing the African coast with the Portuguese royal fleet. In Spain, King Ferdinand's (Ayensu1997) instruction to the conquistador echoes through the wall of the British empire: "get gold humanely, get gold at all cost," and in Africa there was gold in such a great quantity that the western part was baptized the "Gold Coast" as reports of explorers and merchants substantially reinforced the king's message. The rush for gold did not leave any stone unturned. What started as an economic trade and exchange, quickly escalated into a race to take control of gold mines and production?

These expeditions that extracted gold from Africa first spark a discourse about value: human values, social values and economic values that imply the value of objects and things in the context of the transnational market exchange market. Europe's rise over the globe cemented the celebration of Western philosophy and literature and consequently cast a shadow on other forms of a non-western mode of knowledge production. The latter, by default, acted as a seal to the first. In the Western construct, one can say that people endorse the value of objects for consumption because of what advertising proposes. With this in mind, a value would be concerned with the practice of advertising to promote the acquisition of illusions through the purchasing and collecting of objects. This practice applies to the production of objects of mass consumption as well as objects of exceptional provenance.

In the contemporary moment, the conditions of a new global economy have created new and often contradictory cultural and economic values and meanings in objects for most people. As a material culture, those objects travel at light speed through local, national, and international markets and other regimes of value production. These conditions, in the art market, have created a consensus that controls the goods and their dissemination or distribution. A market that thrives on authenticity and rarity attracts first art collectors who invest in finding uniqueness and second by art auctions houses who organize the sale. This network of art collectors and auction houses control the biographical aspects of the art objects by creating a sense of mystery.

1.2 Theory of colonial knowledge

The literature on the theory of colonial knowledge informs the inquiry into meaning and value as related to Africa's history and its people from the colonial experience on the continent. This colonial experience, widely recorded as the scramble for exploitation of Africa, was a period located between the Hobbesian Pre-European Africa and the Rousseauian picture of an

African golden age (Hodgkin 1957:174-75), a period in which, the territories of Africa subjected to a European "centralized despotism" effort between the late 19th and mid-20th century. For this review, Africanist scholars such as V.Y. Mudimbe (1988), Mahmood Mamdani (1996), and Achilles Mbembe (2017) discuss the impact of the colonial project on post-colonial and contemporary Africa and against Africa's traditional gnosis as the way of knowledge. These works mark the presence of African philosophy that interrogate the construct of blackness in an effort toward a democratic reform of the continent. By questioning the sum of the black experience, what might an African theory of value be? How the colonial project influenced the notion of value in the black experience? These authors' discourse about Africa exposed a staged riddle that successfully depicts Europe's effort to reign over the continent while losing its historical status as the center of the modern world. In addition to the insights they provide, these works also inform us about the integration of value and theory of value in the economic histories from the western perspective by way of political arrangement.

Mudimbe (1988) discussion of the invention of Africa interrogates Western image of Africa through the analytic power of anthropologist, missionaries, ideologist, and philosophy. He draws namely from Foucault and Levi-Strauss portrayals of the African value system as he introduces imperialism and anthropology as two common denominators in the reification of primitivism. Mudimbe also writes about the theoretical discourse about the domination of physical space, reformation of native's minds and the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspectives (ibid., 2). In the sense that the picture of Africa is designated by Europe to the rest of the world as the colonial project. The practice of colonization and colonialism have tended to organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs (ibid., 1). Thus, created a usually deployed meta-text about the animal—to be exact, about the

beast, its experience, its world, and its spectacle in which the life of Africans unfolds under two signs: the strange and the monstrous. According to Mudimbe, "Western tradition of science, as well as the trauma of slave trade and colonization, are part of Africa's present-day heritage" (1988, 79). He also argues that colonialism has been some historical accident which on the whole, according to this view, was not the worst thing that could have happened to the black continent (ibid, 3)

Similarly, Mamdani (1996) discussion of citizen and subject offer a bold analysis and insight about the process of democratization in Africa in the post-independence era. Mamdani detailed study of rural Uganda and urban South Africa, showing how the system of colonialism mediated power through reproducing racial and ethnic identity. In fact, Mamdani argues that the British "decentralized despotism" set a pace for a generic form of imperialism carried by others Europeans powers. His works are about "the regime of differentiation or institutional segregation" or "how Europeans ruled Africa and how African responded to it" (1996, 7). For the Europeans answers to practical colonial administration in the peripheries, a single legal order that responds to "direct and indirect rule" defines as a system that rules both the urban and the rural population. Mamdani connect politics to culture as he reveals how "Britain creatively sculpted tradition and custom as and when the need arose" to create a sense of "halo of custom" that represent "authority as the rightful bearer and enforcer of an old age custom and tradition" (1996, 9).

According to Mamdani, the independence movement that surfaced the horizon, following the aftermath of the Cuban revolution in South America derailed the colonial experience. Nevertheless, he claims that the European mission to impose a market and civil society—i.e., the law of value and the rule of law—were neither fully nor successfully transplanted. As results, the

post-independence era was an opportunity for African countries to deconstruct the racialization of civil society, the detribalization of inherent authority and the development of their economy. However, mainstream and radical nationalism goals to restructure relations between the independent state and the international economy and polity turn into interethnic tensions within the civil society. Thus, setting this decentralized despotism into a centralized dictatorship.

Mbembe's critique of the black reason is located at the intersection of the black experience from the Atlantic slave trade to Nelson Mandela's freedom from prison as he "envision this book like a river with many tributaries" (2017, 1). Through his work, Mbembe threads together the history of humanity as Europe designated it for African and colonies. He discusses colonialism, racism, slavery and interrogates the mutation of modernity towards the next contemporary phase of globalization by neoliberalism. Modernity, with the black person at the center of how the modern project of knowledge— and of governance—deploys the tools of colonization that set forth black people to embrace a European identity. He tackles the subject of blackness and race as a vertiginous assemblage that happens over three critical periods: The Atlantic period established the human trafficking network, where men and women from Africa turned into human-objects, human-commodities, human-money and the second moment which corresponded to the birth of writing near the end of the eighteenth century. Mbembe reminds of the power of knowledge acquired through writing that fostered social changes. He argues that black awareness began leaving traces through action such as slaves revolts that resulted in the independence of Haiti in 1804, the struggle for civil rights in the United States and the dismantling of apartheid during the last decades of the twentieth century" (ibid.,10). The third moment of the early 21st century introduced the globalization of markets, the privatization of the world under the aegis of neoliberalism, and the increasing imbrication of the financial markets,

the post-imperial military complex, and electronic and digital technologies. As a conclusion, Mbembe's works identifies the African as a new man or subject is born out the era of neoliberalism, where time passes quickly. This new man converts into the production of the money form such as capital. Mbembe argues that the Euro-American world has not yet figured out what it wants to know about, or do with, the Black Man. Therefore, "Blackness survives those who invented" no other than the "Black Man that is something other than that between a master and his valet" (7). However, these terms often contribute to masking according to Bimwenyi "the colonial enterprise that diffuse new attitudes which were contradictory and richly complex models of culture, spiritual values, and their transmission, and that also break the culturally unified and religiously integrated schema of most African traditions" (Bimwenyi:1981a, 59).

2. Museum Studies and theories

This discussion of museum studies and methods focuses on the works of Sharon McDonald (2011) and David Dean (2015). As the first serves as a guide through the multidisciplinary landscape and develop a cross-disciplinary dialogue about museums, it also has roots in the development of the new museology. The second section presents a more theoretical approach to the exhibition process that begins with the general knowledge, methodologies, and practices of the museum profession. In addition, the work of Foucault establishes the display of power concerning language and literature in the production of museum representation and exhibition. Although this study of the objects is interested in the value of representation and exhibition practices, it also introduces Walter Benjamin's perspective of the object's "aura".

