








Aesthetic and educational values of indigenous sculptures among the Bimoba People of Northern Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the aesthetic and educational values of indigenous sculptures among the Bimoba people of Northern Ghana. Grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, the research employed a qualitative ethnographic approach to investigate the visual, symbolic and pedagogical meanings embedded in selected Bimoba sculptures. Data was collected through unstructured interviews, participant observation, and documentary analysis from twenty-five purposively selected respondents, including indigenous sculptors, diviners, elders, family heads and art collectors. The findings revealed that Bimoba sculptures such as *chicherii*, *tingbana*, *pataa*, *gingana*, *yerii* and *sanpana* are not only visually compelling but also carry deep spiritual, historical and moral significance. These sculptures embody aesthetic values through form, balance, symmetry, proportion, unity, symbolism and emotional expressiveness, consistent with African theories of aesthetics. Moreover, they serve educational functions by transmitting indigenous knowledge, moral codes, historical narratives and identity markers, while promoting cognitive, affective and psychomotor development when used instructionally. Feldman's method of art criticism and Panofsky's iconographic theory were employed to critique the works and analyze their symbolic meanings within cultural and historical contexts. The study affirms that indigenous Bimoba sculptures are rich artistic and educational resources capable of bridging traditional and contemporary art education practices. It recommends their integration into Ghana's visual arts curriculum and establishing community-based art documentation centres to support cultural preservation and sustainable knowledge transfer. This research contributes to decolonising the curriculum by validating indigenous artistic expressions and their role in holistic art education.

Keywords: Aesthetic values, Educational values, Indigenous sculptures, Art education

INTRODUCTION

The Bimoba people, also known as Moab, are referred to as Bimoba, Moba, and Gurma in Ghana, Togo, and Burkina Faso, respectively. Kwekudee records that the Bimoba people migrated from Fada

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Ngourma in present-day Burkina Faso and later settled in parts of Togo and Ghana.¹ After World War I, colonial partition divided them into French and British territories, and those in the British zone became known as British Moba or “B” Moba, which later evolved into Bimoba in Ghana.

Duut et al. identified fifty-nine major Bimoba settlements across the North East and Upper East Regions of Ghana.² Census data place the Bimoba population in Northern Ghana at about 151,174.³ Despite this presence and strong cultural identity, Bimoba artistic traditions have received limited attention in Ghanaian art scholarship, which often focuses on larger ethnic groups and their visual cultures.

Knowledge of Bimoba sculptures, such as *chicherii* and *bant* is declining among the youth. This threatens cultural continuity because these sculptures are not only artistic works but also social and spiritual resources that preserve memory, express meaning, and transmit values within the community.⁴

Therefore, the integration of indigenous knowledge into education has become important. African indigenous knowledge systems remain relevant to make education culturally meaningful and socially responsive, while traditional knowledge is also vital for the development of Africa.⁵ In this context, indigenous Bimoba sculptures can serve as teaching and learning resources that promote aesthetic appreciation, moral education, and identity formation.

Therefore, this study analyses the aesthetic and educational values of indigenous Bimoba sculptures to support art education and cultural preservation. By examining how these sculptures communicate meaning and function within Bimoba society, the study contributes to strengthening indigenous knowledge systems and promoting culturally responsive art education in Ghana.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aesthetics and Criticism in Art

Aesthetics is a philosophy of art that helps in understanding beauty. It explains what makes art visually compelling and meaningful, and art reflects society and evolves with human experiences and values.⁶ Although physical beauty was once central to evaluation, contemporary views often describe outstanding works as “successful,” focusing on structure, meaning, and emotional impact rather than appearance alone.⁷

Art critics analyse artistic ideas, aesthetics, and context to form informed judgments. They relate artworks to social, cultural, political, or religious issues and offer interpretive perspectives rather than fixed answers.⁸ Art criticism emphasizes rational appreciation and applies approaches such as formalist, expressivist, instrumentalist, contextual, and intrinsic criticism.⁹

Diverse viewpoints suggest that what appears beautiful or sublime to one person may be unattractive to another. Indigenous Bimoba sculptures such as *chicherii*, *bant*, and *tinghana* can evoke strong emotional responses and are therefore aesthetically significant.

¹ Kwekudee, “Bimoba People: Hilly Dwelling Small West African Warrior Tribe with Powerful Initiation Cults, Trip Down Memory Lane,” 2013, <https://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/04/bimoba-people-hilly-dwelling-small-west.html>.

² G. N., Duut et al., “A Chronicle of Tourist Attractions in the Bunkpurugu Nakpanduri District of the Northern Region, Ghana,” *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies* 6, no. 12 (2018): 74–88.

³ T. Brinkhoff, “Bunkpurugu-Nyakpanduri,” 2022, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/ghana/admin/north_east/1402__bunkpurugu_nyakpanduri/, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/ghana/admin/north_east/1406__yunyoo_nasuan/, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/ghana/admin/upper_east/0914__tempane/, <https://www.citypopu>.

⁴ Kwekudee, “Bimoba People: Hilly Dwelling Small West African Warrior Tribe with Powerful Initiation Cults, Trip Down Memory Lane”; G. N. Duut et al., “Religious and Cultural Woes of the Ethnic Bimobas, Who Is to Blame,” *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies* 7, no. 1 (2019): 131–40.

⁵ Hassan O Kaya and Yonah N Seleti, “African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Relevance of Higher Education in South Africa,” *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives* 12, no. 1 (2013); E. Perroni, “How Africa Can Use Its Traditional Knowledge,” 2023, <https://foodtank.com/news/2017/11/traditional-african-agriculture/>.

