
CULTURAL AESTHETICS, ARTEFACTS AND SYMBOLS (PATTERNS) IN AFRICAN LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS

¹Ngozi Dora Ulogu; ²Emman Okunna

¹E-mail:nd.uлогу@unizik.edu.ng; ²E-mail: e.okunna@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

African culture is replete with aesthetics, artefacts and symbols as the way of life of its people. These distinguish African culture from among others, manifesting in their values, practices and performances. Artefacts are art objects, and symbols that signify traditional ideologies and philosophies that accentuate cultural heritage. Cultural Aesthetics highlights visual impressions and representations of traditional art forms. The beauty of the African art, particularly, the Igbo traditional art works are appreciated and highlighted in both the literary and visual forms. These objects appear as musical instruments such as the talking drums, *Ikolo*, *ogene*; or as ornaments such as; ivory, *jigida*, *ufie*, or as objects, paintings, patterns and colours designed on walls or on the body as adornments, especially, during festivities. Textual representations of the performance and lifestyle depicting these cultural items present in selected texts of Chinua Achebe and George Ndubisi. Also, the visual expressions of these objects abound in Igbo cultural environments. This research promotes the sustainability of these artefacts and symbols as ways of propagating cultural dynamism and revival.

Key Words: Culture, Aesthetics, Artefacts, Symbols, Visual art, Literary art.

Introduction

Cultural artifacts and symbols are the distinguishing elements and paraphernalia in the African cultural repertoire, heritage and value system. They affirm the existence of African culture right before the intrusion of the Whiteman. African culture possesses visual arts, poetry, objects, languages, philosophies and ideologies that are both concrete and abstract as the core of its heritage. Most of these cultural elements come away as art works, music, ornaments, or patterns for beautification among others. According to Pruitt, S., “traditional African art consists of a variety of media, besides sculpture and painting, it includes textile, pottery, jewelry household objects, and architecture. The traditional African art is produced to enhance the

cycle of life experienced by members of the society” (Mario, 1998, p. 300). The traditional community lives with these art elements as lifestyle and everyday experiences. “These art elements include, the total of the inherited ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge which constituted the shared bases of social action” (Ogunsusi, 2019). The fact of the prominence of cultural arts as inevitable part of mankind says Carey et al (2020) is that “African art has value as entertainment, some have political or ideological significance, some are instrumental in a ritual context, and some have aesthetic value in itself.” In explaining the cultural aesthetic of the African art, *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* defines aestheticism “as a term signifying that the work

of art is self-sufficient and autonomous in judging the work of art, the critic should reject moral, social, political, religion and other non aesthetic standards as irrelevant” (Preminger et al, 1993, p.10). Shava (2015), states that the term African Aesthetic refers “to the African perception and appreciation of the nature, beauty, and value of artistic expressions or representation of African origin. It is embedded in the plurality of African cultures and embodied in people's practices within their lived African societal contexts.” The idea of beauty and perception of artistic expression is practical in the lifestyle of the people. Therefore, it is observed that in African aesthetics, the determining ground of beauty is such that does not only engage our feelings (tastes), pleasant appearance and harmony concerning an aesthetic object but also our theoretico –practical cognitive faculties of judgment towards such an object. It connotes celebration of meaning, value, quality, worth and desirability perceived in things” (Njiofor, 2019, p. 34). The value of the art form becomes as important as the form of the art, whereas for Shelley (2017) “form alone neither makes an artwork nor gives it whatever value it has.” Njiofor (2018) defines aesthetics as “a branch of philosophy that explores the nature of art, beauty, with its creation and appreciation, and taste, it concerns the study of the mind and emotions in relation to natural and artistic beauty and value judgment of good or bad taste.” Aesthetics is a sensation of beauty and visual appeal to art elements.

Artefacts according to Ogunsusi (2020) “represent a culture and a history of a people. Just as language and dance depict difference in cultures, so do artifacts depict the group of people it represents as well as those who made and used them, and this is important in national identity”. These art forms and values are symbolic in the African life styles. Some of the artefacts such as, musical instruments, kolanuts, and others have unique significance in their symbolism in the common existence and ideology of the people. Kanu (2015) observes that symbolism implies:

The practice of using arts, sounds, objects or other means which are not of importance in themselves for directing attention to something that is considered important, it is the substitution of a symbol with the thing symbolized. For instance, kolanut. It is a symbol of life, and that is why during the formal introduction of the kola nut ritual, it is said: *onye wetara oji wetara ndu* (he that brings the kola brings life)” (kanu, 2015, p. 71).

