

**IN DEFENCE OF THE AESTHETIC APPRECIATION OF THE IGARRA
TRADITIONAL ATTIRE**

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JANUARY, 2025

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**BEING A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
PHILOSOPHY, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN BENIN CITY, EDO
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work was carried out by JOHNSON OFUJE REJOICE with the Matt. No. ART2010660 of the Department of Philosophy, University of Benin, Edo State under my supervision.

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty who made it possible for me to pass through my time in school, and to my Dad and Mum who was my supportive team.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to Study

The act of wearing clothes is known to have originated from the biblical story of the GARDEN OF EDEN.

Humans all over the world and for centuries till date clothe themselves with coverings of varying materials and this wearing of clothes has been identified as one of the unique features that pertains to man and as well distinguish us humans, from non- humans .

Clothes or attires are worn for different purposes for coverings, protection of the skin from heat, for warmth etc. For this study, Clothes are characterized by colors, patterns, symbolic adornments such as waist or wrist beads, Peacock Feathers, Neck beads and other cultural regalia.

Traditional attire plays a significant role in cultural heritage and identity of various ethnic groups all around the world. In Nigeria, it is a part of the country's rich cultural diversity and the Igarra people, an ethnic group from Edo state, Nigeria are also known for their distinctive traditional attire.

The patterns, colors and choice of adornments worn with an attire is rather particular than universal, that is, as regards culture, time and place. Various cultures are known for their indigenous attires which beyond and appreciation of aesthetic appeal, lies cultural significance, social contexts and dynamics.

We examine the Igarra traditional attire to gain both an aesthetic appreciation of the attire and as well to bring to limelight its cultural values and meanings and its role in a cultural narrative or context. This examination, goes beyond the sensory appeal of the attire, but rather on the

embodiments of an artistic and creative expression which is influenced largely from culture and the history, values and beliefs on which this culture is founded.

The study of the aesthetic appreciation of the Igarra traditional attire, holds a lot of significant cultural, social, and as well educational values.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The statement of Problem work aims at solving possible arising questions to the statement that “Igarra traditional attire has a unique sense of aesthetic appreciation”.

It examines questions like Does Igarra traditional attire has aesthetic appreciation? ,

How do you respond to critique that it is outdated and not in alignment with the current fashion trend?

How do you appreciate aesthetic value of Igarra traditional attire?

Beyond being just clothing, does the attire have a unique value or cultural representation?

These questions leads to the argument that rather than looking at the color match or adornments worn alongside the attire, attire’s are also used for symbolic representations or for reasons arising from various occasions or ceremonies e.g. Black clothes could represent a state of mourning, cult groups having their color codes of yellow and black, a red and white regalia is also a common code for a traditional worshipper or priest.

1.3 Methodology

This study employs the use of critical analysis approach in an attempt to defend and critically examine and discuss the aesthetic appreciation of the Igarra traditional attire. It challenges our understanding of beauty, taste and fashion , while considering our cultural values that influences our aesthetic judgement.

1.4 Significance of Study

The study is significant because it reopens a philosophical discuss on the aesthetic import of the Igarra traditional attire and how it could be aesthetically appreciated. By exploring the cultural and aesthetic significance of traditional attire, this research promotes a cross-cultural exposition and appreciation of cultural diversity in identity, heritage and values. By appreciation of the Igarra traditional attire, this study tends to foster a greater cultural sensitivity, while preserving our various cultural traditions that make us unique.

1.5 Scope of Study

This work covers the aesthetic appreciation of Igarra traditional attire, although there are also ethical, religious and other imports of this traditional attire, this work is limited to the defense of the Igarra traditional attire.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Aesthetic: An artistic appearance beauty or effect which appeals to the senses.

Attire: Clothes or outfit worn by a person in a particular style or image.

Art: The expression or application of human skill and imagination in visual form.

Appreciation: An act of acknowledging or valuing something of significance or worth.

Culture: The arts, ideas, customs and social behavior of a particular people.

Color: The property possession of an object that produces different sensations on the eyes as a result of the way it emits light.

Custom: A tradition and widely acceptable way of life or behavior that is specific to a particular society or place.

Etuno: An ethnic nationality in Edo state.

Fashion: A popular or latest style of clothing, hair, decoration etc.

Initiation: A kind of traditional occasion where certain grades or group of the society are traditionally recognized and authorized to be able to carry out certain activities.