⁶ E. Welka, “Prezi,” 2016, <https://prezi.com/upsdpcuacazt/3-aesthetic-theories/>; Myint Swe Khine, “Teacher Education and Innovative Pedagogies for the Future,” in *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education: Pedagogical Innovations and Practices in the Middle East* (Springer, 2022), 3–11.

⁷ R. Ragans, *Art Talk*, 4th ed. (Wood land Hills: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2005).

⁸ N. Ntone, “Contemporary Musings,” 2023, <https://natashantone.com/home/2019/2/2/why-art-criticism-is-important>.

⁹ Tia Blackmon, “The Nature and Importance of Art Criticism and Its Educational Applications for K-12 Teachers,” 2015; Khine, “Teacher Education and Innovative Pedagogies for the Future.”

Theories of Aesthetics and Criticism

Philosophers differ on whether beauty is objective and universal or subjective and relative. Thus, the same artwork may be judged beautiful by some and ugly by others.¹⁰ These differences have led to the development of aesthetic theories that explain how artworks are understood and evaluated. The five major theories commonly applied in art criticism are emotionalism, formalism, instrumentalism, imitationalism, and contextualism. Rather than depending on one approach, critics often combine theories for deeper insight. Effective art criticism considers the strengths and limitations of each theory to avoid narrow interpretation.¹¹

African aesthetics emphasizes human resemblance, luminosity, youthful appearance, and reserved demeanor as channels for moral and cultural messages.¹² Sculptures are often ornamented and spiritually empowered, while artists stress fine craftsmanship, material mastery, and functionality.

Rooted in oral traditions, African aesthetics integrates language, music, dance, ritual, and legend to sustain cultural identity and education.¹³ It values symbolism, abstraction, and community relevance over strict realism, communicating ancestral heritage and vitality.¹⁴ Harmony, balance, expressive form, and ancestral reverence challenge Western visual-centered aesthetics.¹⁵

Feldman Method of Art Criticism

Various scholars affirm that Feldman's method of art criticism (description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment) is widely used in art education.¹⁶ It is valued for improving instruction, developing critical thinking, and helping students with limited art knowledge evaluate artworks systematically.

Feldman's approach uses inductive reasoning, moving from observation to meaning and evaluation. It involves a description of observable facts in neutral language, the analysis of relationships among visual elements such as line, shape, colour, and texture, and interpretation to conclude meaning and expressive qualities. The judgment phase assesses quality using theories of aesthetics such as formalism, emotionalism, and instrumentalism.¹⁷

Erwin Panofsky's Iconographic Analysis Theory

Erwin Panofsky's iconographic analysis has three phases. Wahidiyat et al. state that Panofsky divided iconography into pre-iconographic description, iconographical analysis, and iconological

¹⁰ A. Panovski, "Philosophy 101: The 5 Major Branches of Philosophy Explained," 2023, <https://www.thecollector.com/what-are-the-branches-of-philosophy/>.

¹¹ G. J. Brinkman, "Articulations: Crafting Credible Discourse on Art, Aesthetics, and Design," 2024, https://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/viewer/initiative_14.04.03_u; B. Sen, "The 5 Main Philosophies Of Art," 2024.

¹² C. Clarke, "Khan Academy," 2006, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-africa/african-art-introduction/themes-and-issues-in-the-art-of-africa/a/aesthetics>; S. Shava, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of African Cultural Heritage in North America* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2015); V. Belton, "Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute," 2019, <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>; J., Parris, *African Aesthetics and the Everyday: Community, Healing and Living* (Central Lancashire: University of Central Lancashire, 2021).

¹³ Damlègue Lare, "Postmodern Aesthetics in African Literature: Estética Posmoderna En La Literatura Africana," *Littera Aperta. International Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies* 7, no. 8 (2019): 55–78; Agogbuo L. C. and Nwachukwu C. N., "Aesthetics, an Element of the Oral Traditions: A Study of J. P. Clark's Ozidi," *African Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences* 12, no. 2 (2022): 545–55.

¹⁴ C. Newton, *Aesthetics and Educational Significance of Public Sculptures at Mankessim* (Winneba: University of Education, Winneba, 2022).

¹⁵ Ekpo D. P. and Sidogi P., *The De-Africanization of African Art* (New York: Routledge, 2022); Kaha Abdi, "'A Beauty Full of Healing': Black Aesthetics as Methodology," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 23 (2024): 16094069241282868.

¹⁶ Blackmon, "The Nature and Importance of Art Criticism and Its Educational Applications for K-12 Teachers"; Monthira Damrongmanee and Seehazzakd Rojanaatichartasakul, "How Do Art Critics Critique? A Move Analysis of Art Reviews Written by Professional Writers," *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network* 16, no. 2 (2023): 40–60.