According to McDonald, museum studies is becoming one of the most genuinely multi- and increasingly interdisciplinary areas of the academy today. Her compilation of essays by scholars from multi-disciplines and background who dedicated their work "to guide... and to contribute to and develop a cross-disciplinary dialogue about museums" (2006, 1) supports this statement. Together, her handpicked essays of well-versed scholars in relevant academic debates and professional milieus, bridges the existing gap of knowledge between the museum and the academy, by offering practical and theoretical tools that expand the topic of museum studies today" (ibid.), hence setting forward a new joint venture for the discipline of art and anthropology.

McDonald's 's volume explores some of the fundamental aspects of museums and highlights the reasons why museums matter, then focuses on the museum history, including both accounts of the museum and ways in which museums have variously, represented and been the cultural repositories of history and heritage. The fundamentals and the historical aspects lead to

the visitor's encounter concerning debates about education and learning that provide an interactive approach, provocative suggestions for future possibilities. She links the discussions about museum studies to the global context: globalization or growing corporatization and privatization in many countries and some of the practical dilemmas currently facing museum professionals in which the legal and ethical dilemmas such as the identity politics and shifts to a greater voice for minorities. She concludes this volume with discussions about “some of the changes underway and makes provocative suggestions about where scholars – and museums – might, or should, go in the future” (McDonald 2006, 12).

According to Carbonell (2012), ethnology museums have become both agents and producers of heritage as they continue to populate this mode of cultural production by framing and contextualizing both tangible and intangible artifacts. She argues that museums perpetuate the "missionizing and colonizing efforts" (6) that make their collections and exhibitions possible. In this statement, Carbonell identifies the role of ethnology museum as both agents and producers in the construction of received knowledge that originates from the colonial legacy and tends to frame and contextualize narratives. This aspect of the museum narrative has critics that transpose to the new museology studies which "entails particular attention to questions of representation" according to (ibid, 2).

In comparing the old museology to the new museology argues, Peter Vergo (1989), suggests in an introduction of the New Museology that the old museology “was too much about museum methods, and too little about purposes of museums” (Vergo 1989, 3). The old was concerned with the “how to” matters of administration, education, or conservation rather than seeking to explore the conceptual foundations and assumption. The "how to" established such matters as significant in the first place or that shaped the way in which they discussed, which

contrasts the "new museology" which is more theoretical and humanistic. Therefore, the new museology, as a way to depart from old museum practice is Peter Vergo's concern when he establishes a clear difference between old and new. He asserts that the old museology was "too much about methods" in contrast to the new museology which is "more theoretical and humanistic" (ibid, 3).

Macdonald's (2011) reading of Vergo identifies three main points of departure between old and new museology. The first locates in a "call to understand the meanings of museum objects as situated and contextual rather than inherent" (2). The second build from Charles Robert Saumarez Smith's (1989) story about a seventeenth-century doorway turned into a commercial logo introducing the commercial and entertainment subject that drew attention to the "new museum," and the third situates the importance of the museum visitor experience. Additionally, McDonald indicates the 1980s as a period of social and cultural disciplines development where particular attention focuses on the question of representation. The critiques of representation at the cultural level informs the broader argument in which "the voices" of certain groups were excluded from, marginalized within, the public sphere" (Vergo 1989, 2). This statement mirrors the case study of the Akan gold weight at the Brooklyn Art Museum discussed below and echoes "the fundamental representational inequalities involved" as pointed out by MacDonald (ibid). The challenges and critics according to Macdonald, steams from post-colonial, feminist activist and scholars who questioned the "the way in which the 'voices' of certain groups were excluded from, or marginalized within, the public sphere. They argue that existing involved inequalities of representation were entrusted in the broadly liberal democratic and political models of western society (ibid,.), an example is an affirmative position taken by Amy Lonetree (2012) while discussing museums as susceptible sites for native's people. She

emphasizes that these sites remain untimely tied to the colonization process. She also, celebrating a shifting moment in which "a shared authority" of curation has impacted the relationship between native history and museum representation (2012, 1). The most controversial cases about exhibitions are also related to the collectively raised questions about how decisions erupt on what should end up on public display, and who should involve in making them. To this effect, protests from various groups concerned about exhibition practices stress the way in which objects informs in exhibitions and finally, how do museum remains indifferent to demands for the repatriation of objects to indigenous peoples. While some others spoke against museum straying from their proper mandate to represent the majority high culture and truth and act as repositories of the collective treasure for the future. For such, Macdonald concludes that "museum became in short, sites at which some of the most contested and thorny cultural and epistemological questions of the late twentieth century were fought" (2011, 4).

In the discussion of museum studies, McDonald (2006) also introduces the contribution of cultural theory to the field of museum studies. This discussion makes up for the idea that the interdisciplinary nature of cultural theory "has no single definition" however fall under a key "concepts and issues whose application varies according to intellectual context." In this case, she affirms cultural theory is "adapted and refashioned" in the museum study context where the textual approach has been contemplated (2006, 17). Alternatively, the textual approach that involves the analysis of the spatial narrative is discussed by both Roger Silverstone (1989) and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1997). Concerning the narrativity of museums, Silverstone argues a study of an exhibition to define a route...for the visitor and to define a particular logic of representation: (1989, 143-144) while Kirshenblatt-Gimblett adds another dimension, which

involves drawing attention to the degree of performance involved in the narration, she designated as the "movement of spectators through space" (1997, 8).

This aspect of the narrative in a museum political space and environment interests D.K. Dean's (2015) exploration of museum studies. He focuses on the exhibition as an institutional mission that exposes to the public view, a network of an art collection, while providing enlightening and educational experiences that reinforce public trust (2015, 3). This process includes the types of exhibits and the role of interpretation. As such, he notes that museums are much like the proverbial iceberg, as most of the substance lies below the surface, hidden from view; thus, museums exhibitions represent the tip of the massive iceberg that happens to be the museum collections.

Hence, exhibition projects shared common traits such as planning, developing and executing in a cyclical presentation. In exploring exhibition development, Dean lists an array of participants across the museum administrative system, which includes audience's suggestions, board members and trustees, collections management personnel, community leader, curators, directors, educators, staff, and volunteers. According to Dean (2015), museums should be like leaky vessels or sponges in their communities to promote inclusion and diversity that sketches the museum mission statement and exhibition policy. This labor of love, rough in a social ritual, stands as a ubiquitous part of the museum political life that lead to the aspect of truth and power, what the Foucauldian address as "knowledge and power" (2002:133).

The two aspects contributing to regards museum exhibition and arrangements as a relation between things and texts, where new regimes of truth take form. Foucault (1980) remarks, "The truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements" (p133).

This chapter of museum studies and theories has discussed the gold weights in a museum setting along with a case study that illustrates the art objects value perspectives. While the museum as an institution represents by default the window of the world through its cabinet of curiosity, it is also a ritual space for the performance of colonial power and politics. In the reading of Graeber, I mentioned that the theoretical frame that encompasses the three mainstream of value has a flaw. If the social, economic and linguistics streams are a stand-alone concept of value, then, are they different aspects of value or the same core with various branches? Alternatively, if one takes in consideration that a given society functions through a set of the institutional establishment than Graeber's argument stand as a statement that entirely echoes Foucault, Derrida, and Bourdieu; as they had in common the viewpoint of seeing value as "illusions" (Boudon 2013, 3). I would propose that Graeber's omission of the political aspect of value leaves the three streams as a loose construct. The political value, to function adequately as a powerbroker erects as an institutional body that is mystified through a ritualistic display of knowledge. The political value, that is, is the power that set the theory of value in motion as described by Graeber. The performance of objects display in the museum is absent with the lack of political sound structure.