Ita-Owoji: A locally made woven fabric of the Igarra people, produced from a hand-spun cotton yarns with a local loom.

Isobe: A kind of beads worn around the neck.

Isuvo: A kind of beads worn on the wrists.

Oshomoshi: The name for Almighty God in Igarra.

Traditional attire: Clothing worn by people of a specific culture or region, reflecting their heritage and identity.

1.7 Literature Review

The cultural role of traditional attires which is one of the most significant feature that identifies a particular culture and its values, cannot be over emphasized.

Research has shown that traditional attire has a vital role in preserving cultural identity and as well promoting its diversity (Ojo, 2017; Adeniji, 2019).

Studies overtime has shown that traditional attires are imbued with symbolic meanings that reflect the cultural, social and spiritual values of each ethnic groups. It has also shown that traditional attire fosters national unity amongst these various cultures.

Despite the challenges the traditional attire in Nigeria has faced due to the invasion of the western civilization, and the threat of the preservation of the attires as well as its cultural significance, the traditional attires of this various ethnicity has continued to thrive in its values and influence on fashion.

The Igarra traditional attire is woven from industrial cotton yarns (warp) stripes and set among a thick indigo dyed hand spun cotton yarns. They are beautifully designed in simple but attractive colors, usually monochromatic and dominated by dark (Navy Blue). These well crafted traditional attires come in varieties of designs and color stains, including yellow, sky/turquoise blue and lines of white. A biennial festival under “My Dressing My Culture Initiative (MDMCI) has been created few years ago to celebrate the Igarra tradition, culture and heritage¹. The Igarra traditional attire has played a significant role in various ceremonies in Igarra, such as, Traditional Marriage, Wedding Ceremony, Burial Ceremony, Chieftaincy Title Ceremony, House Warming/Birthday Ceremony, and many others. During these ceremonies, the traditional attire could be worn with white, yellow, turquoise blue or navy blue lace, brocade etc with some neck beads (Ovene) and wrist beads (*Isuvo*)² .

¹Akerejola, David (2018). The history of Igarra people. Akoko-Edo. Edo State..

²Simparr, Clement (2019). “Ninety-day seclusion prepared me for the throne - Otaru of Igarra.

2012

CHAPTER TWO

OVERVIEW OF IGARRA PEOPLE AND THEIR WORLD VIEW

2.1 The Igarra People, Culture, Values, Belief Systems and Customs

Igarra, also known as *Etuno* is the Local Government Area Headquarters of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State. The Igarra people are known as Anetuno, an ethnic group of the Edo people; speak the *Etuno* language, a dialect of the Edo language but share linguistic and cultural values similar to the *Egbira* people in Kogi State. Igarra is also one of the ethnic nationalities that make up the *Afemai* group of people in Edo State. The town is made of three quarters, namely, *Ugbogbo*, *Utua*, and *Uffa* quarters. Igarra is situated in the Northern part of Edo State, near the Kogi State borders. The town is surrounded with rocky terrains and *Kukuruku* hills; with a tropical climate characterized two distinct seasons – rainy and dry seasons. Their major occupation is farming on cassava, cocoa, yam, corn etcetera; and secondly, trading on farm produce, clothing and beads – Ovene, Isu, Ofa and Opa were different types of beads the Igarra people traded on³ .

The founding fathers of Igarra migrated from Idah in the present day, Kogi State, under the leadership of *Ariwo Ovejijo* who left Idah with his kith and kin many centuries ago. He and his kith and kin made up of all the present families in Igarra. Founded Igarra and he became the first ruler who ruled over his new kingdom under the title of “*Otaru Ariwo Ovejijo, Oshinoyi Etuno*”, meaning *Otaru Ariwo Ovejijo*, king of *Etuno* (Igarra). Francis (2021), observed that, there are individual kindred in Igarra, namely, *Andede, Eshinagada*.

³Akerejola, David (2018). *The history of Igarra people*. Akoko-Edo. Edo State 2022-12-26.
Okeke, Alexander (2019).