¹⁷ Blackmon, "The Nature and Importance of Art Criticism and Its Educational Applications for K-12 Teachers"; Damrongmanee and Rojanaatichartasakul, "How Do Art Critics Critique? A Move Analysis of Art Reviews Written by Professional Writers"; Apinan Seemuangngam and Han-Liang Lin, "The Impact of Urbanization on Urban Flood Risk of Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand," *Applied Geography* 162 (January 2024): 103152, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2023.103152>.

interpretation.¹⁸ Some scholars also recognize these stages,¹⁹ while others describe them as pre-iconographic, iconographic, and iconological phases.²⁰

Pre-iconographic meaning draws on everyday experience and recognition of visual features. Iconographic meaning depends on knowledge of conventional subjects, themes, symbols, and narratives. Iconological meaning is deeper and relates to cultural values, historical conditions, and underlying principles shaping the work.²¹ Bühren and Jasiński explain that the method moves from identifying forms and arrangements to interpreting symbols and finally uncovering intrinsic cultural meaning through historical insight.²²

Values of Art

Artworks has multiple forms of value. Culturally, visual art preserves traditions, beliefs and identity, transmitting moral values and historical narratives through generations.²³ Therapeutically, art enables emotional expression and healing, reduces stress and improves mental well-being.²⁴ Historically, art serves as a visual record of religious practices, political events, and social change.²⁵ Socially, art promotes dialogue, creativity, and critical thinking, strengthening communal bonds and innovation.²⁶ Politically, art expresses ideologies, challenges injustice, and encourages civic engagement. Economically, the art industry supports employment, tourism, and global markets.²⁷ Educationally, art fosters personal development, cultural transmission, and critical reflection.²⁸ Aesthetically, artworks possess non-utilitarian value through beauty, form, and visual experience.²⁹

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework guides research by drawing on established theories and concepts relevant to the study. It helps the researcher focus the investigation, understand relationships among concepts or variables, identify knowledge gaps, and interpret findings more clearly. It also serves as a roadmap for the study and supports a more coherent and less biased research process.³⁰

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- ¹⁸ Mita Purbasari Wahidiyat and Donna Carollina, "Study of Iconography and Iconology on the Visual Appearance of Ondel-Ondel," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 10, no. 1 (2023): 2257938.
- ¹⁹ Ahmad Hakim Abdullah, Yuhani Ibrahim, and Raja Iskandar Bin Raja Halid, "An Iconographical Analysis Based on the Erwin Panofsky Theory on the Malayness in the Paintings of Amron Omar and Haron Mokhtar," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2020; Serena Clark, "Understanding Contemporary Images Using Iconography: Migration to the European Union and the Representation of Refugees and Asylum Seekers," *Journal of Visual Literacy* 39, no. 2 (2020): 111–24; Ralf van Bühren and Maciej Jan Jasiński, "The Invisible Divine in the History of Art. Is Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) Still Relevant for Decoding Christian Iconography?," *Church, Communication and Culture* 9, no. 1 (2024): 1–36.
- ²⁰ Daniel Marcelo Acurio Maldonado et al., "The Iconographic Method Applied in the Design of Products with Cultural Demonstration in the Creation of the Tourist Destination," *The Academic Research Community Publication* 2, no. 2 (May 27, 2018): 9, <https://doi.org/10.21625/archive.v2i2.245>; Alex Kwasi Azaglo et al., "'My Sculpture, My Life': An Iconographic Study of the Contemporary Ghanaian Sculptor, Isaac Opoku-Mensah," *Journal of African History, Culture and Arts* 2, no. 1 (2022): 1–14.
- ²¹ Maldonado et al., "The Iconographic Method Applied in the Design of Products with Cultural Demonstration in the Creation of the Tourist Destination"; Azaglo et al., "'My Sculpture, My Life': An Iconographic Study of the Contemporary Ghanaian Sculptor, Isaac Opoku-Mensah."
- ²² Bühren and Jasiński, "The Invisible Divine in the History of Art. Is Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) Still Relevant for Decoding Christian Iconography?"
- ²³ Priscilla Asonibare, "The Importance of Visual Artists and Their Art in the Society," 2022, <https://www.creativesauction.com/the-importance-of-visual-artists-and-their-art-in-the-society/>; M. Dowd, "The Role of Visual Artists in Society," 2021, <https://work.chron.com/role-visual-artists-society-22517.html>; Winifred, "Exploring the Impact of Visual Art: Definitions, Types, and Its Significance in Shaping Our World," 2023.
- ²⁴ Asonibare, "The Importance of Visual Artists and Their Art in the Society"; Dowd, "The Role of Visual Artists in Society."
- ²⁵ Mihaela Manolache, "Values of Art," April 24, 2023.
- ²⁶ Dowd, "The Role of Visual Artists in Society"; Winifred, "Exploring the Impact of Visual Art: Definitions, Types, and Its Significance in Shaping Our World."
- ²⁷ Manolache, "Values of Art"; Winifred, "Exploring the Impact of Visual Art: Definitions, Types, and Its Significance in Shaping Our World."
- ²⁸ Nyadzogbe Kwaku Wege, "Documentation of the Lives and Works of Four Traditional Woodwork Artists in Ghana: A Resource for Teaching and Learning in the Senior High School" (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2011); Erin Twyford and Bonnie Amelia Dean, "Inviting Students to Talk the Talk: Developing Employability Skills in Accounting Education through Industry-Led Experiences," *Accounting Education* 33, no. 3 (2024): 296–318.
- ²⁹ Manolache, "Values of Art."
- ³⁰ Dziak, "Theoretical Framework."

