

**THE AESTHETICS SIGNIFICANCE OF OFO AS A SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY
IN IGBO COSMOLOGY**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God almighty for his mercy and loving kindness and to my mum for her support and prayers.

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work was originally carried out by **CHIDERA VICTOR OMEH**, with matriculation number **ART2000830**, and it meets the requirement for an award of Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy.

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Date: 16-02-2025

External examiner

Date: _____

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the aesthetics significance of Ofo as a symbol of authority and justice in Igbo cosmology. Ofo is aesthetically significant within the Igbo cosmology because it represents not only spiritual and temporal power but also serves as a tool for ensuring justice and maintaining order in the society. The study investigates how this emblem functions in the cultural and religious practice of the Igbo people, while examining its symbolic values, aesthetic qualities and role in the socio-political system. The study employs the conceptual-analytical and reconstructive tool in the field of philosophy, while evaluating the virtual analysis of the Ofo symbol and representation in various Igbo settings. The findings reveal that Ofo is a multifaceted symbol, embodying both the spiritual authority of ancestors and the practical responsibility of adjudicating justice in the community. Ofo is not only a symbol of authority and power but also a conduit for enforcing moral order, as it is frequently used in ritualistic practice aimed at ensuring fairness and equity. The study concludes that Ofo remains a central symbol in Igbo culture, deeply intertwined with the concept of justice, leadership and social harmony.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Many intelligible varying conceptualizations put forward by people of different cultures, seen in thought systems, and philosophical traditions are mostly fundamentally based on the differences on people's basic assumptions and theories about reality. Contemporary research in philosophical study of art, beauty, and the responses they engender reveal that aesthetic mindset and perspectives differ as a result of or based on cultural, historical, religious, ideological, ethical, environmental, and educational contents of the appreciating mind. African cultural predispositions and preconceptions colour the aesthetic perceptions of the African people.

Certainly, appreciating knowledge and evaluation of aesthetic objects will always be conditioned by the totality of the worldview of a people. Just as the horizon of our knowledge circumscribes our vision and conception of issues, so our tactile and other sensory apparatus tend to get adapted to and approve of what it is accustomed to. According to Njiofor, There is no question as to the richness and peculiarity of African works of art, and continual upholding of perspectives of African aesthetics systematic

Aesthetically also, although we cannot totally close out individual differences and preferences within a particular culture, it is still the case that amidst the congeries of

varying aesthetic perspectives there is a clear unifying criterion that undergirds African aesthetic mindset. Surely, this mindset has been fashioned due to many peculiar existential data of the African world. Although the African continent is vast and its people diverse, "certain criterion of aesthetic appreciation and judgement is held in common among various traditional African communities".

Recent aesthetic studies have shown that there are certain reasons, though paradoxical, why the bizarre, the grotesque, the odd, the queer, the strange, are sometimes said to contain some degree of aesthetic significance. Aesthetic awareness, knowledge and sensitivity help man to realize this and enable him to valuationally categorize and adjudge an aesthetic object as beautiful or ugly. What is determinative in this categorization is the imagery presented by the work of art, the feeling the work of art creates in and the message it communicates to the observer.

Taking cognizance of the fact that the way an object look like naturally always strikes us in a unique way and arouses curiosity, and in the light of the point that certain symbol is somewhat peculiar to culture and traditions, this study investigates the

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It is pertinent to indicate here that some appreciations are done at the subliminal level, the human level, and the cosmic or physical levels. In African aesthetic world, many reasons undergird the African work of art whether visual, musical, kinetic, poetic, contemplative,

spiritual or other non-visual arts; for there is always a sense of purpose in whatever the African does. His paintings are informed by beliefs, traditions, religion, folklores, conquests, history, etc. Works of art whether in sculpture, building, dress, dance, carving, horticulture, tattooing, theatre, etc., are informed by concepts like peace, love, friendship, courage, toughness, strangeness, hospitality, vision, religiosity, harmony, unity, moderation, etc.

In Igbo worldview, aesthetic values are so much interwoven with religious, political, and moral aspects in their worldview that the terms in which aesthetic appreciation is expressed mainly refer to richness, prestige, cultural, religious, moral and political symbolism. It is from this perspective that the aesthetic significance in ofo as an artform is conceptualized and contextualize in this study. This artform is very symbolic as it has influence the aesthetic and cultural lifestyle of the people. This is because culture plays an important role in the cognitive understanding of reality and unless one is intimately familiar with the ontological commitments of a culture, it is often difficult to appreciate or otherwise understand those commitments.

Often, this traditional aesthetic object is not fully done unless that aesthetic quality is perceived in it. It aims at evoking certain feelings which could be stimulating, reassuring, persuading, sedating, titillating or even soothing to the spectator or audience. The sculpted artwork of "ofò" in Igbo worldview is not just the symbolism of the people's insignia but it portrays the historical tenacity and traditional uniqueness of the people.

Actually, this research has taken its standpoint from the perspective of a tradition deeply marked by the Igbo people aesthetic consciousness which reveals itself through an ancient habit of representation and symbolism involving his artistic mythology-a cultural habit which seems to have been established for a long time and continued into the contemporary period. For the future, it will be necessary to grasp the precise relationship emanating from these aesthetics contained in Igbo thought system and the exiting works of art themselves, in order to arrive at a better understanding of artistic objects called 'ofò' in Igbo worldview.