Moreover, power intervenes in the constructing and dissemination of knowledge during various rituals practice to self-maintain a consensus of authority. Here the elements of power are dissected and spread throughout the institutional establishment of the museum. This notion of power also establishes the correlation that involves colonial theories and the designing of politically engaged museum literature, or knowledge production. For the matter of object treated as art or cultural artifacts, the institutional loci in which they belong are located in museums and gallery as a venue that engages in the ritual of collection, and exhibition as much as the ritual of

maintaining power. Thus the role of "culture brokers" in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) sense is to "study, understand, and represent someone's culture (even sometimes their own) to non-specialized others through various means and media (691). If the museum setting offers clues about art objects social, economic and linguistics value, the social and anthropological life of objects are not ignored either as well as the commodity exchange network in which the objects circulate and the commodity situation in which objects appear.

2.1 The social life of things

According to SJMM Alberti (2005), in museum scholarship, the object biography approach exists to ethnology and archaeology (560). In material culture, Igor Kopytoff (1986) has suggested, objects question similar to those we raise when writing biographies of people, such as, what are the critical moments in the career of this thing? How has its status changed over the course of its life—what have been its significant "ages"? What makes it different from other, similar, objects? How has the political and social climate influence its trajectory? All these mentioned questions must follow art objects in museum collections. The lives of objects whether in a museum or anthropology studies have a thing in common: to create a network of the relationship between people and people, between objects and objects, and between objects and people. This network also contributes to enhancing the historical trail and used values of art objects.

In the context of culture as commodity, authenticity, and originality are mostly at the center of the commodity exchange. Its various owner's social status and the objects historical background contribute to elevating the economic value of the weight in this case. The more the

object's history is obscure and conveys a sense of mystery, the more likely they draw desire among art collectors. A case in point is the impact of African masks aesthetics traits on Western artists: as they indulge in the collection of so-called "primitive art," their reputation as art collectors and creators gained public acceptance and became the foundation of a network of circulating goods that cater to exquisite elite taste. From wealthy patrons to wealthy collectors, objects flow with a new identity that often tied to the owner collection (for example, see Laura Barnes Collection gift to the Brooklyn Art Museum).

Between objects and people, the object relationship with its owner tends to take a more sentimental approach regarding belongings that carries a personal effect on its owner. In the case of primitive art in general, curiosity was permanent in the viewing as much as the propaganda that gives it an exotic and fetishistic aura. Therefore, they fueled the need for possession and consuming. However, considering the mechanics of the movement of objects from their manufacture or growth through collecting and exchange to the museum, along with the accompanying shifts in meaning and status; the three network of relationship enters in the life of a museum object that fits Alberti's (2005) inquiry of museum object dynamic. This inquiry involves activities such as collecting, object provenance, the life in the collection and the viewing of objects (p561), which echoes Appadurai suggestion of the "three layers of commodity situation" (p13).

This literature review offers an array of methods in which objects navigate once they enter the circle of cultural production. The legacy of the old museum practice and the critics of new museology offers various layer of consideration in objects display and representation. This comprehensive collection of essay about museum functions and practices contribute to navigate

the world of culture brokers, and cultural producers as much it helps us understand how objects in circulation affected by the art and the academic community are.

2.2 The Historical Context of the Gold Trade and Gold Weights

Salt, spices, silk, slaves, gold were valuable goods during commercial trade routes of the 16th – 20th centuries. Throughout this history, there are narratives that remind us of some essential trades routes discovered in Asia, Europe and Africa. The Venetian explorer, Marco Polo, in 1274, set out on a 24-year journey across the world to the famous Silk Road from Europe-Italy to Eastern China, earns him the title of "the Herodotus of the middle ages" (Elisseeff 2000). The Silk Road was to Asia what the Trans Sahara road was to Africa and the sub-trans-Saharan trade to Ghana. In West Africa, the importance of these goods favored long travels, days and nights, for a long period across the hot and dry Sahara Desert, while facing all sorts of dangers. Arab merchants were coming from the North East to trade salt, spices, and gold with the West. Mande merchants traveled south in search of gold dust introduced a different form of knowledge to the forest people of the South. Europeans were trading on the coast with Ashanti and coastal indigenous peoples. Camels and horses were a reliable mode of transportation, carrying heavy ballots of goods. This accumulation of wealth fueled the value system that informed the sub-Saharan social and economic formation. In the case of the Ashanti, English historian, TC McCaskie (1980) argues that: "the Akan were aware that gold alluvial derived as dust or mined in the forms of nuggets is located conceptually and materially at the very core of the historical experience of their society and culture" (172). The exportation of gold was no doubt a situation that located the 'Proto-Asante' society in the world economic system, as the

continuing presence and availability of gold guarantee the developed Ashanti state (Rice et al., 1977).

The Akan involvement in the gold trade with its neighbors' traces back to the trans-Saharan route going from Timbuktu and Djenne. Both cities were flourishing commercial center by the inner delta of the Niger River to Rabat, Algiers in North Africa and the European Maritime nation such as Portugal and Royal Dutch navy who were competing in the south. The latter happened to "carry back higher quantities of gold by sea routes (Garrard 1980; 1). As the merchants of Timbuktu depended on gold traded in Djenne, the merchants of Djenne relied heavily on supplies of trade goods, which were sent along the Niger river from Timbuktu in small dugout canoes as the waterways were vital to the two towns (ibid, 12). Therefore, according to Timothy Garrard, the tradition of weighing can be traced throughout the Sudanic cities (Audaghost, Kumbi, Gao, Walata, Timbuktu, and Djenne), and quantities of gold were weighted according to with the *mithgal* and the *uqiya* Arabic weighting system. As tradition states, the weights used in Djenne were initially imported by merchants from Morocco as early as the ninth century. In Ghana, a practice of taxation by the king was described by Arabic historian Al-Bakri statement: the king imposes a tax of one dinar of gold on each donkey-load of salt that enters his country and two dinars' gold on each load of salt that goes out (ibid,12). The dynamics involved in the gold trade through the gold weights dialectic inspired my inquiry about "value" in anthropology by way of material culture study.

In the Ashanti society, the King Osei Tutu was introduced the use of gold weights after he was officially crowned in 1701. The king's spiritual and political advisor Okomfo Anokye who stressed the importance of Ashanti prestige advise the use gold dust as currency rather than the smelted iron in the form of disc rods known as *nnabuo*, then decreed the use of the gold

weights as an institutionalized tool of measurement in the gold dust transaction. The exchange of goods, culture, and people introduced new ideas in the western region of Africa. During this time, Islam religion, the practices of metal casting and weighing technology erupted in the Ashanti nation. Meanwhile, the gold trade gave birth to the Ashanti gold weights. The gold weights in return serves as agency within the Ashanti society, as a set of valuable instruments concerning the creation of a new technological tool that embodies the Ashanti political, economic and social institutions. The weights were used in a scale to measure the value of the gold dust which was the local currency and invaluable to the Ashanti, the Arab, the Mande and the European merchants. Together, they met frequently at the marketplace and participated in goods exchange activity and in this case, "gold dust" was good, and the gold weights represented the tools of measurement. During the exchange or trade, the interpretation of the weights' symbolism system and the attribution in the gold dust value according to their weights followed strict rules. For instance, refraining from sneezing during a gold dust transaction remained an important rule, in fear that to breath would blow away the gold dust.