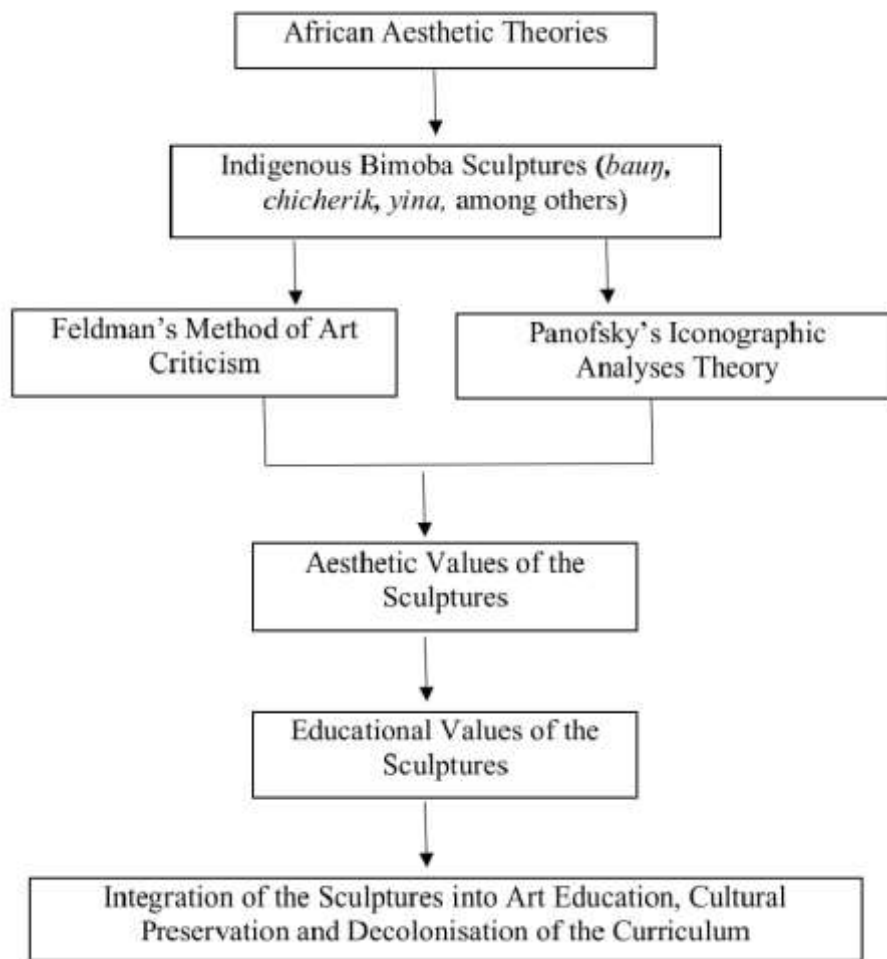


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework for the Study
 Source: Researchers' construct (2025)

The framework is anchored on African Aesthetic Theory, Feldman's Method of Art Criticism, and Panofsky's Iconographic Theory. These theories collectively provide the conceptual basis for analysing indigenous Bimoba sculptures in terms of their formal, symbolic, spiritual, and cultural qualities. The framework further demonstrates that the sculptures possess both aesthetic values and educational values, which support their integration into art education, cultural preservation, curriculum decolonisation, and culturally responsive pedagogy.

METHODOLOGY

Philosophical Paradigm Underpinning the Research

This study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy, which views reality as socially constructed through lived experiences. It assumes that social reality is subjective, shaped by context and interaction, and open to multiple interpretations rather than a single objective truth.³¹ In this study, the interpretive approach was used to analyse the aesthetic and educational values of indigenous Bimoba sculptures through participants' beliefs, history, philosophy, and symbolic meanings.

Research Approach

The qualitative approach enabled the selection of participants who provided in-depth insights into the aesthetic and educational values of indigenous Bimoba sculptures. It also supported rapport-building and a fuller understanding of cultural values. Terrell affirms that qualitative research strengthens

³¹ Merry-Jo D. Levers, "Philosophical Paradigms, Grounded Theory, and Perspectives on Emergence," *Sage Open* 3, no. 4 (January 1, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013517243>; Charles Kivunja and Ahmed Bawa Kuyini, "Understanding and Applying Research Paradigms in Educational Contexts," *International Journal of Higher Education* 6, no. 5 (2017): 26–41.

researcher-participant relationships and provides meaningful insight into lived experiences.³² Data from interviews and observations, therefore, offered valuable perspectives on the pedagogical and aesthetic significance of the sculptures.

Ethnography Research

Ethnography is the study of social interactions, behaviours, and worldviews within specific communities. It seeks to develop a holistic understanding of people's thoughts and actions and examines culture through observations, interviews, and documentary evidence.³³ Ethnographic researchers immerse themselves in a social or cultural group to gain an insider perspective. They investigate behaviours, similarities, and differences in natural settings through observation to understand social realities.³⁴ This approach was appropriate for studying indigenous Bimoba sculptures in their cultural context.

Population for the Study

The study focused on the educational and aesthetic values of indigenous Bimoba sculptures. According to the Ghana Statistical Service, the population of Gurma (Bimoba) includes Bimoba and other ethnic groups, such as Konkomba and Bassari. The population of the Gurma ethnic group across four districts (Bunkpurugu-Nakpanduri, Yunyoo-Nasuan, Tempene, and Garu) totalled 159,858.