'Ofò' sculpted artform as a visual symbol connects all the admirers of Igbo art works to this particular art object. Our choice of 'ofò' sculpted artform is based on its effects as a medium for communicating the sense and essence of the art work which forms part of Igbo aesthetics that it represents within the local and global contexts. The influence of 'ofò' sculpted artform now traverses Igbo communities in Nigeria to Europe and America where there are numerous admirers and appreciators from the African Diaspora and other nationals who admire the beauty in this work of art.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study are:

1. To explore the cultural and symbolic significance of 'ofò' in Igbo worldview including its role in royal ceremonies, traditions, and national identity.

2. To investigate the aesthetics significance of 'ofò' as symbols of authority.
3. To explore the value of 'ofò' to the Igbo people of Nigeria.

1.4 Significance of Study

The significance of this study are:

1. The study will promote cultural identity and national pride and enhance the knowledge of the immense cultural significance of the artistic object for the Igbo people.
2. It will expose us to the cultural and symbolic value of 'ofò' in Igbo thought system.
3. It will enable one to understand the aesthetic significance of 'ofò' in Igbo conceptualization of beauty.

1.5 Methodology

This study adopted the conceptual-analytical and reconstructive tools in the field of philosophy. The conceptual-analytical was used to clarify and assess salient and fundamental concepts in the study, namely aesthetics, beauty, and African aesthetics, among others, while the reconstructive method was employed to recreate and re-enact the ideas of ontological and sculptural symbolism in order to evolve an interpretation of

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study has concentrated on the aesthetic significance of 'ofò' as artistic symbols among the Igbo people of Nigeria while taking into cognizance the relationship of the importance of these art object to the life of Igbo people. The researcher has given critical attention to the concept, functions (aesthetic, adjudicative and socio-cultural) of the artistic object. The researcher has also looked at the contemporary importance of this artistic object and its potentials for further artistic exploration by art lovers. It examined the significance of 'ofò' within the cultural and philosophical framework of the Igbo people of Nigeria.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Ontology is the philosophical understanding of the nature of beings, existence or reality as well as the basic classifications of beings and their interaction. Ontology as a branch of metaphysics could be conceived as the science of what is, of the kinds and structures of the objects, properties and relations in every area of reality. Ontology in this sense is often used in such a way as to be synonymous with metaphysics.

Beauty: Beauty is usually defined as "a combination of qualities that give pleasure to the senses (especially to the eye or ear) or to the mind; a pleasing or attractive feature".

African Ontology: Whatever is, in African ontology, is the life force. Force is being precisely as being. It is the supreme principle of individuality, plurality and unity. "Force finds expression in practically everything that is; force permeates everything, every

thinking, every idea, every utterance and every preoccupation. Force is the enduring sustaining process that makes a thing possible". Everything in African ontology has a spirit or force.

Aesthetics: Aesthetics as a philosophical branch deals with the "historically determined essence of human values, their creation, perception, appreciation and assimilation." Onyewuenyi define aesthetics as "the philosophical study of art and of value judgment about art and of beauty in general".

African Aesthetics: The term African aesthetic refers to the African perception and appreciation of the nature, beauty, and value of artistic expressions or representations of African origin. It is embedded in the plurality of African cultures and embodied in people's practices within their lived African societal contexts.

1.8 Literature Review

African aesthetics perspective clearly or indirectly expressed partly in various forms of oral tradition contains deep aesthetic insights which reflect the prevalent principles and canons of Africans artistic creativity, criticism, and evaluation. And some African everyday words signifying sense of beauty are intertwined with what is normally adjudged good, proper and appreciable in the African world.

By way of definition, therefore, Njiofor defines African aesthetics as a "branch of African philosophy—is the normative science of beauty in nature and art, in other objects, and in living experience in line with African culture and tradition and ideals of the community for the well-being of all". The term African aesthetic refers to the African perception and appreciation of the nature, beauty, and value of artistic expressions or representations of African origin. It is embedded in the plurality of African cultures and embodied in people's practices within their lived African societal contexts.

Ozumba defined African aesthetics as "the African way of appreciating nature, creating aesthetic objects, evaluating and improving on nature aesthetics raw materials for the overall improvement of their well-being hinged on man's multilayered

Bewaji, J.A.I, *Beauty and Culture: Perspectives in Black Aesthetics, An Introduction to African and African Diaspora Philosophy of Art*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited,2003)p,107.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Aesthetics: Meaning and Clarifications

Aesthetic surely falls among the most important and complicated issues in domains of art and aesthetic. From Plato who believed "Beauty is a complicated issue" up to now, concept of beauty has gone through a wide variety of discussions. The most prominent question in history of aesthetic is that whether aesthetic is a quality in human conception or a set of factors in objects or the sensible things human observes. There are a large body of discussions and researches still going on about this question.

Etymologically, the word "aesthetics" derives from the Greek word, "(aesthetics)", which means "sense perception, sensation". It is the study of what is immediately pleasing to our visual or auditory perception or to our imagination: the study of the nature of beauty. It encompasses the theory of taste and criticism in the creative and performing arts. According to Ome, the word was first used in this sense by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten in his dissertation: "(Philosophical Considerations of Some Matters Pertaining the Poem)" of 1735; and in his work "Aesthetica" of 1750.

Vogel has highlighted those elements that characterise African aesthetics. In her description, she sees African aesthetics as having the following characteristics: Resemblance to human being, Luminosity, Self-composure, Youthfulness, Clarity of form and detail, complexity of composition, balance and symmetry, smoothness of finish.

Works of art shape human experience, imaginations, emotions, perception of the world and perception of other people, One can understand aesthetics from aesthetics or outside it; that is aesthetics is a process of articulating a systematic view of things like imaginations, emotions, artworks and how we engage in them, it is an integration approach, for example, when Africans lost the art of writing as a result of incessant wars and revolutions, the aesthetic modes of transmission changed. Some were transmitted through the artistic carvings, wise sayings, proverbs, songs, etc.