The significance of kolanut, just like other symbols such as the talking drum, *ikolo*, and other pottery are well appreciated in the African culture. More especially the kola is an indispensable element when offering sacrifices to the gods. It is also a sign of communion, not just among the living, but also between the living and the dead. “kolanut could be referred to, in a traditional sense as the Igbo sacramental Communion, specially presented, broken, shared and partaken off” (Kanu, 2015). Other symbols like the talking drum and the mask all play very significant roles at traditional activities, feasts and festivals.

Textual representations of these art forms and symbols abound in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. These cultural novels expand the Igbo traditional world, its philosophy, cosmology and festivals. Similarly, texts of George Ndubuisi, showcase varied

aspects of the beauty and ornaments resulting in the reliving of cultural objects. Researcher works such as “The Concept of Beauty in African Aesthetics” by (Njiofor, J 2018); Adeniyi and Ayediro (2018) “African Culture in a World of Change” and Udechukwu, G.I.(2019) “The Significance and Use of Cultural Symbols in the Contemporary African Society: Igbo Symbols as a Paradigm” mostly dwell on the significance of the art objects. Oledumiye (2018) in “Cultural Symbols and African Symbolism: The Efficiency in Product Advertisement” sought to establish the significance and application of African cultural symbol in advertising. Much as these and more have sustained discussion in the area of cultural aesthetics, this paper re-lives the beauty of everyday performance of the artefacts and symbols. Specifically, textual representation of the aesthetics of the art objects and symbols abound in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* and Ndubuisi's *Woes of Ikenga*. The beauty and significance of these artefacts are highlighted as cultural heritage. The paper propagates the need to sustain the Igbo cultural aesthetics and symbols.

Aesthetics in Literary Art

African literary art is a channel through which its art forms are expressed. Literary texts of Chinua Achebe, George Ndubuisi, have incidents and manifestations of these art forms imbued in the lifestyle of the people. Achebe as a leading African literary artist records instances of African rich cultural heritage. As observed by Asika (2013) that Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is “often referred to as “African Bible” in the sense that we can obtain glances of our African past, our way of life, the way we once lived, our culture, our dignity and our pride, but above all our literature” (Okike, 2013, p. 137). The Umuofia community of *Things Fall Apart* engages in ceremonies and festivals. These are occasions for the women to flaunt their beauty and husband's wealth through adornments. Hence:

As the preparation for the new yam festival is on, Okonkwo's wives had scrubbed the walls and the huts with red earth until they reflected light. They had then drawn patterns on them in white, yellow, and dark green. They then set about painting themselves with cam woods and drawing beautiful black patterns on their stomachs and on their backs. The children were also decorated especially their hair, which was shaved in beautiful patterns (Achebe, 1958, p. 30).

Colourful decorations and adornments are cultural practices that enhance the beauty of African women and the people. They come prominently during occasions such as marriages and festivals. A marriage ceremony shows the bride beautifully adorned with cam woods as in the case of Akueke, Obierika's daughter, who prepares for marriage decorates herself with cam wood and *uli*. As stated in the text, “Cam wood was rubbed lightly into her skin, and all over her body were black patterns drawn with *uli*. On her arms were red and yellow bangle, and on her waist four or five rows of *Jigida* or waist beads” (Achebe, 1958, p.56). Other traditional articles of ornamentation and beautification include the hairstyles, ivory anklets and the *Jigida*, these are specially worn by young maidens or girls at occasions like marriage ceremonies.