Table 1: Population for the Study

Gurma (Bimoba and other ethnic groups)	Population
Bunkpurugu-Nakpanduri District	70,490
Yunyoo-Nasuan District	50,190
Tempene District	23,805
Garu District	15,373
Total	159,858

Accessible Population

In this study, the accessible population comprised elderly indigenous sculptors, family or clan heads, and art dealers among the Bimoba in the four districts. According to Brinkhoff, Ghana's Statistical Service in 2020 reported that elderly people (65 and older) constitute 7.2% of the population, giving an accessible population of 11,510 (7.2% of 159,858).³⁵

Table 2: Accessible Population

Gurma (Bimoba and other ethnic groups)	Accessible Population (elderly people)
Bunkpurugu-Nakpanduri District (7.2% of 70,490)	5,075
Yunyoo-Nasuan District (7.2% of 50,190)	3,614
Tempene District (7.2% of 23,805)	1,714
Garu District (7.2% of 15,373)	1,107
Total	11,510

Sampling Techniques

In this study, purposive sampling ensured the inclusion of indigenous sculptors, family or clan heads, elderly persons, and art dealers among the Bimoba people. These participants were selected due to their

³² S. R. Terrell, "Case Study Research," in *Writing Proposal for Your Dissertation* (New York: Guilford Press, 2016), 158–59.

³³ S. Reeves, A. Kuper, and B. D. Hodges, "Qualitative Research Methodologies: Ethnography," *BMJ* 337, no. aug07 3 (August 7, 2008): a1020–a1020, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.a1020>; Scott Reeves et al., "Ethnography in Qualitative Educational Research: AMEE Guide No. 80," *Medical Teacher* 35, no. 8 (2013): e1365–79.

³⁴ M. Allen, "Sage Research Methods," 2017, <https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods/i4910.xml>; Form Plus, "Ethnographic Research: Types, Methods + [Question Examples]," 2021, <https://www.formpl.us/blog/ethnographic-research>.

³⁵ T. Brinkhoff, "City Population," 2021, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/ghana/admin/north_east/1406_yunyoo_nasuan/.

lived experience and direct involvement with indigenous Bimoba sculptures, making them suitable to provide rich and relevant data for the study.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher met the respondents on scheduled dates and conducted one-on-one interviews at residences or workplaces. The interviews were documented with notes and tape recordings. Respondents verified summarized responses, and questions focused on their understanding of the aesthetic and educational values of indigenous Bimoba sculptures.

Data Collection Instruments

Unstructured Interviews: In this study, unstructured interviews were conducted in person and by phone, guided by a semi-structured guide translated into Moar (Bimoba language) to ensure clarity and trustworthiness of the data.

Participant Observation: In this study, participant observation enabled the documentation and interpretation of indigenous Bimoba sculptures in context, supported by field notes and photographs.

Validation of Instruments

Interviews and observations complemented each other to increase validity or dependability. The researcher prepared an interview guide and reviewed it with colleagues before submitting it to the supervisors for correction and approval.

Data Analysis

Indigenous Bimoba sculptures were critiqued using Feldman's method of art criticism and Erwin Panofsky's iconographic analysis. Data from primary and secondary sources were collected, evaluated, and summarized, then descriptively presented with tables, figures, and plates.

Ethical Considerations

Approval was obtained from the head of the Department of Educational Innovations in Science and Technology, KNUST, Kumasi and informed consent was sought. Participation was voluntary, with anonymity and confidentiality assured. Participants were informed that names, photographs, and sculpture images could be documented for publication.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Aesthetic Values of Indigenous Bimoba Sculptures

The aesthetic values of indigenous Bimoba sculptures were analysed using Feldman's philosophy of art criticism and Erwin Panofsky's theory of iconographic analysis. Five works were examined: *baun*, *chicherik*, *yina*, *gingann*, and *tingbann*. The interviews revealed that material choice, symbolic features, and ritual efficacy determine beauty. For example, *chicherik* must be carved from *nyankpang* wood believed to possess life-force, while form and weight vary according to function and use.

Criticism of *baun* (a carved ancestral bench): Jafoak's Family Female *Baun*



Figure 2: Jafoak's Family Female *Baun* (an ancestral bench) with IB-i at Bunkpurugu
Source: Photographed by Kenneth Dam Sakoalia

Description

Jafoak's Family Female *Baun* is an abstract bench carved from *nyankpang* wood, resembling a female animal or a human with breasts. Kept at IB-i's residence in Bunkpurugu, sculptor and date are unknown. It measures 7ft × 1ft × 1ft, with a sloping, smoothed top marked by two lines. The underside shows rectangular legs and round forms; grain cracks indicate unseasoned wood.

Analysis

Carved in wood, the work uses curved, vertical, and horizontal lines with varied textures and round/rectangular forms to create variety. The composition is balanced and stable, the sloping top suggests movement, unity is achieved through ordered arrangement, and female breasts create emphasis.

Interpretation

Carved from *nyankpang* wood, believed by the Bimoba to hold life-force, the object gains potency. Two protrusions look like breasts, symbolising fertility and nurturing. Female imagery reflects African ideals of vitality and continuity. The elongated form and rectangular supports signal balance. It is a medium for ancestral presence, privileging symbolism above anatomy.

Judgement

Carved from a single piece of *nyankpang* wood, the work shows unity and spiritual resonance. Its line, shape, space, and form reflect African aesthetics of balance, symbolic abstraction, and expressive power, where beauty is linked to function and spiritual energy. Protruding breasts stress fertility and continuity. As Clarke and Newton note, symbolism outweighs realism.³⁶

³⁶ Clarke, "Khan Academy"; Newton, *Aesthetics and Educational Significance of Public Sculptures at Mankessim*.

Criticism of *chicherik* (a carved human figure): *Takipoo* (destined woman)



Figure 3: 'Takipoo' (female *chicherik*) by IB-a
Source: Photographed by Kenneth Dam Sakoalia

Description

Takipoo is a miniature abstract female figure carved from nyankpang wood by IB-a, kept at his residence in Konchian Gberuk, Bunkpurugu-Nakpanduri District, Northern Ghana. It measures 25 cm high. The front view shows eyes, nose, breasts, genitalia, and a rope-like waist. Cracks run from the chest to the genitalia. Metal rings, ropes, chains, and padlock link neck to waist; the back head is chipped, with a spinal crack.