2.2 The Idea of African Aesthetics

The various conceptualizations put forward by people of different cultures and as expressed in their thought system showcases that all societies that ever existed have historical record. For this, there are evidences that the people created things such as statues, embroidered clothing, dance, and songs etc. that were valued for their immediate sensory qualities as well as whatever other purposes they might have served. Accounts also can be found in most societies of at least some people's responses to the sensuous features of natural phenomena. These kinds of sensory experiences, along with the variety of emotions and meanings associated with them have fascinated thinkers in Africa for a very longtime and this domain of human concern in Africa is called African aesthetics.

Appreciating and evaluating aesthetic objects has always been conditioned by the totality of the worldviews of a people. Why do we have to talk about African aesthetics? We are talking about African aesthetics because "philosophy seeks to establish order

We can talk about African aesthetics because African culture has its own "standards of value in judging art"; its own "general principles" in explaining the value of any work of art. African has his own view of life which is regarded as the starting point of philosophy. Our knowledge of life is above all contained in certain and cultural views of the world which play a prominent role in philosophy. That philosophy of art is universal does not mean that all aestheticians should employ similar standards of value in judging art, To know how a people view the world around them is to know how they evaluate life and this provide a guide to their behavior, consequently, this is leading to discussing the idea of African aesthetics in this section of the thesis.

African aesthetics perspective clearly or indirectly expressed partly in various forms of oral tradition contains deep aesthetic insights which reflect the prevalent principles and canons of Africans artistic creativity, criticism, and evaluation. And some African everyday words signifying sense of beauty are intertwined with what is normally adjudged good, proper and appreciable in the African world.

By way of definition, therefore, Njiofor defines African aesthetics as a "branch of African philosophy—is the normative science of beauty in nature and art, in other

2.3 Components of Artistic Expressions in African Aesthetics

The essence of African aesthetics is in its representation as a construct of African people that articulates African culture, identity and spirituality. It is how Africans consciously define their own standards of perceiving, appreciating, appraising or applying aesthetic values. African aesthetics embraces a rich variety of creative forms and styles peculiar to the people of African origin that incorporates a combination of practical, physical, material, temporal and spiritual aspects. It includes African artistic expressions.

African aesthetics encompasses the elements of artistic representation and presentation, such that virtually every aspect of living in Africa constitutes a veritable domain for the preservation and application of African artistic expressions. African aesthetics is embedded in the plurality of African cultures and embodied in the people's practices within their lived African societal contexts. It is therefore a significant component of African people's tangible and intangible cultural heritage that simultaneously affirms their diversity and reinforces their cultural unity. Most Africans in diaspora have retained some of their traditional aesthetic components which are exhibited in their dress, hairstyles, ornamentation, music artworks. These various symbolic components of Africans aesthetics define and sustain their identity and origin.

We shall now discuss some of the components of African aesthetics accordingly:

2.3.1 Dressing, Ornaments, Beads and Jewelry

Dressing is one of the basic necessities of life either as a protection from the elements or as a means of covering one's nudity upon the consciousness of the same. Most cultures and societies have specific standards for dressing male and female; they devise dress codes which enhance the different genders, while at the same time complementing the beauty of humanity. For Bewaji, African dress forms play an important role as an expression of identity, the Africans dress for every occasion and every dressing tells a story of who you are, what you are doing and where you are going.

Dress is politically, socially and religiously significant in its role as indicator of group identity and as a medium for developing and strengthening ethnic, religious and political cohesion. In most African societies also, "there are dress codes related to age grade, personal, official, and other stations in life, especially as these enhance or reflect functions on duties, statuses, and performances".

2.3.2 Song and Dance

Songs are inspirational and elevating. In war and peace, men and women in many African societies, improvise songs and sing old ones, either embellish to reflect contemporary realities or modified to remove redundancies created by historical anachronisms to inspire their men and women to acts of valor. They also sing to remind

2.3.3 Music and Musical Instruments

African music is alive in the people's soul, their feeling, their thought, their environment, their voice, their tongue, and every part of their body. This treatment of art seems natural, for freedom is the essence of art. Sing when you feel like singing, and dance when the limbs can no longer restrain the emotions. Music is an important medium for conveying African tradition and culture. African music is imbued with meaning as the primary function of music is to communicate and to convey feeling or emotions (happiness, sadness, unity, love, praise). African music combines rhythm, song, dance and spirituality. The role of music in social entertainment is not separated from its spiritual celebration in African contexts; music therefore carries a mixture of the sacred and the secular. Music is the common possession of a body of people who share the same traditions in social terms. Music exists only in term of social interaction and it is learned behaviour...it involves the behaviour of learned individuals and group of individuals.

Who is a musician? In Africa, the musician is not just the originator of the harmonious sounds, or the composer of the rhythmic stanzas, or the vocalist that sings the piece. No, the musician is not even the dancer who lends dramatic vigour to the whole art, nor the whole contingent of artists whose instruments are the sine qua non of music.

2.3.4 Sculptures, Paintings and Architectures

In her emotional arts of sculpture Africa has made a perpetual contribution that has revolutionized art everywhere. And one may generalize that African art is, above all, the sculptor's art. The sculptor's talent is that of attention to forms in their relation to one another. "When one turns to another very popular African arena of artistic expression, sculpture, one finds the situation of perspicacity, perceptiveness, richness, and variety replicated. Some sculptures are realistically and naturalistically done while others are not, as they do not fit into any narrow stereotypes".