In the same vein, in *Arrow of God*, Okuata's hair style receives special attention during her marriage ceremony, “her hair was done in the new *Olimili* Fashion. There were eight closely woven ridges of hair running in perfect lines from the nape to the front of the head and ending in short uptight tufts like a garland of thick bristles worn on the hair-line from ear to ear”. She wore as many as fifteen strings of *jigida* on her waist. Most of them were blood coloured ... the strings of *jigida* clinked as she danced.....” (Achebe, 1964,p. 116). As a show of fashion and flaunting of wealth, the five wives of Nwaka are greatly adorned with traditional artefacts

where:

Each of them wore not anklets but two enormous rollers of ivory reaching from the ankle almost to the knee. Their walk was performed slow and deliberate, like the walk of an *Ijele* mask lifting and lowering each foot with weighty ceremony. On top of all, this the women were clad in many coloured velvets ivory and velvets were not new in Umuaro but never before had they been seen in such profusion from the house of one man” (Achebe, 1964, p. 68).

Acquisition and flamboyant display of these beauty ornaments are indications of wealth in African cultural milieu. Going further in the beauty consciousness and adornment, Ezeulu's younger wife examined her hair in a mirror held between her thighs. She could not help feeling that she did a better job on Akueke's hair than Akueke did on hers, but she was very pleased with the black patterns of uli and faint yellow lines she had on her body” (Achebe, p. 66).

Events at funeral ceremonies are great ways of representing African rich cultures. Funeral ceremonies take a high dimension as it adds as occasion of honour and recognition of the quality and wealth of the deceased. For example, Ndubuisi (2014, p.34), in *Woes of Ikenga* narrates the lengthy funeral ceremony of Okoye Udejaja, one of the eldest titled men and a pillar of the sacred *omenani* in *Umuafor*, saying, “as custodian of *Ndi-ichie* and *Ogwugwu* shrines, a white he-

goat was sacrificed to *Ogwugwu* to guaranty his safe transit to the spirit world, while as an *Ozo* title holder, a cow was made available to *Ndi-ozo*, a group of titled men who had achieved greatness in their various fields with selfless sacrifice to their respective communities.” Similarly, the funeral activities for Ogbuefi Ezeudu in *Things Fall Apart* are such that befit a warrior and titled man. It entertains a lot of fanfare including masquerade dance, display of strength, wrestling and feasting. As noted in the text:

It was a great funeral, such as befitted a noble warrior. As the evening drew near, the shooting and firing of guns, the beating of drums and the brandishing and clanging of matchets increased ... Drums beat violently and men leaped up and down in a frenzy ... it was then that the one-handed spirit came, carrying a basket full of water ... He danced a few steps to the funeral drums and then went to see the corpse” (Achebe, 1958, p. 98).

The masked spirits and masquerades display are selective outings at funeral ceremonies. They appear as a mark of honour at the funeral of traditional title-holders. The sounding of the *ikolo* usually heralds the presence of the masquerades. The talking drum or the *ogene* are regular accompaniments of *ikolo* in the traditional setting.

The talking drum plays prominent roles in the traditional festivals and important ceremonies. Oladumiye (2018, p.20) highlights the significance and application of the drums saying

that, “the talking drum is a prominent part of Nigerian culture. It is a cultural significant instrument of communication in traditional African society that serves as the voice of the whole community and it communicates the sum of their desires.” The *Ikolo* is described in *Things Fall Apart* as fashioned in the olden days from a giant iroko tree at the very spot where it was felled ... its body was carved with men and pythons and little steps were cut on one side, without these the drummer could not climb to the top to beat it. When the *Ikolo* was beaten for war, it was decorated with skills won in past wars” (Achebe 69). *Ikolo* communicates emergency and it is used for summons. For example, after the visit of the white man's messenger inviting Ezeulu to Okperi, Ezeulu calls the elders to an emergency meeting and “soon after the *Ikolo* began to speak to the six villages. Everywhere elders and men of title heard the signal and got ready for the meeting” (Achebe, 1964, p. 140). The sounding of *Ikolo* does not come ordinarily. It comes with a message of importance. When sounded at events it is usually accompanied by the *ogene*.