Analysis

The sculptor carved a round head, cylindrical hands and legs, genitalia, and other female *chicherik* forms with an adze. Eyes, nose, and breasts appear as incised dots, lines, and round shapes. The surface is smoothed with handling and libations, while cracks suggest unseasoned wood. Balance, unity, variety, and movement appear in the organised forms and hanging rings, chain, padlock, and ropes. Emphasis lies on the genitalia.

Interpretation

Takipoo ("Destined Woman") is adorned with rings, chains, and a padlock, symbolising protection and spiritual control. The emphasis on the breasts and genitalia highlights fertility, female power, and spiritual agency. As a ritual *chicherik*, it mediates between physical and spiritual realms, sustaining potency and resolving social conflicts.

Judgement

The sculptor employs symbolic abstraction by stressing spiritually charged parts such as genitalia, breasts, and protective charms. Nyankpang wood, valued for spiritual strength, heightens ritual significance. The figure reflects African aesthetics of stylisation, emotional expressiveness, and spiritual relevance. As Clarke notes, expressive form and spiritual function are prioritised, and both appear here.³⁷

³⁷ Clarke, "Khan Academy."

Criticism of *yina* (a mask)



Figure 4: *Yina* (a headdress/mask) with IB-t at Najong No.1
Source: Photographed by Kenneth Dam Sakoalia

Description

Yina (a mask), associated with IB-t, an elderly member of the Bauk Clan at Najong No.1, is an assemblage work. It uses two horns of a wild-animal called *gummik* (impala/antelope), binding wire, a fabric hat, and yarn. The equal horns (1.5 ft high) show ring-like bases tapering to pointed tips, bound at the base and mounted on a thick black-and-white woven hat.

Analysis

The horns are formed by two diverging lines from the hat's top, curving backwards, then coiling slightly at the middle, with the tips rising and converging upward. Ring-like forms encircle the horns from the base to the bends, then taper smoothly to the tips. The horns, hat, binding wire, and yarns are arranged in a balanced composition. Variety appears in the mixed materials and colours, while movement is suggested by the horn shapes.

Interpretation

The *Yina* mask, made of horns, yarn, and fabric, signifies transformation, vitality, and concealed identity. Used in dance and hunting rites, its forward horns project power and charisma. Beauty rests on performance, rhythm, and impact; it parallels the Konkomba Ipienza.

Judgement

The sculptor's materials and symbolic arrangement reflect African aesthetics of abstraction, performativity, and spiritual utility. Upward-curving horns and symmetry convey dynamism and sacred energy, integrating function, performance, and symbolism. As Lare and Newton note, masks succeed through expressive power and communal relevance.³⁸

³⁸ Lare, "Postmodern Aesthetics in African Literature: Estética Posmoderna En La Literatura Africana"; Newton, *Aesthetics and Educational Significance of Public Sculptures at Mankessim*.

Criticism of *gingann* (drum): *Gingannapaŋ* (a medium-sized *gingann*)



Figure 5: *gingannapaŋ* sculpted by IB-p at Naanyiar
Source: Photographed by Kenneth Dam Sakoalia

Description

The *gingannapaŋ* is a medium-sized *gingann* (drum) sculpted by IB-p at Naanyiar, measuring 15 inches in diameter. Goat skin covers both ends of a carved nyanpook wood tube. A white nylon rope laces the skins and ties firmly to the body. A brown fabric rope serves as a shoulder holder. Blue and green nylon cords on each skin enhance sound, aided by a small round sound hole. The *gingangbianu* (drumstick) rests at the right.

Analysis

The work is a multimedia sculpture made with wood, skin, fabric, and nylon ropes, using carving and construction. Varied materials introduce different colours, lines, shapes, textures, forms, mass, and volume, creating variety. The arrangement also shows symmetric balance and movement.

Interpretation

This *gingannapaŋ*, made from wood, goat skin, fabric, and nylon ropes, functions as both a drum and a sacred communication medium. Among the Bimoba and many African societies, drums channel ancestral voices, convey messages, and support ritual invocation. Sound-enhancing elements express vitality and interactivity. As Ragans and Welka note, African aesthetics value performative, communicative objects in social rites.³⁹

Judgement

The sculptor combines materials with symbolic and acoustic value, showing strong control of form and function. Symmetrical balance, textural variety, and rhythmic movement reflect African aesthetics of harmony, expressiveness, and community relevance. As Parris notes, African beauty rests on functionality and cultural engagement, which this *gingann* fulfills.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ragans, *Art Talk*; Welka, "Prezi."

⁴⁰ Parris, *African Aesthetics and the Everyday: Community, Healing and Living*.

Criticism of *tingbana* (earth shrines): *Tingbanpoi* (female earth shrines)



Figure 6: *Tingbanpoi* (female earth shrines) with IB-o at Bunkpurugu
Source: Photographed by Kenneth Dam Sakoalia

Description

These *tingbanpoi* have been sculpted and used by IB-o since 1989 at Bunkpurugu. They consist of three female earth shrines modelled as ovals with animals' blood. The largest is about 2 feet high. Two similar shrines lie to the left (with a sugar cube) and stand to the right, while a smaller one sits on top. They grow as blood from repeated sacrifices is added for modelling.