In addition to the abundance of gold, the Akan introduced a system of weighing using metal alloy weight commonly called "gold weights or *abrammuo*." These weights were fashioned according to Akan values and social construct, which have roots in their oral and folkloric tradition. According to the German linguist, and pioneer in the study of African languages." Besides, the gold weights provided a social and collective memory model for the autochthones population. African scholar, Georges Niangoran Bouah (1985) compares the weights aphorism to others societies divine writings. Further, he suggests, "the gold weights are a sum of objects that individuals or groups together yield to tell a story or conveys a message and for the Akan society, the weights contained in the Dja (bag of weights) constitute a fundamental

cultural text, comparable to the Christian Bible, the Islamic Quran or the Hindu Veda” (16). For Bouah, it is within this sacred package that they had consigned diagrammatic letters onto posterity so their descendants would not have to reinvent their ancestor’s knowledge, which constituted the foundation of their civilization (Ibid.,17). The Ashanti people of Ghana, in the western part of Africa, have a common language called Twi or Ashantee language. The *Twi* language is the guardian of the Akan culture and value system and embodied in the long practice of oral tradition that transmitted knowledge from one generation to another. Before Hegel described Akan at the world court of history as barbaric, cannibalistic, and preoccupied with fetishes, without history, and without any consciousness of freedom, the Ashanti Kingdom was at the summit of economic and social prosperity (Barnett 1998). In this chapter, I discuss how the Akan see the world, its inhabitants, and their religious and social belief system by borrowing on Mundibe (1988) concept of gnosis, which is “seeking to know, inquiry, methods of knowing” (ix).

To know the Akan worldview requires in establishing a relationship between semiotics and folktales. They both inform the collective memory of the Akan oral tradition and knowledge production. For this reason, I begin with their creation story that describes an environment where God and humans used to cohabitate. In Akan cosmology, however, God moved high up into the sky because of unsettling human behavior. According to the legend, an old woman kept hitting God with her mortar while pounding yam; as a result, God move far away in the sky. In addition to the creation story, the Akan identifies as a God’s children and to whom they profess obedience. These two proverbs serve to illustrate the Akan connection to God: *Onyame ani wo ne mma pa so* (God keeps his eyes on his true children) and *Nyamesuro ne nyansa ahyesee* (Fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom).

This connection between God and society plays out throughout the entirety of Akan society. For instance, the Akan associate the celestial beings, the minerals, the animals and the fauna as part of God creation. For them, God's creation also involves the invisible realm of the deceased called ancestors or spirits. In addition, both a king and a queen mother reign as the representations of God and their ancestors on earth rule the Ashanti kingdom. They established the law of the land as well as they carried over tradition to the new generation. Although the Akan have a matrilineal family structure, they also entertain a patrilineal structure through a clan system. According to Eva Meyerowitz (1951), "a sacred institution such as the Ashanti Kingdom is requiring, above all, a Queen mother represents the daughter of the Moon, Moon, symbolizing the female characteristics of *Nyame*, the Supreme Being" (5). From this observation, Meyerowitz tackles the religious aspects of the Akan society that includes the moon cult, with regards to the supreme moon mother-goddess; the creatrix of the clan and the Venus cult that embodies the created world by the God *Odomankoma*, the creative intelligence, god of the earth with its mountains, plains, seas, rivers and trees. One of the God *Odomankoma*'s creation: the sun represents as well by the sun god *Nyankopon* or *Ohene ye awia* – The king is the manifestation of the sun that is, the personification of the male aspect of the supreme Mother-goddess. This duality system is represented in the family structure and introduce to concept of *Kra*; the particle of the life-giving fire of the moon. The *kra* is the lifeblood –*kra ne bogya* – literally, the “fire (gya) of the creature (boa); animal or man.” (1951, 10).

In man, the *kra* then is blood vivified by a spark of fire from the moon or anyone of the sevens planets and is a substance appointed by the Supreme Being *Nyame*. Thus, become the source of man’s good and bad fortune. After death, of a man, only a pure and unsullied *Kra* becomes one again with the Supreme Being. Therefore, when proven worthy becomes the

guardian spirit of the family. As such, the subject of family in Akan society demands important regards. In this case, the father provides the *sunsun*, (soul) and the mother contributes with *bogya* (blood) both as necessary to the creation of a child. "Oba firiose yam na Okot0 oni yam" or the child comes from its father 's sexual organs, and it goes to its mother's womb. (1951,14)"

Unlike Christians, the Akan worship their gods through natural elements such water bodies, the forest or the minerals. In this case, water, frequently indicates name of a lesser gods called "fetish". The Tanno River, one of the most important rivers in that region is attributed this following proverb "Ohi nkwalì Tanno nho aka (1916, 222)", the translate meaning, in the context of addressing the river Tanno as most famous fetish in Ashanti and the gold coast, suggests that "No one consults the lots without calling on (his) fetish (lit. Tanno)" (Rattray 1916). Equally, we can also find a proverb about the wind "Wope aka asem akyere Onyankopon a, ka kyere mframa (Rattray 1916; 24) meaning "If you wish to tell anything to the Supreme Being, tell it to the winds."

Since the Akan practice of oral tradition is the primary communication medium, history transmits through the mastery of proverbs and their appropriate uses. Therefore, all forms of knowledge intake are channeled with proverbs which are themselves originates from the ancestors. Ancestry, as such, is at the foundation of their core belief systems while the succession of kingship provides continuity regarding traditional rites, customs, and laws. Thus, ancestry performs as the guardian of the collective and social memory through various modes of transmission, i.e., folktales, songs, text drum, and pictogram all sealed in proverbs.

A reinterpretation of story that begins this thesis is well suited to illustrate the use of proverbs during an economic transaction. Although the story describes a scene where the gold weights apparatus functions, I would like to bring specific insights to how the weights chosen by

the Akan dignitary carries value and symbolism. Among the weights selected for the trade, the Akan dignitary picked the one represents a crocodile holding prey in his grip. This particular weight, according to Bouah (1980), corresponds to the proverbial expression *Odioka*, (if he eats he stays). To grasp the meaning of this message, we must understand that the crocodile is one of the many symbols of a king, the man of power. In the scene described, the man of power was not the king but the man with the firearm: "If he eats, it stays" means that if the crocodile, symbol of the man of power, seizes something, there is no force in the water, which is capable of making him restore it. The dignitary thus indicated to his discontented notables that if he refused the transaction, the white man armed with a firearm and threatening to use it could take the jewels with him with impunity.

An alternative to the transaction, the Akan dignitary, was in dialogue with racial brothers and with his white partner. The use of the crocodile as weight lead to conclude that there is a message of wisdom that comes transparent through his scene, wisdom in the fact that the African dignitary saw the firearm, the object of the transaction was an agent of power. In the presence of both the European sailor and the firearms, prudence could be an elegant behavior to avoid any use of force, and here the crocodile, namely the strength of a crocodile (ibid., 23-4), represents the duality. This transaction elaborates not only the economic aspect of the trade but also its political aspect, which is to avoid at all cost any trouble with the white-armed sailor.

3. Case study: Brooklyn Museum

In Brooklyn, New York, the Community District 8 of Crown Heights and Prospect Heights (including Weeksville) represents the spatial backdrop in which the Brooklyn Museum facility sits. In this cultural, recreational, and educational district, the museum stands as one of the oldest and largest art museums in the United States with its remarkably constructed features reminiscent of the Greco Roman architecture. As such, this imposing building, in size and style, stands as a Beacon institution of the Brooklyn borough and by extension the city of New York. Finally, the Brooklyn Museum rises as one of the first institutions in the United States to collect and exhibits African material culture as artⁱ. For my research, I surveyed an extensive collection of Akan gold weights from the museum African arts collection. Some of the weights were on display since August 2011 as part of the exhibition titled: *African Innovations and Double Take*, while some remained stored in the conservation room in a climate control environment.

This case study accounts for three questions I answer during my analysis. These questions are informed by the combination of the theoretical framework discussed earlier in this thesis and the museum archives documentation database. They are mostly concerned with the discussion about the circulationⁱⁱ and representation of non-western cultural artifact in the museum context. In such, I inquire about what kind of dynamics are involved in the acquisition of the Akan gold weights. What are the steps involved in their circulation from production to their candidacy on the commodity network? Finally, in what kind of social sphere do they navigate? These questions also, resonate with Marcus & Myers (2005) work on the circulation and traffic of arts, echoes Appadurai's (1986) work on objects social lives and finally address Mauss's (1924) discussions of gift spirit in a commodity exchange network. Beyond, these three

questions, I will examine the mode of exhibitionⁱⁱⁱ and conservation and finally discuss an inclusive

alternative^{iv} method of representation that links Akan proverbs to the weights design and symbols.