In *Things Fall Apart*, *ogene* plays a veritable role for information dissemination for the Umuofia elders. “And in all the nine villages of Umuofia, a town crier with his *ogene* asked everyman to be present tomorrow morning” (8). The *ogene* usually heralds the arrival of the masquerades. Masquerades feature prominently in festivals and serve as means of justice system. The *Otakagu* Age-group presents a new ancestral mask during the *Akwu Nro* festival, “the mask arrived appropriately on the crest of excitement ... it approached a few steps of bells and rattles on its waist and ankles ... (Achebe, 1964, p.198). The dance steps of the masks at ceremonies create

great excitement for the people, especially for the women folk. While at deaths or occasions of violation of the sacred custom the appearance of the masks are eerie and fearful. For example, at the event of the desecration of the masked spirit by Enoch, a religious convert in Umuofia, the masked spirits staged a combat against the culprit:

That night the mother of the spirits walked the length and breadth of the clan weeping for her murdered son. It was a terrible night. Not even the oldest man in Umuofia had ever heard such a strange and fearful sound, and it was never to be heard again ... on the next day, all the masked *egwugwu* of Umuofia assembled in the market place ... The dreadful *Otakagu* came from Imo and, *Ekwensu* dangling a white cock arrived from Uli... For the first time in living memory, the sacred bull roar was heard in broad daylight” (Achebe, 1958, p.149).

In the traditional African justice system, the category of masked spirits determines the severity of the offence committed and the magnitude of public caution and punishment.

Perhaps, the most significant symbolic art element in the Igbo culture is the *kolanut*. *Kolanut* is a very important aspect of the tradition in Nigeria which holds great social significance for many ethnic groups. The “Traditional” *kolanut* is regarded as a sacred nut, which is used to communicate with the gods being that it was chosen by the elders as the head or king of all seeds” (Oladumiye, 2018, p. 19). The *kolanuts* is a welcoming symbol and object of prayer and adulation. Kanu (2015), states that

“the kola is also a symbol of peace and goodwill. This is why the first thing an Igbo offers a guest is the kolanut to indicate that the guest is welcome” (71). That is why even Unoka the debtor welcomes Okoye his lender with *oji* in spite of the fact that he has come to ask him to pay his money. “Thus while Unoka is playing on his flute, he goes inside to bring kola for his visitor and tells him, “I have kola” going further in presenting it to him, he says, “He who brings kola brings life” (Achebe, p. 5). Kola plays a key role at gatherings and ceremonies, such as the naming ceremonies. At the naming ceremony of the twin born to Chinua, “Chinua broke the kolanut after addressing the attendants and poured a wine libation to share the children's names with the ancestors” (Ndubuisi, 2014, p.35). Ceremonial rituals in traditional African setting include the breaking and sharing of kolanuts.

Aesthetics in the Visual Arts

The Igbo culture has known cultural objects and symbols peculiar to its lifestyle and tradition. Most of them relate to its idea of beauty and represented in their art forms. Among the Igbo, the word *mma* as Aniakor (1976) puts it is used widely to refer to beauty, expressed through the evaluation of the beauty of the human body which is enhanced in the case of women with indigo stains (Barden in Aniakor) or hand drawn body designs known as *Uli aru*. Beauty of the human body, for the Igbo, is viewed conceptually, drawing aesthetics referents from the vegetal environment. Aniakor gives an example, and says the beautiful girl is referred to as *Oji ugo*, that is, “eagle's kola”. To him, “the eagle's kola (*Oji ugo*) is yellow in colour and are rare to find while the more common ones are known ... To refer to a maiden as eagle's kola that is to say that her beauty is of the rare type”. The eagle is a rare bird whose white feather among the Igbo is regarded as a symbol of status and prestige and so is worn as an

adornment of the red cap of the titled Igbo man among the *Nze na Ozo*. “And so the Igbo concept of aesthetics is here seen in the notion of rarity strongly expressed when a maiden is referred to as *odiuko na mba*” (Okunna, 2002).

Aniakor (1982) believes that in Igbo aesthetics, a work of art is considered beautiful by the extent to which the skill of the artist is made manifest subject to other factors as the social and economic status of the patron. This is because “among the Igbo social status of an individual is achieved and forms the basis for the commissioning and ownership of works of art” (Aniakor, 1982). The chip-carved doors and wooden panels readily come to mind. Among the Igbo, they are not commonly found. They are emblems of wealth and prosperity, so that where they are found, they readily give off the status of the one residing in the compound behind those panels.