Analysis

Animals' blood is the main medium, layered to model three oval forms. Oval shapes dominate, and the arrangement of lines, shapes, and forms suggests unity, balance, and dominance. Aside from the sugar cube on top, there is little variety in colour, shape, or form. The work has a sparkling colour, though the surface is not well-smoothed.

Interpretation

The *tingbanpoi* are modelled from layered animals' blood, a spiritually potent substance linked to sacrificial power and life-force. Their oval forms and ritual growth through repeated sacrifices reflect African aesthetics of art as living and evolving. Though abstract, they signify femininity, fertility, and sacred continuity. Their protective, healing, and exorcistic roles show art's active place in community well-being, as Ekpo and Sidogi discuss.⁴¹

Judgement

These shrines embody African aesthetics of spiritual symbolism, process-based creation, and community engagement. Dominant form, compositional unity, and material potency support the criterion that ritual efficacy outweighs visual elaboration. Though minimally decorative, their success lies in sacred function and symbolic weight. As Newton affirms, beauty emerges through mediation between human and spiritual realms.⁴²

Iconographic analysis of *Bauŋ* (a carved ancestral bench): Jafok's Family Female *Bauŋ* - Figure 2

Pre-iconographic description

Jafok's Family Female *Bauŋ* is an abstract female ancestral effigy carved from nyankpang wood. The sculptor and date are unknown because they have been inherited from one family head to another. It is kept at the residence of IB-i, a Loouk Clan family head in Bunkpurugu, North East Region, Ghana.

⁴¹ Ekpo and Sidogi, *The De-Africanization of African Art*.

⁴² Newton, *Aesthetics and Educational Significance of Public Sculptures at Mankessim*.

Measuring 7ft × 1ft × 1ft, it is a heavy single-piece bench with four rectangular supports, two vertical lines, two circular projections, smooth wear, minor cracks, and slight edge damage.

Iconographical analysis

The Jafok's Family Female *Bauŋ* was carved in *nyankpang* wood using cutlasses to block and adzes to define forms and details. Curved, vertical, and horizontal lines, varied textures, and round and rectangular forms are evident. The elongated top signifies ancestral comfort, while the two hanging round forms represent breasts (fertility). The near rectangular forms suggest hands (upper legs), and the two left forms indicate lower legs, symbolising stability. The *nyankpang* wood is valued for durability and its believed life-force, making the *bauŋ* a female ancestral deity linked to fertility and hunting.

Iconological interpretation

Every family/clan head must carve or commission a *bauŋ* if none is inherited. Jafok's family *bauŋ*, now kept by IB-i in Bunkpurugu, is a bench-like ancestral object housed in the *naakuuk* with male or female traits. It is owned only by the family head and inherited with *pataa* as *patsaakara*. Pito brewing and sacrifices on it protect the family; misuse may cause insanity or death. For childbirth, *gbajar* (a cudgel) or *sanpann* (a flooring tool) is placed on it with offerings and rites. Its fertility symbolism and function reflect African aesthetics that prioritise meaning over realism.⁴³

Iconographic analysis of the *chicherik* (a carved human figure): *Takipoo* (destined woman) - Figure 3

Pre-iconographic description

Takipoo is a small sculpture carved by IB-a from *nyankpang* wood and kept in his house at Konchian Gberuk, Bunkpurugu-Nakpanduri District, Northern Ghana. It is 25 cm tall. The front shows eyes, nose, breasts, genitalia, and a rope-like waist form. Cracks run from the chest through the breasts to the genitalia. Three multicoloured metal rings with ropes and chains hang at the neck, with a padlock linking to a waist ring. The back head is chipped, with a spinal crack.

Iconographical analysis

Nyankpang wood is durable and believed to contain life-force that enhances *chicherik* efficacy, so *Takipoo* was carved with an adze. Genitalia mark it female; the round head and cylindrical limbs are incised. Libations have smoothed the surface; cracks suggest unseasoned wood.

Iconological interpretation

Takipoo ("Destined Woman") is dressed with rings, chains, ropes, and a padlock used to correct fertility problems and resolve police or court cases. For childbirth, *gbajar* (a cudgel) or *sanpann* (a flooring tool) is placed on it before sacrificing a white ram and white dove, followed by *yarayara*. For legal matters, perfume and cow milk are applied, a name is mentioned, and the padlock is locked. The sculptor emphasised eyes, breasts, and genitalia, reflecting African stylisation seen in Baule figures, *Akuaba*, and *Ibeji*. As Ekpo and Sidogi note, such art empowers transformation.⁴⁴

Iconographic analysis of *yina* (a mask) - Figure 4

Pre-iconographic description

IB-t, an elder of the Baauk Clan at Najong No. 1, created the *yina* as an assemblage sculpture. Measuring 1.5 feet high, it is made from yarns, a binding wire, a fabric hat, and two equal-sized wild animal horns. The horns feature ring-like forms from the base to the middle and taper smoothly to pointed tips.

⁴³ Clarke, "Khan Academy"; Newton, *Aesthetics and Educational Significance of Public Sculptures at Mankessim*.

⁴⁴ Ekpo and Sidogi, *The De-Africanization of African Art*.

Iconographical analysis

The horns diverge from the top of the hat, curve backwards, coil slightly in the middle, and rise upward with converging tips. Ring-like forms encircle them from the base to the bend, smoothing toward the tips. The balanced arrangement of horns, hat, wire, and yarns shows unity, while varied materials and horn curvature create variety and movement.