Culturally, they wear clothing such as Africa print, lace, brocade, George, *adire* and hand woven fabrics for their traditional ceremonies. Their main traditional cuisine (food) includes dishes like *uka* (made from corn and cassava flour), *apapa* (moi moi made from beans) and pounded yam with *egusi* soup (Ajaye, 2022). Okeke (2019), opined that Igarra people traditionally, believe in a Supreme God, called “Oshomoshi”, and other deities/gods associated with nature, fertility and prosperity. Their festivals are *Aba*, chieftaincy festival (celebrate every seven years), *Upe-Enu*, new yam festival (a festival celebrated to mark the new yam season), *Ekwochi* festival (the masquerades’ festival celebrated annually) among others. While some of the Igarra men are known for their skillfulness in wood carving, creating intricate and beautiful pieces, like doors, walking sticks, seats and so on; their women are known for hand woven fabrics such as *oga* (a piece of woven fabric for carrying babies on the back), and their most famous, traditional attire; the *ita-owoji* which is used for ceremonial wears. They have a unique style of music, characterized by the use of drums and other local musical instruments. They have various traditional dances, such as *arigede* dance, *ikede* dance among others. Their ceremonies include azi ceremony, traditional marriage ceremony, age group ceremony etc.⁴ The Igarra people place great value and believe in respects for elders and traditions, the people also value community and cooperation among the kindred with many social and cultural activities around communal participation. Igarra people have a strong spiritual tradition, with many believing in the power of their ancestors and deities; and others Christianity and a few in Islam⁵.

⁴Omogbia, J.E. (2010). “Edo Government Rolls Drums for Aba Festival”.

⁵Adams, S.A. (2015). “Igarra Kingdom/Festival”.

2.2 Cosmology of Men According to Igarra Culture

Cosmology according to Collins (2003)⁶, is an account, science or theory of the origin and development of the universe. In a broad sense, cosmology is the study of the fundamental nature of reality, including the relationships between the universe, humanity, and the divine. Basically, cosmology involves the study of origin and evolution in order to understand the nature and structure of the universe.

The cosmological origin of men, is multifaceted and could be religious, cultural, scientific and technological in nature. Man's origin can be traced back to ancient civilizations from Egyptian roots and is historically characterized by distinct periods with unique achievements.

Some of these periods are : The Iron Age, Stone Age, Middle Age and the golden age.

The Igarra culture shares a similar cosmological account with that of the Bini people. The Bini people believe that the world was created by Osanobua, who sent his sons to found earth. Before the sons of Osanobua came to earth, He asked them to take whatever they might need for their journey.

The eldest chose riches, the other chose wisdom, the third chose mysticism and the fourth chose what looked like a snail shell filled with sand. When they came to earth, they saw that it was all covered with water and when the youngest emptied the content of his shell on the waters, there was an explosion and land emerged from the waters this land was called Igodomigodo. The youngest gave his siblings a condition that if they must use and live on his land, they had to deposit their gifts from the Father on his land. Two of the brothers agreed and the eldest, Olokun, disagreed and chose to rather live in what was left of the waters and he took his riches with him.

While the youngest became the Oba of Igodomigodo, the others went to start the other parts of the earth which started the origin of the rest of humanity.

The Igarra creation myth also gives an account of how the world was created by a supreme god, Ovia. According to this myth, Ovia created the world which was the earth and the sky first and then humans, a Man and a Woman from the first clay of the earth.

The Igarra people believe that humans originated from the earth and were created by Ovia to serve as caretakers of the natural world. They also believe that humans have a sacred duty to protect and preserve the natural world and to live in harmony with the land and the spirits.

Humans are believed to have a deep connection to the spiritual realm which is inhabited by ancestors, spirits and gods. And this connection can be maintained through rituals, sacrifices and offerings to the spirits. The Igarra people believe that the spirit realm is closely tied with our natural world and we must respect and honor them in order to maintain peace and harmony in the natural world and as well promote the well-being and prosperity of all living things on the earth.

The philosophical cosmology of Igarra culture examines the fundamental nature of reality, including the relationships between the universe, humanity and the divine; cultural cosmology explores the ways in which Igarra culture understand and interpret the universe and their place within it (Carolyn, 1999)⁷.

In view of the above (Adam, 2015), said, according to Igarra culture, the cosmology of men is basically centered on the various concept of traditional beliefs and practices which the people must perform in order to honor and maintain their connection with the spirit realm . One of these concepts is the concept of “Oshiomoshi” which refers to the supreme being, creator or god. He is

believed to be the ultimate source of power, wisdom, courage and knowledge and the perfect example for all men to emulate.