Sculpture is the type of art that is most popular with Western curio collectors, because it panders to the exhibitionism in the nature of their societies and their art patrons, which must always be expressed in the number of artistic items they have collected, privately exhibited or collectively owned and displayed, probably, a) as a mark of their elevation to the status of arrival among the parasitic ruling and often oppressive elite class, b) as an exhibition of sudden or newfound wealth, c) for companionship, especially in their homes, as these artefacts replace the human company denied to

Westerners in the face of that possessive individualism and an irresponsible personal freedom rooted in the egocentrism that typifies Western culture, and d) as a mark of pretentious display of intellectual acumen and ability to appreciate value and beauty individually and collectively.

These particular needs are never so pronounced in most African cultures where the plastic arts are largely functional, as simply things of beauty, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, have great meaning collectively to the people in terms of their religio-metaphysical, historical, moral, cultural, etc. needs, as it serves to ensure the oneness of the terrestrial and the extraterrestrial and further serves as the harbinger of their ideas and ideals, while thus having unquantifiable monetary value to the whole community and to the individual.

In this regard, the art also functions as the locus of power, a link between the physical and the metaphysical, representing continuity, power, remission, intermission, essence, existence, authority and life for the individual and for the people. As we look at African and Western sculptures of the last century, can we discover exotic influences on the African work? None that is basic, But in the Western, the effect from their African contact is the basis of the revolution that is still sweeping the whole of art.

Thus we can say that sculptures are important in the artistic terrain of Africans. They are often grandiose, noble, intimate, intricate, and even disturbing. They help to record history as they chronicle their times and epochs and they serve as mementos and

2.3.5 Crafts: Pottery, Carving and Metal work

2.3.5.1 Pottery

Western scholars have proved that pottery- that is, objects made of clay and hardened by fire- are one of the oldest inventions of man, and that it developed simultaneously in many countries. As man emerged from the Stone Age culture, wherever he lived, he made indefatigable efforts to devise a vessel in which to cook his food. All over Africa, in Egypt, Morocco, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, men invented the

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2.3.5.2 Carving

The art in carving is distinct from that in sculpture. It is a material art very close to the emotional arts of literature and Sculpture. Working with wood is traditionally the domain of men. The carvers employ the use of the short-handled adze. Carving entails making household utensils, chairs, benches, stools, tool handles, musical instruments, etc. The carver examines the wood material to find out what the grain is. He takes the board down, and in a moment, by the aid of a small cutting edge, scratches a few lines on the board. Then he takes up his mallet and cutter, Carving begins. In his mental imagery is the picture of the figure he intends to carve. He must not make a single mistake or the wood would be spoiled; and he is too kind to the wood to have to condemn and replace it. Within a day or two, by a gradual chipping away of the flat surface, a form emerges accurately as a work of art.

Perhaps you consider that this hard-working artist deserves at least a good compensation for what he has created. There you are terribly mistaken again. He has no idea of being remunerated for bringing forth a new image. This African artist does not care to ask, or take fees. His fee is his emotional satisfaction. You may so understand that you force him to accept even a penny, not, you may reason with him, as the real value of

2.3.5.3 Metal Work

As we dwell on the components of African aesthetics, metal work is of great importance too. We have admired the potter and the carver, the light cast on this is equally magnanimous because of its contribution to African aesthetics. Working with metal is done by male blacksmiths, who smelt using traditional clay furnaces and bellows. The popular traditional metals worked with in Africa are iron, copper, brass, and gold. Traditional African metal craft includes the making of tools, equipment, weapons, sculptures, regalia and other ornaments. To discuss the bronze plaque of Egypt, of Morocco, of South Africa, and of Benin (Nigeria) would amount to a book, for each in its own colour and style leaves an inimitable impression on the total culture of the great people.

2.3.6 Hairstyles and Cosmetics

Many modern African hairstyles are influenced by and have historical connections to traditional African cultures. "African inspired hairstyles include Afro or straightened hair, dreadlocks, buns, knots and plaited hair. Natural hair has been worn as statement of African identity and pride; for example, the Afro hairstyles of the 1960s were an expression of connection, power, revolution and differentiation". It was a popular

hairstyle among artists, political activists, and youths. There are elaborate hairstyles of and specialists in various African communities that cater the ornamental aspects of hair presentations. The elaborate hairstyles are mere body decorations and beautification that tells the story of about the society. Reflect upon morals in society, represents choices and testimonials of the clubs and societies of their various wearers, etc. Some others are associated with religious persons who officiate in special capacities and on special occasions.

One may find that hair is weaving and plaiting, usually associated with women, are not so gender specific when religion and cultural activities commingle with stylistic representation in society, though hairstyling is more or less a woman's beautification thing in many African societies, because they were the ones whose hair is expected to grow long naturally and to need constant beautification attention. According to Bewaji, "Whenever women leave their hair to grow long, it is expected, for reasons of hygiene

Such care includes proper packing or decoration to prevent it getting into food and drinks, thereby causing contamination, long, untidy and unkempt hair has no virtue to either the person wearing it or to the society in which the person lives, for it ultimately reflects negatively on the person, relatives and the community in which the person lives.

African communities present a wide variety of hairstyles. In Africa, there is a gender hair styling distinction and differentiation, how this difference developed is not what can effectively be discussed with fact, but with the differentiation and distinction between the

two sexes, there is no reason to engage in any form of competition as to whose hair can grow longest.