For the *Ite ike*, one of the most aesthetically unique pottery types among the Igbo of Inyi, two features particularly distinguish it from other Inyi pottery and in which its beauty resides. First is its enormous size. Second is its surface embellishment usually done in very high relief, drawing most of the Igbo aesthetic referents from the vegetal environment, largely from plant and animal life. It is not uncommon though that the artist potters draw referents too from the firmament with its symbol of the crescent moon. And so is this pottery type usually classified as ceremonial because they feature only at very important occasions and are not owned by just anybody. While the aesthetic quality of this art piece – *ite ike* is located in its physical character, the pottery types of everyday use are evaluated for their surface merit in their functionality. This is clearly manifest in the market place as the gestures of the buyer as she negotiates price with the seller are quite informative:

First, she taps the pot and feels the weight in both hands. Second, she taps the pot and listens to its ring, or more appropriately echo from the interior. Third, she runs her hand inside the pots interior to feel the smoothness of the walls. Fourth, she feels the neck area of the pot in order to ascertain its relative strength. Finally, she holds the pot in both hands, throws it gently into the air a few inches above the palm to which it returns gently (Aniakor, 1982).

He believes that what the buyer brings into her aesthetic evaluation of a pot is “virtually all her senses, including the tactile, aural and visual”, although for everyday pottery functional –structural qualities are weighted in favour against surface adornment. In effect the pottery of this category are evaluated in terms of aesthetic quality, not in their surface embellishment but in their function, giving vent to Yanagi's (1978) assertion that “the beauty of pottery finds its fullest expression only when it is joined to utility”. He goes on: “modern artist potters forget that all the best of the old pieces which we value so highly today were made not for ornament but for the ordinary purposes of the household”. So are also, the aesthetic evaluation of a good quantum of other cultural art forms as the same principle in the foregoing are applied, where complexity gives way to simplicity and utility.

The *ofo* readily comes to mind, which beauty resides in its place in the cultural life of the society where it is used. In Igbo cosmos, the *ofo* is associated with authority and held only by the custodian who may be head of the family, clan, or community. As Nancy Neaher notes, “the *ofo* ... serves as a family icon. The *ofo* represents the collective power of the gods and ancestors ... the *ofo* also symbolizes the link between the living holder of family or ruling authority and their ancestors”. The *Ofo* is a very important piece of insignia in the cultural religious arena. *Ofo* is a household object that serves as a sign of authority and means of divine relationship with the spirit. Kanu writes that “in the Igbo world, nothing important can be done without the invocation of the *ofo*. Through it, the righteous deed, good spirit(s) are invoked to uphold justice, decisions and settle disputes” (Kanu, 2014, p. 69). Thus every man in the Igbo cosmology has his *ofo* and guards it as its guarding angel. The rattle staff (spelt *oji* in Igbo without the dot under the O as in *oji*, *kolanut*) is another important art form fitted with numerous tiny metal gongs in ringed clusters at intervals along the length of the staff. It is borne by one of the followers of the masquerade and announces the approach of the masquerade as it is struck on the ground at almost measured intervals. Perhaps, the greatest of cultural art forms in which aesthetics finds the most of expression is

the masking tradition, displayed in such unique masks as the *ijele*, unique in complexity and ornamentation, described as the supreme mask (Aniakor, 1985). To Bravmann in Aniakor (1985), masking ranks amongst the most public, of all the visual art forms and expressions in Africa. This high visibility associated with the masking further anchors the reason for the deployment of the best of artistic resources in this art tradition, and so the high level of consideration given to their aesthetic quality. In the masking, a visual spectacle which gives the perceiving audience an emotional sense of beauty, sometimes so much that the beholder is temporarily overcome to the point of not finding enough words to articulate his or her experience, the Igbo simply say, in modern parlance: *olu a di egwu* – “This work (of art) is wonderful” (Aniakor, 2002).

Symbols and Symbolism

As statements may be written, so could they also be uttered in any given language. So also ideas, events and indeed stories may be committed into literary volumes. But as Okeke (1995) believes “more inexhaustible, complex, effective, evocative and enduring are the meanings encoded in works of art”. Works of art are therefore like statements to be comprehended in visual terms. This assertion is true both in the art forms and the iconography in the surface embellishment of these art forms. These surface decorations are therefore the language the artist, *omenka* or *okwanka*, uses to communicate, either in three dimension or two dimension. In executing the surface ornamentation of his works, the potter draws his referents from plant and animal life, and sometimes from the firmament with its symbol of the crescent moon. Apart from the artistic manifestation of these symbols, the artist uses them to make statements in visual terms about things of importance in the traditional Igbo society. The yam plant tendrils because of their

delicate forms lend themselves to use as cultural referents while at the same time used to make statements about yam as the king of crops.