They also believe in the concept of '*Opa*' (age groups), which translates to 'the making of men through Rites of Passage after which they are considered to be full-fledged members of the society and are entitled to all responsibilities that come with manhood. These rites includes:

⁶Collins, C. (2003). Collins Cobuild Advance Learners English Dictionary. Great Britain: Harper Collins Publishers.

⁷Carolyn, K. (1998). Aesthetic, the Big Question; Hackett Publications

- i. Training: Initiates are trained in various aspects of manhood, including, hunting, farming, trading and home fronts.
- ii. Ritual: Initiates participate in rituals and ceremonies which are designed to test their bravely, strength and character.

There are three stages of manhood which include:

- i. *Opa-Ogah*: The first stage which represents youth hood, saddled with the responsibilities of sharing items, gifts, food and drinks.
- ii. *Opoze*: The second stage, which represents young adulthood, and the transition to manhood, is saddle with the tasks of going for errands (messengers), image makers, and making announcements (town criers) within the community.
- iii. *Azebani*: The third stage, which represents full manhood, and the attainment of wisdom and leadership. The chiefs and elders belong to this category.

Furthermore, (Adam, 2025), outlined the functions of Igarra ancestors who play a significant role in Igarra cosmology. Men are said to be connected to their ancestors through a network of spiritual relationships as follows:

- i. Guidance: Igarra people believed their ancestors guide and protect them throughout their lives.
- ii. Wisdom: They also believed, their ancestors possessed wisdom and knowledge which are passed down through generations.
- iii. Accountability: Igarra men are held accountable by their ancestors for their actions and decisions. They are expected to honor their ancestors through rituals and sacrifices and other forms of veneration.

The Igarra people place great importance on ancestral worship believing that the ancestors can provide much needed guidance, protection and wisdom and in return, we must honor them through our rituals and offerings. They also believe that through our connection with nature, which is inhabited by these beings, we could maintain balance and harmony in the world⁸. The cosmology of men according to the Igarra people, highlights an interconnection of all existing things and emphasizes the need for humans to respect this relationship, while showing respect for nature, ancestors and spirit for balance in the world.

⁸ Ndubueze Udeh “*the artistic and aesthetic analysis of the costume of Egungun festival.*”
Journal of Art and Design, Vol 5 (3), 2018.

2.3 Symbolic Significance of Igarra Attire

The Significance of Igarra Attires in Etuno Culture cannot be underestimated.

Haruna (2019), asserted that the Igarra traditional attire is useful in the promotion of Igarra identity and cultural heritage. He also opined that the Igarra traditional attire is important to the preservation of the people's identity and cultural heritage, in order not go into extinction, but to be passed from one generation to another. Furthermore, the Igarra traditional attire is also important to showcase the distinct and authentic identity of the Igarra people and their rich culture.

The long term effect of this is to make known home and abroad the identity, culture and to preserve the heritage of the people of Igarra. One his part, Okeke (2019) and Adams (2015), stated that, Igarra attire is significant to the promotion of socio-economic activities among the Igarra indigenes. This was in agreement to the fact that young and old men and women of Igarra origin were, and are still involved in the production and selling of Igarra attires within the country and abroad. Igarra attire also enhances socio-cultural activities among Igarra people; as these attires are usually worn during special and important accessions and ceremonies.

The Igarra attire is a vital aspect of the cultural heritage of the Igarra people and is not just a means of covering the body but it is also an embodiment of deep symbolic significances that reflects the community's values, beliefs and history. The Igarra attire consists of several components, colors and patterns; each with its symbolic meaning and aesthetic appeal. The wrapper and Buba which is worn by the ladies, represents unity, solidarity, protection and warmth. While for the men, their loose fitting trousers represent humility and respect for tradition. Their headgears symbolizes wisdom, knowledge and spiritual growth.

Their colors also have symbolism such as: Red symbolizes courage and vitality and is often used for traditional ceremonies and rituals. Blue, symbolizes calmness and serenity, White signifies purity, innocence and spirituality and is also commonly used during rituals. Black signifies fertility, prosperity and abundance and Green, signifies nature, growth and harmony and is also often used in traditional ceremonies⁹.

The Igarra traditional attire gives a deep symbolic meaning on aspects of the community's beliefs such as in their cultural identity, a spiritual significance and reflection of the community's connection to the divine, their social status from attires which are worn for certain occasions and as well their respect for tradition and heritage, which emphasizes on the preservation of cultural values and practices.