For this analysis, variables such as Albert Barnes, the Barnes Foundation, the Laura Barnes collection and the crocodile weight out of her gift to the museum will serve as study sample materials that help illustrate the discussion about objects circulation, social life and the nature of the gifting spirit.

3.1 Mode of acquisition and circulation of arts objects

3.1.1 Acquisition

According to Steiner, African art objects are sometimes sold with a documented “pedigree” which consist of a list of previous buyers" (2005, 157). This situation causes the price of an object of fluctuating based on the identity of the previous owner as such an object owned by wealthy clients (Picasso or Rockefeller) is worth far more money than the collection of an unknown patron (Ibid, 157). In 1900, the Brooklynn museum purchased its first objects from Africa. Although no financial records were available, the acquisition consisted acquisition consisted of beautiful baskets, fiber hats and a group of sculpting clay pipes from the Congo people. In 1903, the museum came to assume a leading role in collecting and exhibiting African art primarily through the efforts of the new curator of ethnography Stewart Culin. Before Culin, no curator had played a more influential role in building the museum's African collection and no curator has had a more profound impact on the entire history of the Brooklyn Museum of Art^v. a self-taught ethnographer, Culin was raised in Philadelphia and developed an early interest in Chinese culture. At the end of the World War I, he developed new interest like European avant-garde artists who turned to ‘primitivism’ and ‘folk’ cultures. He believed the avant garde artists

were less complicated and corrupted by "modernity," as opposed to those close to nature and more expressive of basic human needs and emotions (Siegman 1980, 11)

Although there is no indication that gold weights exist among the acquired objects, archival material show the period in which letter of interest was received by the museum director during late 1966 from a trust company concerning Laura Barnes estate. This information also does not imply that her collection was the first to enter the museum facilities but rather indicate the approximate period leading toward the weight acquisition. Based on the museum library archives, the collection of Akan gold weights amount to about 233 objects, the dollar value of which remains anonymous because of the museum status as a non-profit institution. These acquisitions consequently recorded and documented as gifts to the museum institution, are tended with great care of privacy. Most of them, as described by the museum credit line database, donated by private individuals as part of their family estate, art institution and art galleries constituted the highlights of the museum Akan gold weight collection. "We take the confidentiality of our donors seriously," declared to the assistant museum curator (personal communication).

Illustration: This collection includes the acquisition of Laura Barnes collection, which falls under the gifts category. This example informs the aspect of how objects weights circulate within a closed social network. The reputation of her late husband as an eccentric and wealthy art collector in the US establishes the condition in which the gold weights circulated within his social circle as a gift to his wife, Laura, and consequently reveals the character of the weights social life.

3.1.2 Circulation

After arts objects departed from Africa and reach the West, they entered the art market network commonly at the hands of art brokers, art dealers, private collectors, art galleries, and institutions. As the objects appeal to ethnographic and anthropological studies, they inspired the western avant-gardist and the Harlem Renaissance movement to fame. Within the circulation network, art objects trade, sells, exchanges, auctions out and as gifts. This network also set up art objects for candidacy to mostly wealthy collectors. Steiner argues that this opportunity “is to discover what has previously gone unremarked” as the gift connoisseur “sees” the aesthetic quality of a piece and thereby transform a neglected artifact into an object of art (Cf. Price 1989) in (Marcus and Myers 1995, 154).

According to Marcus and Myers, while the aspect of authenticity and uniqueness happens to factor in the choice between buyers. The middlemen and broker create a narrative built around the exotic and fetishistic to sparkle interest as they are aware of Western collector’s taste and interest which discounted the identity of the artist or the history of local ownership. At the Brooklyn museum, the analysis of the trajectory from acquisition to an exhibition of African arts objects and especially the Akan gold weights exists. This relationship fostered into the nature of the relationships between various communities, stakeholders, and museums administration that constitutes the art world or “imagined communities” of tiered commercial, communicative, and social network spreads across the globe. It is the system of artists, dealers, critics and collectors who stand behind the images in international art, magazines, consciously shape the posterity of Western art, and function as a community of common interest governed by its own "political economy" (Anderson: 1983, 6).

Within this sphere of exchange, purchases and gifts transaction are taking place as a tournament of values (Appadurai 1986). This perspective resonates with Mauss notion of gift spirit and reciprocity that transpire in the relationship between the Barnes collection and the Brooklyn Museum as a moral obligation to carry on the Barnes legacy and to foster stewardship for prosperity.

Illustration: Laura Barnes collection at Brooklyn Museum has a history that can be traced back to her husband who formerly acquired the weights from an art broker in Europe and precisely in Paris. In this case, the circulation trajectory originates in Europe and make it way in the United States and belongs to different regimes of value. In this instance, the initial purchase made by Albert Barnes turn into a gift to his wife, and a gift to the Brooklyn Museum.

3.1.3 Conservation

This section emphasizes the importance of storing the arts objects. At the museum, the gold weights are kept stored in the conservation room with a climate control environment. The conservation room keeps at a constant temperature to avoid any deterioration of the objects. As such, they are disposed and arranged on large trays that are stored in a type of archival grade storage to optimize and preserve the integrity of valuable Art while creating space. They are also and arranged by donor credit lines with name and information with little white tags attached to them.

3.2 Representation and exhibition

This section explores the aspect of value in terms knowledge production during representation. With regard to knowledge production and representation of art objects in museums, critics have primarily considered the implication of Western institutions in

perpetuating racism and prejudice, yet it also fair to acknowledge the effort conducted by new museology practices to improve on old museum ideology. According to Lynch et al. (2000), museums have been complicit in the construction of physical and cultural hierarchies that underpinned racist thought from the Enlightenment until well in the twentieth century (14). This argument takes shape in more detail when the authors claim that Western institution continue to maintain borders and to privilege particular ways of knowing. As a result, museums display has faced criticism in recent years concerning their exhibitions practices.

3.2.1 The politics of representation of arts objects: Cult and exhibition values

According to Benjamin (2016) art objects, generate a unique ‘aura’ inseparable from being embedded in the fabric of tradition. This aura confers “authenticity’ to the work of art, provides its basis in ritual and the location of its original use value" (52). As such, art objects possess a double value at different moments of their social lives: the cult value and the exhibition value which contradict with Benjamin notion of cult value. In the analysis of the gold weights, the discussion relating to the involvement of ritual derives from two aspects. The first is located in their presence in time and space of their making or from the production of its original use value. In this aspect, the weights were subject to an annual cleansing ceremony that links to ancestral worship cultural practice. The second is conversely, located within the Western mode of knowledge production. In this instance, ritual extracted out of Benjaminian context and applied to the various procedures that are involved in the circulation, acquisition, and representation of art objects. In the museum context, beyond their exhibition value, their ritual value is present in the politics in which art objects shows and represents. Additionally, this exposes the pertinent question concerning how to negotiate a space that assimilates original "use

value" of the Akan weights in the setting of the museum construct that claims its role as a historical and cultural guardian.

3.2.2 Akan weights description

The description of the weights borrows in part Timothy Garrard Gold weights classification system and the International Committee for Documentation of the International Council of Museums (CIDOC). Timothy Garrard (1980) classifies the weights, into two broad stylistic periods: the Early and Late period during which old designs and new designs successively evolved (275). The early period weights were of geometric and engraved styles and were dated between circa (1400-1720), while the late period dated between circa (1700-1900) by contrast have geometric forms toward ornateness (Ibid.,284), with the particularity of raised design, often crossed lines or a curling motif, enclosed in a comb-like border on two sides. They were also designs carved in high relief, taking such forms as wavy lines, zigzags, circles, chains of ring, latticework, crosses, stars and various types of spirals (ibid). During the early period (1600-1720), figurative weights also called "proverbs weights" were a reminder of Akan social and moral values. They depicted anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and botanical forms (ibid.,289).