The delicate lines formed by the head of the kolanut known as *isi oji* come in handy as an aesthetic referent. But the kolanut holds so much more meaning to the Igbo which the artist expresses in visual language using his art. Cole and Aniakor (1984) say of kolanut in Igbo society: “Hospitality ceremonies centre upon sharing kolanut and/or white chalk, *nzu* both of which are sacred substances used to bless any and every undertaking and to promote its success” To Cole and Aniakor, “It is difficult to imagine Igbo life without them”. To Egbeson (2001) “Oji signifies clean mind. Its shape resembles the heart as though it is its nature to be and speak man's mind”. In demonstration of his good heart towards Okonkwo's request of support with the seed yam for planting, Nwakibie prays over the kola nuts. He breaks it saying, “we shall all live. We pray for life, children, a good harvest and happiness. You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me. Let the kite perch and let the egret perch too” (Achebe, 1958, p. 15). This gives a clear significance of the good will the kola generates in the Igbo culture.

The gliding patterns of the python known among the Igbo as *ije agwo* are admired for their curvilinear rhythms. These patterns become handy in the embellishment of art forms such as pottery. The python motif and its gliding designs are also found in chip-carved doors and wooden panels, decorations in traditional Igbo houses and head dresses of a variety of Igbo masks, such as the *Ijele*. The wide distribution of the gliding pattern of the python or the snake-python motif is a measure of antiquity and therefore the evaluation of its beauty and evocative strength when used on art objects (Aniakor, 1976). The snake-python is sacred in large areas of the traditional Igbo society. Its wide distribution is therefore easily understood. They are also found on the Igbo bronze works which have been dated to 805AD (Shaw, 1970).

The *ite-ike* of Inyi, already mentioned for its enormous size and its lavishly ornamented surface has as motifs a multiplicity of animals executed in very high relief, such as the lion which symbolizes courage, and the bull which symbolizes strength. The elephant features strongly too because of its size, metaphorically translated into majesty.

Just as these patterns or symbols are deployed for aesthetic purpose, for the meaning they hold for the Igbo, so also are some art forms. The *ofo*, for example, symbolizes power and authority and can be likened to the mace in the chambers of parliaments. According to Ikegwu (2012), “*ofo* – the branchlet of the Detarium Senegalese ... has different classification and usage in Igboland. Its consecration and ritualization make it a sacred object. It signifies a symbol of authority, justice and decorum in the Igbo societies and culture areas”. So is the masking tradition among the Igbo. The *Ijele* mask the king of mask is ultimately an artistic projection of Igbo notion of authority, status and achievement. In the *Ijele* mask, the vocabulary concerning what is beautiful encompasses prestige, wealth, status, ideology and political and ritual symbolism (Aniakor, 1985).

The *Igbo-ukwu* unique pottery which displays mastery of the use of the aesthetic referents show concentric circles done in high relief, a motif which symbolizes continuity. The handles are done in beautiful rope-like structure which represent what the Igbo refer to as *eriri ibe nne*, symbolizing Igbo man's strong link to his maternal relations, affirming an Igbo saying:

“when a man runs for dear life, he heads for his maternal home” (Okunna, 1999). Iconographically, the use of symbols is a feature shared by all forms of Igbo art. These motifs have emblematic meanings. The leopard motif, for example, is a symbol of royal power. In the Nsukka area, the most powerful mask in terms of social control is the *Omabe*, conceived to be the incarnation of the leopard as a symbol of power, ritual and political, utilized in response to problems of social control. (Aniakor, 2002). The Igbo African art works have immeasurable symbols and significance.