⁹ Benedict Eboh, "*Symbolic Expression in Traditional Attire in Nigeria: A Study of Nigerian Cultures.*" *The International journal of Social Science and Humanity*, Vol.7, no.5, 2017,pp. 342-346

2.4 Theoretical Framework, Aesthetic Review and Cultural Criticism of Igarra Attires

2.4.1 Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, this project is founded and anchored on the theory of aesthetic by Immanuel Kant. This theory is relevant to the project because it follows the laid down rules and principle arrive at aesthetic appreciation.

In the theory of aesthetics as posited by Immanuel Kant, Chomsky and Hall (1999), opined that aesthetic theory is the concept of 'artworld', where an art work can be referred to as an intentional arrangement of conditions for affording experiences with marked aesthetic

characteristics. This means that the essential function of a work of art is the capability to produce aesthetic value or experience (Crowder, 1989). In support of this, Declacroix (1980), opined that art has an intended aesthetic function. In his works on aesthetics and technology, Kant argues that, it is our faculty of judgment that enables us to have experience of beauty and grasp those experiences as part of an ordered natural world with purpose. Therefore, aesthetic can literally be defined as the theory of beauty or broadly, be defined together with nature of art object (Declacroix, 1980).

2.4.2 Aesthetic Review of Igarra traditional Attire

The Igarra traditional attire is guided by several dynamics of aesthetic principles that reflects their cultural essential identity, values and beliefs. It can be seen as a social construct created by the Igarra people to uphold the preservation of their culture. Some of these aesthetic principles are:

- 1. Balance and harmony:** The Igarra traditional attire is characterized by a sense of balance and harmony which reflects the community's emphasis on living in harmony with nature and the spirits.
- 2. Color and pattern:** The colors and patterns used on the Igarra traditional attire represents various aspects of the Igarra culture and reflects the community's cultural heritage and values and their connection to nature.
- 3. Style:** The Igarra traditional attire is characterized by a distinctive and unique style that adds a touch of elegance to the attire. The attire is worn with loose fitting garments and traditional accessories such as headgears or headties, their local hand and neck beads, cowry shells etc.

4. Cultural significance: Every attire which aesthetically appeal to ones senses, have an underlying essence behind it. The Igarra traditional attire reflects the cultural identity, social status and the spiritual connection of the community.

The igarra traditional attire is manually woven with intricate design, alluring and beautiful and attractive colors. In retrospect to Immanuel Kant's theory as postulated in his aesthetic notion, it is obvious that the Igarra attire is expressed with imagery in variety forms like the motifs such as *ive* (comb), variety of vertical lines and colors. The way the colors, motifs, lines and other elements of design used in the execution of the attire point to the attributes of symbolism. Another form of art employed in producing Igarra attire is abstract. Thus, the *ive* motif and variety of lines applied on the background of the fabric appears abstracted. Thus, the attire is one of such hand-woven (crafted) fabrics produced with a great deal of concealed meanings (Akerejola, 2018) (Grant, 2002).

In analyzing and reviewing Igarra attire while using the classical art style as it relate to Kant's theory of aesthetic, it is obvious that the production of the Igarra attire is very logical in the composition and the selection of the motifs, lines and colors which suited the setting of Igarra people. The lines and motifs used on the attire are uniquely composed and well arranged. Looking at the Igarra attire, there is no doubt the attire is aesthetically endowed with a very good title, '*Ita-Owoji*' to complement the deliberate composition of the attire (Delacroix and Tansy, 1980).

It becomes very clear that Igarra attire has a bearing with romanticism. In conceiving the idea of using *ive* as a motif and variety of lines create the design in the production of the attire, is metaphorical. Thus, expresses the importance and uses of such comb, *ive* among the Igarra

people (Okeke, 2019). Similarly, Igarra attire is endowed with colors that are intense, even though appearing calm; they are brilliant and attractive to the viewers.

The Igarra traditional attire is an attire that is well crafted to express idea, feeling, emotion and thought about the important of *ive* and line to Igarra people. Also the attire showcase, promote the cultural identity, and socio-economic activities among the Igarra people (Silvers, 2010).