Bewaji assert that "the nature of gender neutral division of labour in many traditional societies dictates that men wear their short hair as this is conducive to the type of vocations they practice, so their hair does not get in the way of dexterity and quickness when there is need for this", while in the case of women, "the tasks that they performed and probably, the grace it adds to their physique, encouraged them wearing long hair" This situation is reversed when roles are reversed; for example, when men perform symbolic feminine roles and when women perform symbolic masculine role, otherwise they have to devise means of securing the hair to prevent interference.

2.3.7 Poetry and Storytelling

Humans have a compulsion to seek explanations to things. These may be events, phenomena, reality, dreams etc. In seeking explanations, the knowledge, beliefs and opinions of the society and the knowledgeable or influential matters very much in helping develop explanatory models. For this reason, poetry and storytelling are forms of explanation in Africa social milieu. Praise poetry is a common practice among African communities. Praise accompanies community leaders in ceremonial functions describing their prowess. According to Shava, "Praise is also used to thank and to appease other community members. For example, the use of totemic praise is common among the Shona tribe of Zimbabwe and is applied to both men and women as greeting, gesture of

respect or means of appreciation.it is applied in diverse contexts from private bedrooms to public occasion".

In the words of Bewaji, "Poetry is a form of entertainment at ceremonial gatherings, whereby the poet will demonstrate his or her creative oratory prowess in relation to the occasion through poetry interpolated with the appropriate use of proverbs and idioms". Among the West African people, precisely, poetry and proverbs formed the basis for logical argument in personal relations, legal proceedings and political negotiations.

The African has few poems that he can recite merely as poems. He loves poetry when it can be dramatized, sang and danced. We have no real poetry besides songs, for a true poet does not compose without the sublime inspiration that comes from musical impulse. Bewaji further buttressed that "The African poet is conscious of the co-operation and simplicity that characterize his society. He sympathizes with his audience and wants them to share with him actively in the poem. That is the cultural reason why the poet always invents an easy chorus for the audience. Often the words or phrases have no literary meaning. All they have is musical charm, a dominant rhythm".

African tales, fables and myths form a distinctive way of entertaining as well as educating the young about the world, combining both myth and reality and drawing on the wisdom of the elders. Myths are stories seeking to justify events or to explain usually featuring gods, heroes, or beings. In many instances, myths have veiled meaning, because

they originate out of unclear presuppositions regarding the things they explain about which there is detailed knowledge. As an oral society, the art of storytelling remains a distinctive aspect among African people. In telling stories the audience is intimately involved.

Story-telling among the African people is defined by its role and performative representation among the people. For example, the Igbos as a people can all be considered as story-tellers and as the audience at the same time. This is because all stories originated from their collective cultural milieu and experience. As such, no story is

2.3.8 Architecture

The artistic expressions of Africans in architecture is showcased in the environmental friendly construction of homes, public places such as shrines, churches, mosques palaces public squares etc. the architecture of the various traditional and contemporary African societies has exhibited an understanding of nature, the climate and environment in which the people live. When the traditional Africans moved away from hunting and food gathering societies to more settled domesticated life, they employed the various observations of how the animals constructed their homes, to build themselves homes that were environmentally friendly and highly resilient.

The way the weaver birds build their nests, the termites their homes, the wasps their abodes etc., were useful technologically instructive information sources for the human

intent on maintaining a permanent or a semi-permanent settlement. These were coupled with the knowledge of plants, soil, climate and seasons of the year to produce abodes that meets the needs of the people and survived hazards of the climatic changes and natural forces.

The Savannah dwellers built round houses with dome-like tops that survived the windy sand storms, the riverine and coastal dwellers built their homes on stilts to survive the floods. In all cases, the artistic inclination of the peoples were never compromised and the richness of the knowledge they accumulated over the thousands of years of creating beautiful living environment are evident wherever you turn in Africa.

In many societies architecture is often a reflection of the state of the wealth of members. Architecture is an expression of the very basic desire to enhance comfort within the living environment and also to show to the world the degree of creativity of members and wealth of the people. As we talk about architecture as a component of African aesthetics we see the elaborate effort put into the construction and decoration, primarily of the homestead and secondarily of other places of public convocation and regular congregation.

Bewaji puts this way by saying that, "The doors are carefully and beautifully carved in many societies (giving vent to the state of life, taste, preferences, hopes, fears, while they may be very simple in others (just to prevent stray animals and unwanted intruders from entrance as, in the wise Yoruba proverb, the 'doorless house is easy for mad persons to

enter), and seemingly almost nonexistent in others," because of the total feeling of security of life from unnecessary stress and threats of invasion; the outer and inner walls painted and decorated with calabash carvings, sculptures, engravings, etchings, paintings, and murals, and, in many cases, "where the people are of various religious persuasions, an area sanctified and devoted to the religious aspect of life in which sacred objects are kept and prayers said on a regular basis or on appointed occasions, consultations held with the ancestors, the divinities, and the Supreme Being, for the welfare of members of the family and the immediate and distant fellow human beings"

2.3.9 The Spoken Word

The spoken word is highly respected among the various peoples of the world, whether they are traditional, modern or contemporary and, as such African societies are no exception. In Edo language, for example there is a great respect for intelligent and expert use of the Edo language, because it is the harbinger of peace and war, it is the engine of culture and civility, it is the hallmark of conversational prudence, and it is the epitome of intellectual maturity that may be the precursor of social and, political, religious and cultural responsibility.

There are things that can be said in certain circumstances; some said in muffled, hushed tones, some said with gestures or gesticulations without vocalization, others never said at all because they are too volatile and others still better left unsaid though not unsayable

but assumed as known and understood by someone who has been well brought up or who is highly cultured.