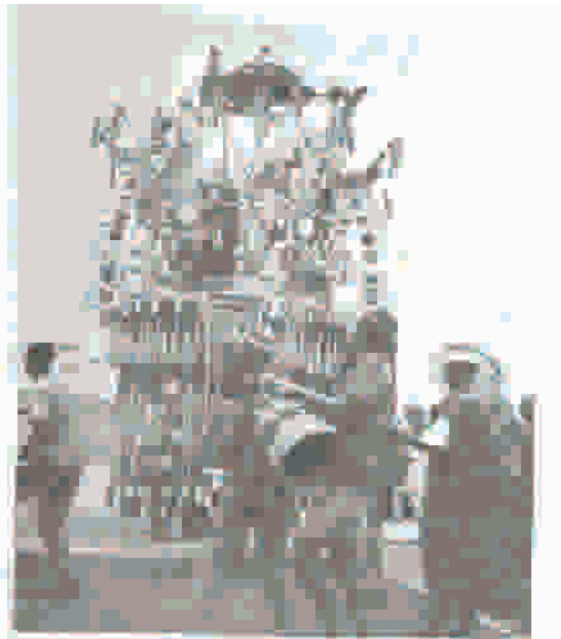
Conclusion

African cultural aesthetic is a veritable identity and philosophy of the African and the Igbo people in particular. The Igbo visual and literary arts are rich in performance and functionality. These objects are part of the life of the people, coming as objects of decoration, ritual, adornment, symbols and practices that sustain the age long respect and harmony in the traditional communities. They highlight the rich repertoire of values and the need for sustainability of these practices in everyday life of the people. As stated:

Works of art are crafted as answers to various existential problems and therefore somewhat serve practical ends. As part and parcel of the life of the African, they are not just made to be admired and appreciated disinterestedly but are active modes of expressions and representations, more or else symbolic forms of participation in the spiritual (religious), physical, and social life

of the community, and most often indicative of the human relational taste perceptions of the African people. (Njiofor 32).

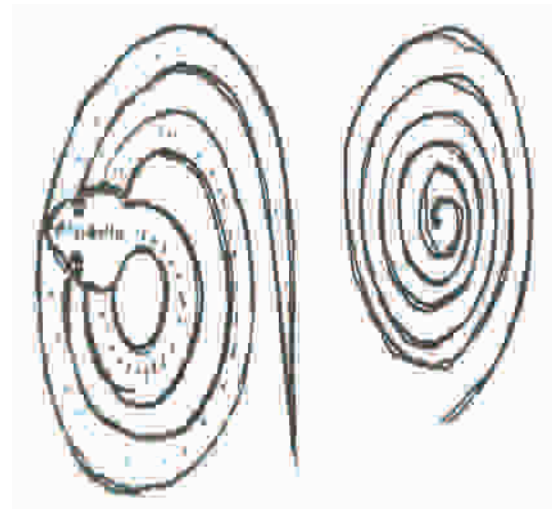
These artefacts are best appreciated and reappraised as part of educational curriculum for the younger and growing generation. Being in tune with the aesthetics, cultural objects and symbols boost the understanding and the background knowledge of African culture for a harmonious traditional society.



Ijele Mask culled from C.C. Aniakor, 2002.



Igbo-Ukwu pottery excavated by Thurstan Shaw, showing animal motifs and other linear patterns.



Detail of the animal motifs and other linear patterns.



Igbo chip-carved door and panels showing diamond shapes they have been decorated with. Culled from C. C. Aniakor, 2002.



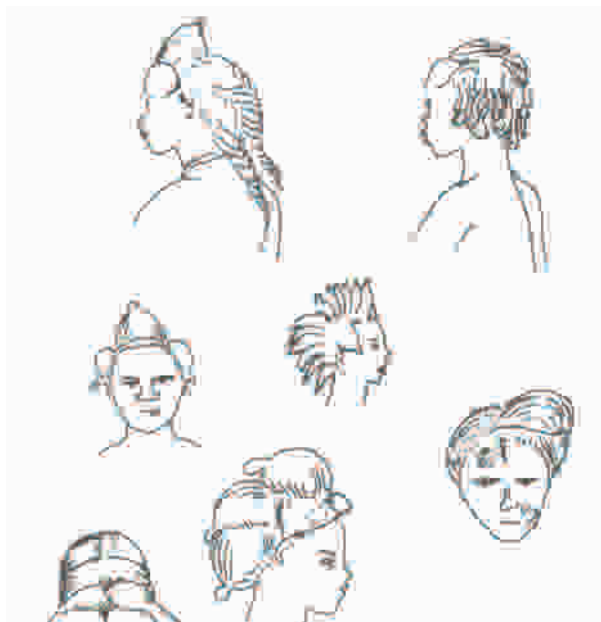
Some geometric patterns for body adornment among the Igbo, especially at festivals or ceremonies.