2.4.3 Criticism of Igarra traditional Attire

The Igarra traditional attire is not without criticism as the method of production is very slow. It usually takes days or weeks just to produce a piece of the attire, because it is manually produced or woven with a local loom. The reason why some merchants have mass produce the attire in wax prints called 'Ankara'. However, this doesn't look like the original that is manually produced. This is lighter and also cheaper. In addition, the cost of production is very high, due to economic hardship and high rate of inflation which have resulted in the radical drop in the value of the Naira. This has further compounded the problem of producing the attires as the materials like hand-spun cotton yarns have to be imported along with the fabric weaving accessories at a very exorbitant exchange rate. This scenario has contributed to the high cost of the Igarra attire and put the attire beyond the reach of the common man, who wishes to have them. They rather prefer to pay more attention to the basic needs of survival in this hash economic.

The end products of these hand-woven (made) attires are usually thick to be used for gowns, trousers, skirts, and blouses, except for wrappers and headgears; due to the type of hand-spun cotton yarns used in producing them. To curbs this limitation, a variation of the traditional attire have been produced recently in wax prints called "*Ankara*". This is lighter and can be used for variety of styles in fashion design (world) (Ajayi, 2019).

CHAPTER THREE

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION OF IGARRA ATTIRE

3.1 An Overview of Aesthetic

Aesthetic is derived from the Greek verb “*aisthetikos*” which means “to sense or to perceive”. It is used to describe the ability to perceive or appreciate beauty especially in relation to art and nature. Aesthetic deals with nature of beauty, taste and art. It creates a judgemental base for the evaluation and criticizing of what we call beautiful and what is not¹⁰. There are several key concepts in aesthetic and one of these, is the concept of Beauty. Aesthetic experience is gained by ones perception and appreciation of beauty and is characterized by other key features such as: Art, Taste and Imagination.

Beauty, has no definitive description as it involves the senses, imagination and emotions. There are many theories of beauty that ranges from ideas that beauty is an objective property of objects, beauty is a subjective experience from ones imagination. The definition of beauty is one that can be understood in many ways and is subject to cultures, geographical locations, individual perspective and as well a society construct¹¹.

Aesthetic was extensively propounded in the 18th century by Immanuel Kant, who developed the subjective nature of aesthetic qualities and experiences as the sensory observation of the feeling of the beautiful sublime. Immanuel Kant’s contribution to aesthetic theory is developed in the critique of judgment; where he investigated the possibility and logical status of judgment of taste, moral judgments, and scientific judgments. According to Dokubo (2015), the aesthetic theory primarily addresses sensory perception. This considers the way aesthetic addresses spectators, however, Dokubo (2015), noted that, aesthetic can be defined in terms of beauty or

¹⁰Danto, A. (2003). *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetic and the Theory of Art*. Open Court Publication.

¹¹ Delacroix, H, and Tansy, R.G. (1980). *Art Through the Ages*. 7th Edition. New York. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc

appreciation of beauty. Furthermore, aesthetic can also be referred to as a branch of philosophy that concerned with the nature of beauty and the philosophy of art.

Aesthetic examines the philosophy of aesthetic value, which is determined critical judgments of aesthetic taste; thus, the function of aesthetics is the “critical reflection on art, culture and nature”. Basically, aesthetic is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of beauty, taste, and art. It involves the study of how we experience and appreciate beauty, as well as the principles and values that guide our judgments of what we regard as beautiful or ugly. The aesthetic theorists argued that the audience uses all artworks to function as sources of aesthetic experience; basically this is the reason why they seek out of artworks. Judgment of aesthetic value relays on our ability to discriminate at a sensory level. Aesthetic examines our effective domain response to an object or phenomenon (Dokubo, 2015).

3.2 Beauty in Igarra World View

Beauty is a dynamic, complex, and subjective concept that can be defined and perceived differently by various cultures, individuals, and contexts. It encompasses various aspects, such as physical, inner, natural, and artistic. Its perception is influenced by cultural, personal, philosophical, psychological factors, making it a complex, dynamic, and subjective experience. For instance, while artistically, beauty is the creative expression through art forms like music, dance, literature, and visual arts; philosophically¹², Pluto’s idea of beauty suggests that beauty is

universal, eternal, and perfect concept. Culturally, beauty varies across cultures and historical periods, influencing what is considered beauty (Danto, 2003). Basically, beauty is a combination of qualities, such as shape, colour, texture or form that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight. Beauty gives pleasure to the senses or the mind.