One other important area in which the spoken word is very creatively employed is the formulation of proverbs, pithy sayings, poetry, etc. These areas are very important in society because they provide the avenue for (among others) the representation of diverse ideals and impressions by members as well as modern societies. The images that lie beneath the proverbs for example, provides the necessary building blocks to recognize the structure of cognitive development. Proverbs are very essential for meaningful discourse as it illuminates dialogue, when dialogue is deadlocked, it is proverbs that are used to clarify it.

The use of words is seen as equivalent to tertiary level education, for the orator is someone seen with an uncommon and very special skill indeed. It is something that is guarded with a great honour and used with extreme prudence and discretion. In Africa, a good talk is seen as what brings out kolanut from the pocket for sharing, while bad talk brings arrow from its store for a fight. The other side of this important skill is the ability of the audience to listen, to have an ear attuned to the spoken word, to hear and understand its deep meaning, its nuances and textures in particular and varied contexts.

Clearly, "the metaphysical presuppositions of the cultures in which we live and under which our lives have meaning are formulated in words and enshrined in languages (and, in many instances, in the dialects) of the societies in which they exist". There is a need to

come to an understanding of the power of words as limitless, especially in knowledge development, knowledge imparting, knowledge storage and history telling. It is an artistic instrument that with an efficacy that transcends the immediate content of the utterance or sound.

2.4 The Characteristics and Elements of African Aesthetics

African aesthetics encompasses the visual and nonvisual, the tangible and the non-tangible elements of artistic representation and presentation, such that every aspect of living constitutes a veritable domain for the preservation and application of art. It can be conjectured that the two tropes which facilitate the understanding of the content and meaning of African aesthetics are beauty and pleasantness. Beauty and pleasantness

To this end, a consideration of African aesthetics cannot be complete without a brief mention of how artists, in all walks of life, are appreciated in various African societies. For, it is often said that praise begets further acts of excellence, while failure to appreciate could stymie creativity, if not totally destroy it. For this reason, while the members of society who are skilled, talented and creative in various ways are also persons who have different vocations, such members of society are valued for the special abilities they bring to enrich society. Be they drummers, painters, potters, dancers, singers, poets, or actors, the society see them as icons, who make life more valuable, meaningful, and properly tethered and coded.

It is gladdening to remark that there exist common standards among Africans in spite of the vastness of the African continent and the diversity of its peoples and cultures. These certain standards of beauty and correctness in artistic expression and physical appearance are held in common among various African societies. In his view, Matiza, V. M. opines that these values and standards are the composite elements that sum up as African aesthetics. Vogel has highlighted those elements that characterize African aesthetics. In her description, she sees African aesthetics as having the following characteristics: Resemblance to human being, Luminosity, Self-composure,

Mask is defined as "any of several coverings for the face, worn as disguise, as protection, or to filter air breathed in or out. A disguise or method of concealment...cast of a face, reproduction of a face, as an ornament or gargoyle (the head of a fox, dog, cat, etc.)

Mask is an essential component of Nigerian aesthetic experience. The evolution of masks historically up till date has been gradual but certainly effective. The mythical (oral) traditions according to Izibili, proclaims that the origin and knowledge of forms and their symbolisms were lauded by the gods, to be retained and passed on from generation to generation

However, in the researcher's opinion, forms are creatively developed and perfected by the individual artist as it is done, the individual and style and identity of the artist is stamped on the form created. This concept of origin and knowledge of things gave rise to the sense of custom and tradition. The carrying out of things considered customary and

traditional, are inevitably the things that have been handed down by the gods; or the ancestors to the present generation. Tradition therefore, which is in this sense is taken as sacred, is the substance of sacred history.

These aesthetic values summarized in a small and portable object is aimed at capturing the inner minds of the people so as to know what the society is expecting from

Vogel, S. M. African Aesthetics: The Carlos Monzino Collection, New-York: Centre for African Art, 1986) p7

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Ethnography of the Igbo People

According to Yudada the Igbo people are those persons who have been grouped into the Kwai linguistic stock but with variations of dialect. They are those who have as their natural home the Igbo-land, which is located formerly in the East Central region of southern Nigeria but are now located in the South East geopolitical zone that is comprised of five core Igbo-speaking states - Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. It also extended to some parts of Delta and Rivers States in fact, the Igbo territorial divisions cover the whole area stretching from the coastlines of the Bight of Benin to the outskirts of Ijebu and Igbo territories in the east with its eastern boundary being formed by the Cross River.

However, the origin of the term 'Igbo' remains uncertain, just as the precise ancestry of the Igbo people is still unknown. There have been various debates and theories regarding their origin, leading to a range of perspectives on where the Igbo people come from. The question of their origin continues to be a topic of speculation.

Nnaozie, E. H. 'An Ethnographic Study About the Aspects of Igbo Culture That Influence Educational Practices of Female and Male' 12th Grade Students in Their Career Choices in English State Schools, Nigeria. 'Electronic Trees and Dissertations, 1078.

3.2 Symbolism: Meaning and Clarifications

Symbolism is present in various forms such as sculpture, photography, and painting. The countless ways in which meaning can be conveyed are virtually limitless, with some approaches being more traditional or based on specific symbols. According to Araghi, N. C. Eze, O. C. and Omer, P. U. O. (1996). *The Tanger and Jorjadje Heritage*. Vol. 15, 200.10.1-1.1.3.

Be that as it may, the 1960 ethnography was first visually documented in bronze and pottery through empirical and non-empirical methods, agencies or institution such as the divination and native medicine,

categorized as a sign involving the use of its primary content as a form of another content, that is, its correlation with the content of cultural information transmitted to it. Symbolism thus uses symbols to express ideas and qualities by giving them a symbolic understanding of, the world and nature.