The survey focused on the non-exhibited objects in the conservation room with a particular emphasis on The Laura Barnes Weights Collection among a prestigious inventory of donors. Before my survey, the guide handed some gloves as a precautionary measure for handling these valuable historical museum object. My visit supervised and guided by the Associate Museum Curator, Meghan Bill. She allowed me to hold them firmly so I could feel, smell and take some pictures. In this description, a close examination of the Ashanti gold weights or *Abrammuo* shows an elaborate set of symbols. They modeled into abstract, geometric, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms. They were tiny pieces of brass alloy with an average of

1mm in size. Some were with a brown-yellowish color to them while some others were still wearing that faux gold color probably because of proper maintenance.

The objects were carefully handled with gloves and kept in large trays coated by Styrofoam sheet laying in a compact shelving unit under a climate control system to keep them from any form of corrosion, damage or dust. The excess of heat or cold was an essential factor leading to their deterioration. Two days before my visit, my guide informed me that the facilities management was working on establishing the corrupted climate control system. It was in July in New York, and it was sweltering about 95 F outside in the shade.

The collection of gold weights at the museum were geometrical and figurative forms from the early period. They dated as far as back from the 18th century. The objects weights sampled displayed signs of wear in some cases, and no wear in others. The greater the wear, with a rich and dark color patina, the older it was as opposed to the no wear that was. By contrast, the objects without no wear were of a later generation that had a yellowish gold color. The objects were also very light in weights and small in shape; they fit comfortably in my hand as I could form a fist around them without the feeling of holding a foreign object in my palms. They diffused an odor that was a mixture of iron and brass smell, and sometimes reminiscent of an old wooden piece smell. There was a sense of something ancient around that odor which is soft and lingering. In addition to the scent and shape, the weights had a healthy and robust texture just from a physical perspective, as I could not exercise any pressure on the object. However, from the touch of my fingers, I could feel a texture that is composed of lines and shapes.

Among the Laura Barnes collection, there was a crocodile weight, which falls into the category of the early period figurative forms and depicted zoomorphic shapes and forms. The crocodile weight had a dark patina and dated from the 18th century. This object had particular

importance in the establishment of morality and ethics by its symbolic aspect which was part of the Akan more substantial cultural practice of proverbs use. The crocodile symbol informed about power, wisdom and unity as they "have helped to regulate behavior and uphold traditional values" (Garrard: 1980; 289). This object like to one used in the alternative model demonstrates the existing link between symbols and proverbs.

3.3. Conclusion of Case Study

After the survey of the gold weights at the Brooklyn Museum, the notion of values, art object lives, and traffic comes to light in the network of economic exchange. The Akan gold weight in this setting reveals the following observations:

- 1 -The Brooklyn Museum collection of gold weights come from various donors. The donors are themselves either art collectors or art administrators.
- 2 -The Brooklyn Museum collection of gold weights have the same particularity as they were documented as gifts from their donors.
- 3 -The legacy of Dr. Albert Barnes, the Art collector, is immortalized through his wife bequest to the Brooklyn Museum.
- 4 -The collection does not mention the existing functions of the weights as an assortment of objects that belong to the "*futuo*." (the gold weight bag).
- 5 -The weights are labeled as art with an unknown artist.
- 6 -They are displayed in a "thematic" (African Innovations and Double Take) exhibitions that showcased as cultural artifact or art of a given primitive population leaving out the objects primary use and functions.

The social, economic and linguistic values stressed by Graeber, informs my evaluation of the value of the weights. The life and biographical aspects of the social life the thing according to Appadurai and Myers highlight objects traffic, which introduced the case of art collectors Dr. Albert Barnes. Although Graeber's theory validates the social and economic values of the weights in this setting, there is a contention when it comes to the language. Here, the core value of the weights, from a linguistic approach, is censured and replaced. by "Parody, poetics and politics" discussed above and henceforth denying to the Akan the ability to skill technological and literacy advancement. Here, I propose a more inclusive aspect of the weights communicative purpose that draws from the proverbial sentences in association with symbolic design to carry out the collective and social memory of the Akan people. As such, by cross-referencing Akan proverbs and objects weights symbols, I have selected an assortment of proverbs (3) that when unpacked ties to the weights (3) symbolic designs and are conducive to a more objective way of representation.

4. Alternative representation

According to Geertz, man is in need of symbolic "sources of illumination" to orient himself with respect to the system of meaning that is any particular culture (1973, 45). A careful look at the gold weights design gives a better insight into the Akan philosophy, patterns of thought and behavior. They are all forms of silence represented by visual icons. Their interpretation demands insight into the socio-cultural knowledge of the Akans (Agyekum 2002: 46). Silence implies with communicative mediation where a message travels from the speaker to the addressee through a third party. It is mediation and indirection meant to avoid face-to-face conflict and face-threatening acts. (ibid.,43)

Akan symbols are forms of eloquent silence that manifests in non-verbal contexts or the semiotic silence or surrogate language (ibid.,43). The designs on the gold weights are silent proverbs and famous maxims, and they meant to speak and remind people of some of the essential principles and values of the society. These gold weights called *abrammuo* kept in a leather bag called *futuo*, and together with several scales *nlenia*, a gold shovel *famfa*, spoons *nsawa* and a box for storing gold dust *mmumpuruwa*, all made of brass (Ott: 1968, 17-42).

Example 1: The bird looking backward

The gold-weight in the form of a bird looking backward (Sankofa) reminds the observer to 'pick it up if it falls behind you,' in other words to learn from experiences and not to be afraid to try to redeem mistakes already committed.




Example 2: The divine Altar

The medicine pot with holy water, usually erected at the front or main entrance of the house serves as a shrine dedicated to God. Gods' Tail.

Example: 3 the twin crocodile's weights

The two crocodiles who, even though they eat into the same belly, fight over the food, because each wants a taste. The weight symbolizes unity in diversity in every home, district, region, or nation. This indicates the structure of the Asante Kingdom, which made up of different states coming together as a union (see Sarpong 1974, 101-104).

Plate 1- Akan Gold Weights Alternative representation

1- <i>Sankofa</i> as the mythic birth	2- <i>Gniamiem Dua</i> as tree fork	3- <i>Funtum Frafu</i> as the twin crocodiles
		
<p>Proverbs</p> <p>YOU MUST KNOW YOUR PAST IN ORDER TO BUILD YOUR FUTURE</p>	<p>Proverbs</p> <p>GIVE PRAISE TO GOD THE CREATOR</p>	<p>Proverbs</p> <p>LET GATHER OUR RESSOURCES ONE STOMACH LEAD UNITY</p>

Appendix 7; Alternative display of 3 weights

5. Conclusion

The search of meaning about the Akan gold weight informs the bigger picture which involve the study of material culture through Western colonial conquest of the Africa's Gold Coast. In this project, finding meaning means to study two systems of thought and propose alternative ways for such endeavor. It also means utilizing a European colonial perspective to find meaning about a local cultural artifact and not omitting that the task at end conducted by a non-Western student would be a tentative attempt to reconcile differences across the empire and its colonies.

From an interdisciplinary perspective, I presented the topic of the Akan Gold weight as the subject of my thesis which was framed through the reading and analysis of material culture and the theory of value. My philosophical inquiry leads me to “what is the meaning of the Akan gold weights’ symbols? And how are they represented in western museums? Then I argued that the weights’ symbols are part of a larger written communication system of the Akan people and consequently misrepresented in Western museums. For such I provided an alternative way of crafting a methodological study of meaning and introduced also an alternative labeling approach to improve museum’s display and exhibits of Akan gold weights.