In Igarra world view, beauty is a multifaceted concept that integrates physical, spiritual, and moral aspects. It is reflected in their cultural practices¹³, traditions, and values; emphasizing the importance of balance, harmony, and community. In Igarra culture, beauty is viewed through a holistic lens, which comprises physical, spiritual and moral aspects. (Akerejola, 2018), analysis of beauty in Igarra world view as follows:

- i. Physical Beauty: Igarra people value physical beauty that reflects symmetry and proportion, such as a well-shaped body or facial features. Traditional adornment like wearing of beads and body decoration using *uli* are considered as beauty and enhance one's physical appearance.
- ii. Spiritual Beauty: In Igarra culture, spiritual beauty is linked to one's connection to the divine, ancestors, and the natural world. Participation in traditional rituals and ceremonies is seen as a way to cultivate spiritual beauty and balance in Igarra community.

Moral Beauty: Igarra people emphasized the importance of good character and conduct, such as honesty, respect for elders, integrity, and kindness as essential

¹²Grant, S. (2002). *Formalism in the Philosophy of Arts*: Reading Ancient and Modern Boston. McGraw Hill.

¹³Okeke, Alexander (2019). “*Ninety-day seclusion prepared me for the throne*” – Otaru of Igarra.2024

- iii. components of beauty. Beauty is also associated with strong community ties and positive relationship (bond) with others.
- iv. Cultural Expression of Beauty: Igarra art, such as weaving, wood/walking sticks carvings, pottery, hairdos, and textiles reflect their aesthetic values and considered beautiful. Traditional music and dance are integral part of Igarra culture and are seen as expressions of beauty and joy among the people.

3.3 Aesthetic Appreciation of Igarra Traditional Attire

Igarra traditional attire is hand crafted and woven that is made from pure hand spun cotton yarn. The fabric is woven by Igarra young ladies who specialized in the skills of weaving fabric. It usually takes them some days or weeks to finish a set for adults dressing. The fabric is closely and beautifully woven and well designed with simple motif (*ive*), and vertical lines of various thickness and attractive colours, usually monochromatic and dominated by dark (navy) blue, with lines of royal blue and turquoise blue, and yellow spotted motifs of *ive* (wooden comb). Igarra traditional attire is aesthetically appealing and alluring to behold; particularly when it is worn with a combination of either navy blue, turquoise blue or brilliant yellow/golden orange blouses (tops). Also noticeable in the Igarra traditional attire is the exploration of principles of design such as balance, harmony, and contrast in the execution of the traditional attire. The cultural role of the Igarra traditional attire cannot be over stated¹⁴.

¹⁴Simparr, Clement (2019). “*Ninety-day seclusion prepared me for the throne*” - Otaru of Igarra. 2019.

The traditional attire is made and woven with industrial cotton yarns (warp) stripes and set among a thick indigo dyed hand spun cotton yarns. It is beautifully designed in simple but attractive colors made of navy blue, turquoise blue, royal blue and yellow. This well crafted traditional attire comes in varieties of designs and color stains, including yellow, royal blue, turquoise blue and lines of white.

A biennial festival under ‘My Dress My Culture Initiative’ (MDMCI) has been created few years ago to celebrate the traditional attire in order to preserve the cultural heritage¹⁵. The Igarra traditional attire has played a significance role in the following ceremonies Igarra, namely traditional marriage, wedding ceremony, chieftaincy title ceremony, house warming/birthday ceremony and many others¹⁶. During these ceremonies, the traditional attire are worn with either white, yellow, turquoise blue or navy blue lace, brocade etc, with some neck beads (*Ovene*) and hand beads (*Isuvo*).



¹⁵David, K. (2014). *The Aesthetic Theory of Arts*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁶Delacroix, H, and Tansy, R.G. (1980). *Art Through the Ages*. 7th Edition. New York. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc

3.4 Symbolic Expression and Cultural Significance of Traditional Attire

Despite the cultural significance of traditional attire, it has faced so many challenges in our contemporary society. The influence of the western culture, globalization and urbanization has led to a severe decline in the appreciation of traditional attire among younger generations. The symbolic expression of traditional attire cannot be over emphasized. It symbolizes beauty, harmony, uniqueness, unity, and cultural identity and bond among the various cultures. These attires not only reflect the aesthetic preference of a community, but it also conveys cultural meanings, values, myths, spiritual beliefs, ancestral heritage and histories of the community. Traditional attires play a very vital role in the preservation of cultural heritage and cultural identity and in demonstration of connection to ones cultural roots for example some particular attires could be worn to showcase the celebration of a particular event e.g weddings, festivals, age group/ initiation ceremonies, naming ceremony, burials etc. this attire when worn by the people, foster a sense of oneness and cultural/ social bond and this traditions tend to pass down from one generation to another¹⁷.