From this philosophical viewpoint, language therefore is understood as symbolic and agreement rather than any intrinsic connection. This highlights the notion that language is a fluid and evolving system used to construct meaning. Some thinkers have self-interests, including those, intended by social norms, psychological factors, or intimate and, for example, some of the most central psychological factors, or symbolism adds a new value

to an object or an act without thereby violating it into an open event, symbolic thought opens the door to bear it, in the object or action.

3.3 Symbols and its Usefulness in Africa Worldview

The concept of symbols has existed since ancient times, and their definitions have been a major focus for many scholars, especially when examining literature. This leads to the question of what symbols truly mean. It is essential to recognize, however, that symbols go beyond language and cultural boundaries, carrying multiple layers of meaning that can be both tangible and abstract. This allows them to connect with a wide range of audiences and express complex ideas. Bewaji, J.A.I describes symbol as something whose meaning does not consist in its external appearance or sound but in the significance that lies beyond it. Therefore, a symbol can be understood as a word or phrase that points to a deeper meaning beyond its immediate form. More so, a symbol acts as a brief replacement for a more detailed explanation, offering a quick point of reference without the need to go into specifics.

In looking at pictures, sculptures, architecture and all ornamentation, including objects of daily use from whatever period, ranging from Stone Age discoveries to modern paintings, we are constantly faced with the question what does it mean? What is hidden

Frutiger, A. Signs and Symbols: Their Design and Meaning. Translated by Andrew, (Bluhm Van: Nostrand Reinhold, 1989). p.235

Ritualistic symbols serve to instruct and initiate followers into their religious beliefs, often focusing on theological teachings. Artistic symbols are used for aesthetic purposes, commonly found in African shrines. Overall, symbols provide a unique insight into African thought systems and cultural practices, encouraging further exploration and understanding. It is however germane to not that these symbols can be physical, graphic, or mentally visualized.

By Physical symbols we refer to those tangible items like artifacts and masks that can be seen and touched. These objects carry meaning and represent the continent's history, mythology, and cultural beliefs. Graphical symbols, are visual signs that convey ideas and can be observed. They express messages related to community, respect, and hospitality. Mind symbols, on the other hand, are abstract concepts that can be imagined and reflected upon, representing the continent's philosophical views on existence, time, and space.

Kanu and Paul observed that in Africa there's a widespread profound sense of the sacred and mystery which makes it difficult to separate the life of the African from his personal inclination to the divine. It is in this regard that he does everything with the consciousness of God. Thus the symbols employed by the Africans are not entirely free

3.4 Ofo as a Symbol of Truth Justice and Authority

Like many other Africa culture, the Igbo people has a rich artistic heritage, encompassing a diverse range of traditional art form, including sculpture, mask, artifact, textile and metal work, such as bronze, archeological evidence of the Igbo people artistic prowess dates back to the early 19th century with the discovery of bronze artifact at Igbo ukwu a site that has yielded significant cultural and historical treasure, in this study however, the Aesthetic Significant of Ofo in Igbo traditional Cosmology is being examined, this is in respect to serving as a unifying concept that underlies the Igbo understanding of truth and the administration of justice. The ofo holds a central position in Igbo culture because it is a universally recognized symbol among Igbo speaking people representing the core values of truth, justice and authority.

Etymologically, ofo is both a tree, *detarium elastica* and a symbol among the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria, its origin among the Igbo is difficult to unearth as it is shrouded in mystery. On one hand, the ofo tree's branches are associated with political power and leadership. They symbolize the authority and governance of leaders, representing the seat of power and decision-making. In this sense, the ofo tree's branches embody the idea of leadership and the responsibility that comes with it.

On the other hand, the ofo tree's branches also hold deep spiritual significance. They are believed to connect the physical and spiritual realms, representing a bridge

In the Igbo land there are various sayings that highlight the significance of the Ofo. For instance *Ofo Ka idide ji awa ala* this means the earthworm can break into your earth

because it wields the Ofo, symbolizing the power and strength associated with it. Another saying goes thus *oyne obula so na o ji ofo ma ofo ma oyne ji ya*" suggest that while many claims to wields the Ofo, only the Ofo knows who truly wields it or possess it power. Additionally *oji ofo ja la* means that those who genuinely wields the Ofo will successfully reach their destination. This proverbs suggest that the Ofo is deeply rooted in the Igbo spirituality and cosmology.

On representing justice and continuity, the word Ofo contains a root word *Of* which signifies perpetuity and regeneration. This concept ensures that Ofo is passed down through generations, maintaining its significance and power. In Igbo culture therefore, defaulting on agreement is avoided, as it believed that even death won't absolve individual of their responsibilities and reincarnation will be necessary to face the consequences and receive justice. Names like *Ofo dum* (led by the Ofo) and *Ofo Biike* (Ofo is strength) amongst others emphasize the importance of the Ofo in the Igbo society,

Ajeabili, N.C., Eze, O. C., & Omeje, P. U. Ofo: The Tangible and Intangible Heritage Of The Igbo of South Eastern Nigeria, in the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* vol. 15. 2020, 104-113.

In Igbo belief, the ofo is seen as a remote control that operates on biological hardware, which includes the *okpu chi*, *okpu nde miri*, *okpu Nde ICHIE*, and *okpu Alusi*. These forces represent the divine, ancestral, and spiritual realms, and of is named after them, indicating the specific "hardware" it is attuned to. For instance, *ofu chi* represents the ofo

of one's God, ofo Ndi ICHIE represents the ofo of the elders, and ofo Nde Nmiri represents the ofo of the realm of water. The ofo plays a crucial role in Igbo spirituality, allowing individuals to tap into the energies and wisdom of these various forces. By wielding the ofo, individuals can access the realms of the gods, ancestors, and other spiritual entities, seeking guidance, healing, and spiritual growth. This concept highlights the Significance of Ofo in Igbo Culture. Thus, the ofo is a revered symbol in Igbo culture, representing spiritual authority, connection to the divine, and access to higher consciousness. This sacred staff is more than just a simple object; it is a powerful tool that bridges the material and spiritual realms.