The context of coloniality and materiality to discuss material culture was thus crucial for the understanding the object of inquiry which is a non-western cultural artifact. The play is reminiscent of a Greek tragedy that transcended time and space. As it is scripted in Europe, the performance itself happen on a stage of a faraway land. Where gold was *the prima facie* of the play. The actors in this play are the Northern European and the Southern African and more precisely the British against the Akan. In a perfect Hollywood blockbuster, the plot revolves around the hero from the North’s attempt to conquer the villains and seize their gold mines. A

visual testimony is well captured in the (1986) South African TV series “Shaka Zulu”. Two continents, two systems of thought with a common need: plotting for Gold.

The historical background of the Akan people and their tradition is introduced with elements of study about the Akan religions, law and constitution, social and economic structure while extending that epistemology to the African continent. The historical background is also dedicated to the gold trade activity in the western Soudan and the rise of the Ashanti Empire and the use of gold weights as monetary tools (most commonly known used). I discussed also the western epistemology as the foundation for the search of meaning, and as in the western of though as such, the discipline of philosophy was reviewed to lead us to language and semantics theories and analysis. I discussed the many reason why problems arise in term of establishing meaning in nonwestern population’s studies.

While the skepticism revolving around the history and nature of Western philosophy is one concern, the difference between ontological perspectives happens to be the other. The difference among both system of thought resides primarily on the hard premises that unlike western philosophy, African or Akan epistemology is highlighted by the presence of a divine entity that in turn favors human with life and therefore create the condition of his existence, while much of the Western ethos of thought is drawn from human beings called thinkers or philosophers who questioned the human being’s existence. Although the concept of God exists in western epistemology, it departs from philosophy as not applicable to the search of meaning for which rationality coupled with scientific evidence are conducive to knowledge. Therefore, the debate of whether there is an African philosophy should lead us to explore the African and Akan ethos of life and helps solve our inquiry.

For illustrative purpose, I used a case study to situate the life and condition of the Akan gold weights in a Western museum and discuss the representations, exhibits and labeling concerns ties to the bigger discourse of hegemonic promotion. From the observations gathered at studying exhibition catalogs from the three museums, they are catalogs commonly labeled as cultural artifacts from the Akan, made by an unknown artist, they indicate the dimensions and the probable period of manufacture. As well, no inscription states the importance of these artifacts within the Akan socio-cultural context. The meaning of the symbols is unknown for most of the exhibitions case The field study demonstrated the impact of the colonial power's extension through the fate of these weights in terms of museum politics that favor its own agenda rather than the proper transmitted information in term of cultural legacy. I propose an alternative way to label the Akan gold weights that provides linguistic meaning using proverbs to establish a mean of communication. The effort to discuss the anthropological meaning of a non-Western cultural artifact through the framework of material culture was motivated by the vast discourses on de-colonial theories that range from, decolonizing the field of anthropology to the one of museums studies. In order to afford the sustainable future of the humanities scholarship, taking into consideration the various actors of the global dialogue would be the best action mankind could have ever accomplished. Thus referring to the Akan mythic bird looking backward called *sankofa* whose nature is to remind Akan about their past and how important history is for shaping the future. We ought to assess our present knowledge by looking into our past to correct our mistakes for a better understanding of our difference to build a more inclusive trend to benefits the study of the humanities at large.

Appendix 1: Maps

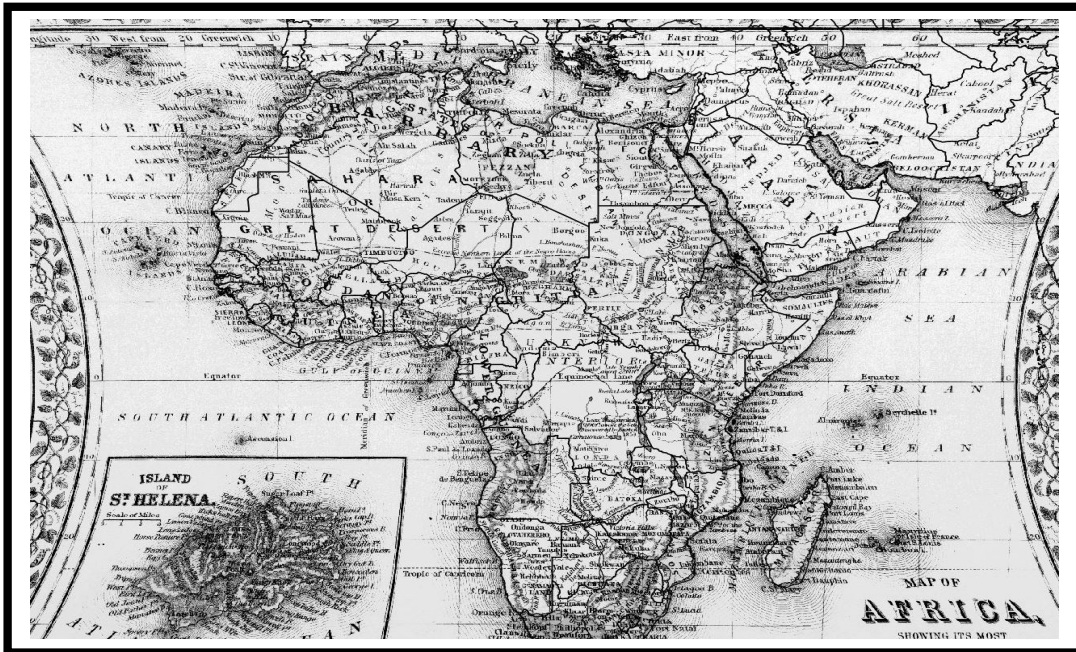


Fig 1: Colonial Map of Africa (<http://worldmap.harvard.edu/africamap/>)