“Ite ike”, showing the surface designs in very high reliefs.



Some hair styles of maidens even carved in masks.



**More hair styles. Culled from
C. C. Aniakor, 2002.**

REFERENCES

- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann.
- _____. (1964). *Arrow of God*. Heinemann.
- Adeniyi & Ayedero (2018). African Culture in a World of Change. *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, 1(3).
- Asika, I. E. (2013). Discourse Technique in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. *Okike: An African Journal of New Writing* Number 50. 2013.
- Aniakor, C. (1976). The Broad Synthesis of African Art: A Survey of their Significant Aspects. *Ikoru*, 3(2), 1976.
- _____. (1982). *Igbo Aesthetics (An Introduction)*, Nigeria Magazine, Lagos, Department of Culture.
- _____. (1985). *Igbo Arts as Environment: The Example of Mask Head-dress*. *Nigeria Magazine*, 53(4), 89-97. Lagos, Department of Culture, 1985.
- _____. (2002). *Art in the Culture of Igboland: A Survey of the Igbo Nation*, G. E. K. Ofomata Ed. Onitsha, Africana First Publishers Limt.
- Carey, M. A. et al. (2020). African Art: Visual Art. *Britannica*. www.britannica.com.
- Cole & Aniakor (1984). *Igbo Arts: Community and Cosmos*, Los Angeles, University of California.
- Egbeson, M. O. (2001). *Oji Igbo in Culture and Inculturation*, Awka, A Hand book.
- Ikegwu, J. U. (2012). *Ofo as a Global Resource and its Significance in Igbo Culture Area*, Nsukka, Ikenga, International Journal of Institute of African Studies, 14(1).
- kanu, I. A. (2015). *African Philosophy: An Ontological Existential Hermeneutic Approach to Classical and Contemporary Issues*: Augustinian Publication 2015.
- Neaheer, N. *Ofo in Igbo land*, Wikipedia.org accessed 28/11/2020.

- Ndubuisi, G. (2014). *Woes of Ikenga*. Kraftghots. *Journal of African Studies*,8(1), www.ajol.info.
- Njiofor, J. C.(2018). The Concept of Beauty in African Aesthetic. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 7(3).
- Ogunsusi, C.E. (2019). Significance of Cultural Artifacts to National Identity. *Nigerian Tribune*. <https://tribuneonlineng.com/significance-of-cultural-artifacts-to-national-identity>.
- Oladumiye, E. B. (2018). Cultural Symbols and African Symbolism: The Efficacy product Advertisement”. *Journal of Fine Arts*, 1(2), 16-23. www.researchgate.net.
- Okeke, C. E. (1995). The Evocative Power of Visual Statements, A Colloquium Paper.
- Okunna, E. (1999). Surface Embellishment of Igbo Pottery: An Evocative Visual Statement. Awka, *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 14(1).
- _____. (2002). Igbo Pottery: The Aesthetic Admiration and Evaluation of An Aspect of Igbo Arts”. Awka, *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. IV.
- Preminger & Brogan et al.(1993). Ed. *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. MJF Books.
- Pruitt, S. (1998). The Art of Africa and the Diaspora” in Mano Azevedo Ed. *Africana Studies: A Survey of Africa and the African Diaspora*. Second Edition. Carolina Academic Press.
- Shava, S.(2015). African Aesthetic, *The Sage Encyclopedia of African Cultural Heritage in North America*.11-17. <http://dv.do.org/10.4135/9781483346373.nu>. www.researchgate.net
- Shelley, J. (2017). The Concept of the Aesthetic. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aesthetic-concept>.
- Udechukwu, G.I. (2019). The Significance and Use of Cultural Symbols in the Contemporary African Society: Igbo Symbols as a Paradigm. *Mgbakoigba*