It is however important to note that the ofo is often held with the left hand and it is often stricken on the earth or water to seal a deal between humans in presence of spirit, to seal deal between humans and spirit and to ensure Justice, equity and fairness and it is

The ofo serves as a sacred cult object among the Igbo people, analogous to the Brahminic traditions. Similarly the ofo can be understood as a prayer stone, imbued with spiritual significance and used to connect with the divine and ancestors. The ofo is deeply intertwined with the traditional Igbo religious experience, worldview and their conception of the world, it is necessarily involved in the dynamic Igbo social and cultural life. Thus the ofo plays a vital role in the vibrant social and cultural fabric of Igbo society, influencing various aspects of their communal life. In contemporary settings, Ofo can be likened to symbols of authority found in various institutions. For example, the mace in

legislative assemblies represents power during ceremonies, debates, and lawmaking. Likewise, judges wield a gavel to assert authority over decisions, while auctioneers use a hammer to close deals. These modern counterparts emphasize the lasting significance of Ofo in both traditional and modern contexts, among the Igbo people.

E. Isichei, in her study of the Igbo people, has argued that the Igbo were nothing if not profoundly religious and all the account of their life reflect the fact. Every Igbo believe in the existence of a supreme being -chi- ukwu who was (and still is) assisted a pantheon of intermediary gods and goddesses often referred to as Les-Dieux or Nde Alusi

3.5 The Aesthetics Significance of Ofo in Igbo Cosmology

Symbol in the Igbo cosmology are part of Igbo identity. Symbols have been observed to serve not only as code of conduct but also as a yardstick for measurement which members of a community look up to. Among the Igbo people of Nigeria it is believed that the Ofo symbolically represents the earth goddess, Ala and the Ndi ichie both whom oversee the customary morality of the Igbo. Thus whatever the Ofo holder decrees, condemns or approves are considered to be a direct reflection of the will of the gods and the ancestors, carrying divine authority and legitimacy. The Ofo thus embodies ancestral authority, sacred tradition and community unity, and is also revered among the Igbo people as a symbol of justice, upholding moral order and ensuring that wrong doers are held accountable.

Ajeabili Op Cit p. 107.

The participation of the revered ancestors and the community's deities in the event was due to the belief that, spiritually, the titleholder served as the connection between the ancestors and their living descendants.

According to traditional believe the Odu-atu is thought to possess the spiritual power to neutralize poison and punish wrong doings. This potency is believed to be activated when the odu atu is ritually charged with spiritual energies, enabling it to fulfill it role as a sacred instrument of justice and protection. It follows that, aside from upholding truth, any criminal act such as murder, poisoning, theft, or adultery committed by a titled individual would inevitably result in suitable punishment from the ancestral spirits or the earth deity. In other words the ofo has exerted a profoundly salutary influence on the Igbo populace as it is venerated for its role in protecting the innocent and executing justice upon the guilty, even to the extent of moral consequences. This belief is succinctly encapsulated in the Igbo proverb "oji ofo ja la" which translates to the righteous will successfully reach his destination" this aphorism serves to reinforce the notion that ofo function as a guardian of moral rectitude and a champion of justice, ensuring that those who adhere to the path of righteousness will ultimately achieve success and prosperity.

Uchenna Op Cit p. 340

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Evaluation

Of what value is 'ofò' sculpted artform in Igbo ontology as self-others complementarity? Epistemologically, such a conception implicitly emphasizes the significance of group, and in the final analysis, social knowledge, which usually transcends the individual knowledge in terms of its in-depth nature. There is an English proverb which supports this, 'two heads are better than one', meaning that the knowledge of the other complements that of the self. Metaphysically, it gives primacy to the oneness of human being within any social space. Morally, it recognizes the moral dignity and thus the interest of the other in the pursuit of self-interest. Socially, it promotes what Badru, would call 'cooperative interaction' rather than "self-interested interactive." The former interaction fosters group development: I feel that I am not complete without you and you also likewise towards me. Thus we actively work towards our collective social development. The latter interaction is engaged in, because of what the self stands to gain from the other, the other also feels the same way towards the self. Thus, not individual but group, and in the final analysis, social development is forged.

If one situates the foregoing within the context of Igbo aesthetics as indicated in 'ofò' sculptural artform, it is clear that the aesthetic significance of this works of art leads

Ndubuisi F.O., "The Philosophical Paradigm of African Identity and Development", in Open Journal of Philosophy, Vol.3, No.1, February 2013, pp. 1-59

Temels P., "Individual-Community Dialectics in Community Development", in Open Journal of Philosophy, Paris Presse, Africa, June 1999, pp. 1-59

"self" is conceived essentially towards other, which is "being-with-others". Identity in African nation centers and selfhoods and in African metaphysics. is color, size, shape and so on distinguish the King from the other. "self" is conceived essentially towards other, which is "being-with-others".

4.2 Conclusion

The notion of scarcity, which comes to deal of scarce goods, of subsistence, which exists side by side, independent of one another, is a peculiarity of Western ontology, and explains the importance of one another. On this science, art is of art, that is, model by the assumption of a unitary framework. On this science, art is

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