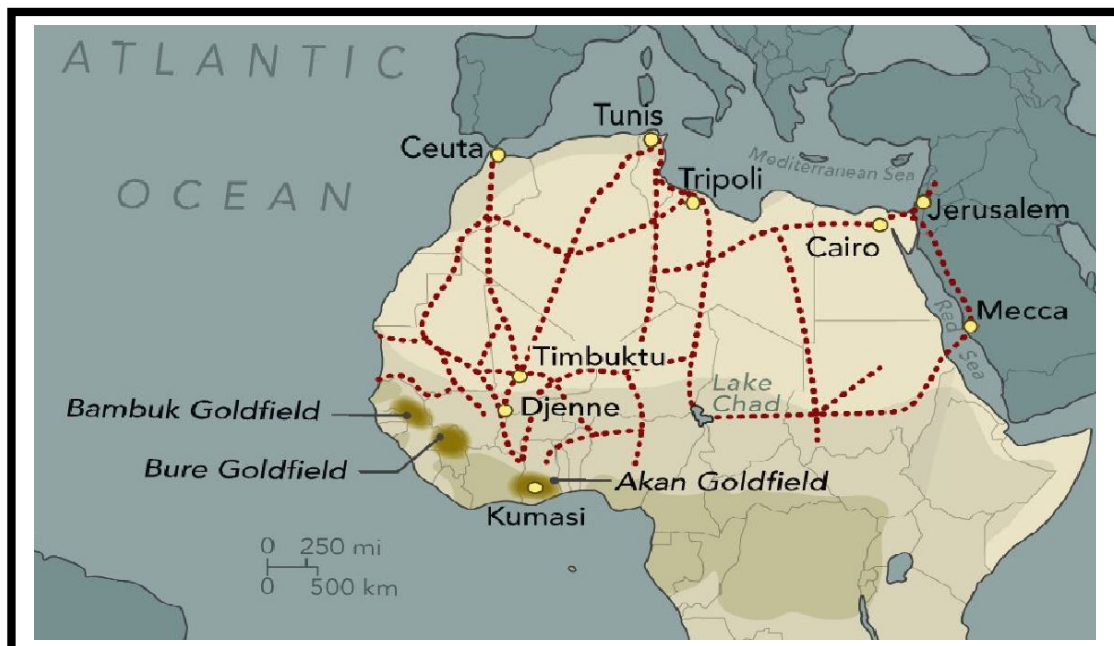
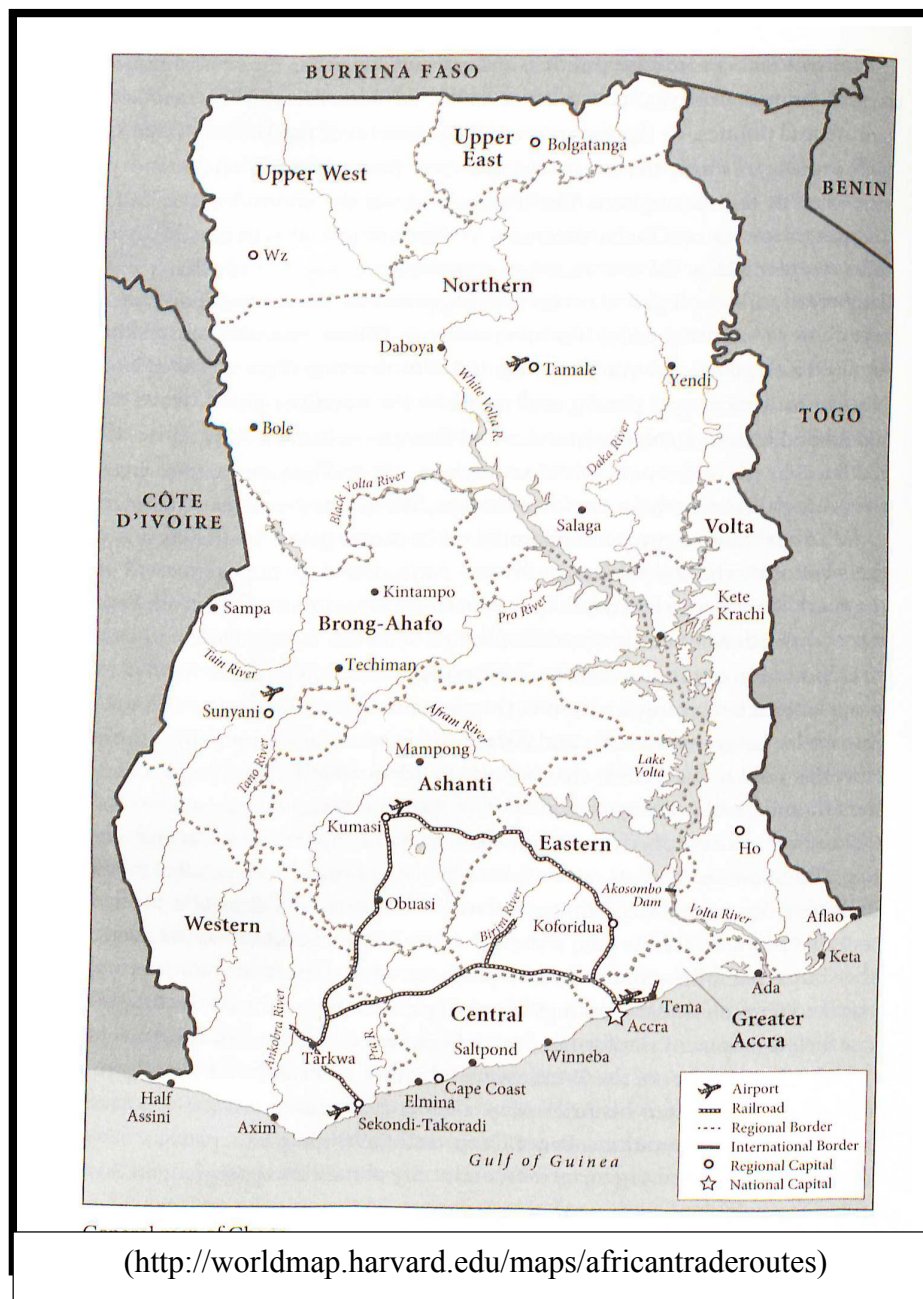


Fig 2: Trans Sahara Trade routes (<http://worldmap.harvard.edu/maps/africantraderoutes>)

Appendix 2: Ghana Map (ex-Gold Coast)



Appendix 3: Akan gold weights the *Futuo* Bag (credits photo; Bouah (1985))



Fig 1: Exterior view of *Futuo*



Fig 2: Inside *Futuo*

Appendix 4: African Art Exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum

Fig 1: Double take exhibition entrance (photo credits: courtesy Auguste Kouadio 2016)



Fig 2: Akan gold weights in display at Double take (photo credits: courtesy Auguste Kouadio 2016)



Appendix 5: Akan gold weight (conservation and label sample)

Fig 1: View of storage room (photo credits: courtesy Auguste Kouadio 2016)



Fig 2: View of Akan gold weights (photo credits: courtesy Auguste Kouadio 2016)



Appendix 6: Akan gold weights labeling sample (courtesy of the Brooklyn museum archives)

Fig 1: Laura Barnes sample weights (courtesy of the Brooklyn museum archives)

Akan Gold weights as labeled

44.4.6

Friday, March 31, 2017

Collection:	Arts of Africa
Title:	Gold Weight
Classification:	Weights/Measures
Culture:	Akan
Date Label:	late 19th-mid 20th century
Place made:	Africa
Medium:	Copper
Dimensions:	9/16 x 3/8 x 1 1/2 in. (1.5 x 1 x 3.8 cm)
Credit Line:	Henry L. Batterman Fund
Vendor:	Julius Carlebach

Laura Barnes Akan weights samples



Arts of Africa and the Pacific Islands
67.25.14
Unknown Akan artist
place made: Ghana
Leopard Gold Weight
19th or 20th century
Cast brass
1 11/16 x 3 3/4 in. (4.3 x 9.5 cm)
Bequest of Laura L. Barnes



Arts of Africa and the Pacific Islands
67.25.15
Unknown Akan artist
place made: Ghana
Elephant Gold Weight
19th or 20th century
Cast brass
1 11/16 x 3 3/4 in. (4.3 x 9.5 cm)
Bequest of Laura L. Barnes

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Endnotes

ⁱ Although the museum roots extended back to 1823, the initial construction which began on September 14th, 1895 was completed and opened to the public in 1897. The museum houses, also a library and archives spaces comprising 7,000 square feet on the second floor with nearly nine hundred units of space saver compact shelving. The museum's 5th level display the vast richness of collection. This including American Art, Arts of Africa, Arts of the Americas, Arts of the Islamic World, Arts of the Pacific Islands, Asian Art, Contemporary Art, Decorative Arts, Egyptian, Classical, Ancient Near Eastern Art, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art and European Art.

ⁱⁱ See circulation diagram appendix

ⁱⁱⁱ See circulation diagram appendix

^{iv} See circulation diagram appendix

^v African Art: A century at the Brooklyn Museum by William C. Siegmann

Akan Lexicon

Asoko: Small village located in the Ivory Coast south sea coast

Issinian: Inhabitants of Asoko, or Issaian

Abrammuo: Akan name for the gold weights literally; gold stones

Futuo: The leather purse that contains the family weights

Sanan: The leather purse that contains the state weights

Adae Kese: Annual festival that honors ancestry through the display of weights

Nnabuo: First metals rod used as a currency

Mande: Neighboring merchants from northern Ghana

Twi: The language spoken by Akan ethnic group

Ashantee: referring to the Akan confederation

Nyame: For God

Odomankoma: The almighty

Nyankopon: The supreme deity

Ohene ye awia: Refers to the sun king

Kra: Refers to the soul

Sunsun: Refers to the higher spirit

Tanno: The local lake in Ghana

Odioka: Who eats stays proverbs

Nsenia: Weight apparatus, scales

famfa, Weight apparatus spoons

nsawa: Weights apparatus feather

mmumpuruwa: weights apparatus refers to the box holding the gold dust

Sankofa: mythic bird refers to a proverb