With over 250 ethnic groups, Nigeria boasts of a rich tapestry of traditional clothings with each uniquely representing their symbolic and cultural significance. For example, the Adire cloth worn by the Yoruba's symbolizes wisdom, creativity and their cultural heritage.

¹⁷David, K. (2014). *The Aesthetic Theory of Arts*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁸Delacroix, H, and Tansy, R.G. (1980). *Art Through the Ages*. 7th Edition. New York. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc

The Akwete cloth of the Igbo people symbolizes fertility and prosperity. While the kaftan of the Hausa's represents royalty, dignity and Islamic values.

The traditional attire of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria represents a symbol of cultural identity, heritages and values. This diversity in attire, reflects the country's richness in cultural diversity and as well promotes a sense of cross-cultural understanding and harmony¹⁹.

By the promotion of the traditional attire, Nigerians foster a greater cultural awareness, unity, pride in their cultural heritage and this awareness is handed down from generation to generation for preservation of indigenous cultural identity²⁰.

¹⁹Oyebade, Francis (2022). *Language Policy and Planning Critical Concepts in Linguistic. International Journal of Linguistics*. Maiden Edition. September, 2022. p53-58. A publication of the department of linguistics and African Language. Federal University, Lokoja, Lokoja, Nigeria.

²⁰Akerejola, David (2018). *The history of Igarra people*. Akoko-Edo. Edo State 2020.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Evaluation

The Igarra traditional attire is a vital part of the community's economic activities, its cultural identity and heritage. The traditional attire reflects the Igarra people's identity and cultural values.

The attire is a source of the community pride, symbolizing unity and solidarity. The traditional attire helps in the preservation of the Igarra cultural traditions and customs and also promotes economic activities among the people of Igarra. The Igarra traditional attire which is popularly known as *Ita-Owoji* is characterized with indigo, orange, turquoise blue colors with intricate patterns making it usually striking. The traditional attire features; simple but attractive designs with motifs (vertical lines and *ive*), showcases the community's artistic ability, taste and skills. The traditional attire has a distinct and unique style, that sets it apart from other traditional and cultural attires.

The traditional attire holds both spiritual and social significance among the people; connecting the wearers to their ancestors and the people of Igarra community. It can also be used to indicate the wearers' origin or identity within the society. The attire is usually worn during important occasions or ceremonies, emphasizing its cultural importance and uniqueness.

4.2 Conclusion

The need to carry out this study, "In Defense of the Aesthetic Appreciation of the Igarra Traditional Attire, was to critically analyze and defend the aesthetic appreciation of the Igarra traditional attire. This will serve as a means of promoting the traditional attire and also encourage its patronage within and out the shore of Igarra community, thus prevent it from going into extinction. This will also serves as a means of showcasing the Igarra rich and unique cultures and customs, thereby influencing its modernization and global acceptability. Additionally, it will also help in the preservation of the cultural heritage of the people of Igarra. In other words, efforts have to be made to preserve and promote the Igarra traditional attire, including documentation and education.

In the course of carrying out this study, it was discovered that Igarra traditional attire can be a source of economic empowerment for the community, through sustainable production and merchandising (trading) of the traditional attire. To help the outcome of this study, references were made to related literature and cultures, which made up the title of this project and from which the theoretical framework was created. Therefore, this study was inspired and carried out due to indicating studies, that the Igarra traditional attire is already fading out and going into extinction as only very few young and old women are into its production and making.

The findings of this study have revealed the significance of the Igarra traditional attire, which include social, spiritual, economic and cultural significance. The study gave a distinctive and descriptive analyzing of the aesthetic principles and symbolism underlying the Igarra traditional attire. And also discussed intensively the aesthetic symbolism and cultural expressions of the traditional attire in order to promote Igarra cultural identity. The study also showcased the Igarra rich and unique traditions, cultures and customs that will be of importance to Igarra oncoming generations. Thus, it is the researcher submission that the study will not only promote and showcase the Igarra traditional attire, but also serves as a means of preserving the attire and Igarra cultural identity.

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