Iconological interpretation

The *Yina* (mask) is made from wild animal horns mounted on a fabric hat using assemblage. Its tall, pointed horns resemble those of an impala or antelope. It acts as a charm for hunting, war, attraction, or intimidation. Worn in dance or hunting, it conceals identity and projects power. Similar to the Konkomba *Ipienza* and Gambag-rana's mask, *Yina* reflects African aesthetics where beauty lies in performative vitality, symbolism, movement, and spiritual strength.

Iconographic analysis of *gingann* (drum): *Gingannapan* (a medium-sized *gingann*)- Figure 5

Pre-iconographic description

This *gingannapan*, a medium-sized drum created by IB-p at Naanyiar, measures 15 inches in diameter. A carved *nyanpɔk* wood tube is covered with goat skin on both sides and laced with white nylon rope. A brown cloth strap allows shoulder carrying. Blue and green nylon cords and a small sound hole enhance sound, while the *gingangbianu* rests at the right.

Iconographical analysis

The work is a multimedia sculpture created with wood, skin, fabric, and nylon ropes using carving and construction techniques. Varied materials introduce differences in colour, line, shape, texture, form, mass, and volume, creating visual variety. The arrangement of forms demonstrates symmetrical balance and a sense of movement.

Iconological interpretation

This medium-sized *gingann* (*gingannapan*) shares features with drums of the Mamprusi, Dagomba, and Konkomba, called *gingann* in Moar and *gungong* in Dagbani. Among the Bimoba, it is used for festivals, funerals, marriage rites, *kɔnt*, *jokit*, and locating missing persons. As a mixed-media object, it serves musical and spiritual roles, expressing communal identity and rhythmic vitality. As Parris notes, such instruments embody collective expression, resonating ancestral voices and community messages.⁴⁵

Iconographic analysis of *tingbana* (earth shrines): *Tingbanpoi* (female earth shrines) – Figure 6

Pre-iconographic description

Since 1989, IB-o has sculpted and used these *tingbanpoi* in Bunkpurugu. They consist of three female earth shrines modelled as ovals with layered animal blood. The largest measures about two feet high. Two similar shrines lie horizontally (with a sugar cube) and stand vertically, while a smaller one is placed on top. Repeated sacrifices of animals add blood, causing the shrines to grow over time.

Iconographical analysis

Animal blood is the main medium used to model the *tingbanpoi*, which form three-layered oval shapes. Oval forms dominate, and their arrangement suggests unity, balance, and dominance. In addition to the sugar cube, there is little variation in colour, shape, or form. The surface is uneven yet sparkling.

Iconological interpretation

The sculptor precisely models the oval forms using layered animals' blood. Visual elements-colour, line, shape, texture, form, mass, and volume are organised to achieve balance, movement, and unity. *Tingbanpoi* symbolise fertility and are used for protection, healing, and exorcism. Their abstraction and

⁴⁵ Parris, *African Aesthetics and the Everyday: Community, Healing and Living*.

blood-based modelling reflect African aesthetics of sacred embodiment rather than visual beauty alone, aligning with Ekpo and Sidogi’s view of art as a bridge between visible and spiritual realms.⁴⁶

Educational Values of Indigenous Bimoba Sculptures

Through personal communication with respondents, the researcher analysed the educational values of selected indigenous Bimoba sculptures. Indigenous sculptors explained that teaching and learning of sculpture is voluntary, as children may be taught by parents or learn informally within the family.

1. **Gbapirit (hoe handles), sokdaat (hand plough handles), gbianii or gbajara (cudgels):** Respondents stated that ordinary objects such as *gbapirit*, *sokdaat*, and *gbianii/gbajara* serve as teaching aids for apprentices learning wood carving. IB-y explained that his late father supported his learning by providing tools, materials, and tasks such as carving *gbapirit*. Similarly, IB-d noted that he learned through repeated practice carving *gbapirit* and *sokdaat*.
2. **Chicherii (carved figures) :** IB-g, IB-a, and IB-h affirmed that *chicherii* teach moral conduct by discouraging adultery, divorce, and quarrels. They explained that *chicherik* is believed to enforce loyalty and deter misconduct through feared spiritual consequences, thereby promoting social order and morality.
3. **Ginganna (drums) :** IB-q, IB-g, IB-h, and IB-p (personal communication, 5th–6th January 2024) reported that *gingana* are used for *kɔnt*, *jokit*, and funeral rituals. They are also used to search for missing persons in the forest and to communicate community events, as different drum sounds signal funerals or festivals. For instance, *Lolin, lolin, lol chinchin, lolin, lolin, lol chinchin* (Tie, tie, tie tightly; tie, tie, tie tightly) means that they are tying a corpse on a bier or in a casket for burial.

Table 4: Sample *gingana* sounds in Moar (Bimoba Language) and English translation with their meanings for funeral rituals by IB-q, IB-g, IB-h and IB-p

C/N	Moar	English Translation	Meaning
1	<i>Paruk parindoo, li parin dinna, paruk parindoo, li parin dinna</i>	The unexpected has happened; it has happened today. The unexpected has happened; it has happened today.	Someone has died.
2	<i>Gbingber doo mɔpinyerik, gbingber doo mɔpinyerik</i>	A lion has climbed the top of a thatched roof; a lion has climbed the top of a thatched roof.	A man has died.
3	<i>Bunjosankpann, janbinjobik; bunjosankpann janbinjobik</i>	Circumcised penis, clit tip, circumcised penis, clit tip	A man has died.
4	<i>Konbaboung tan gaat korik, tan gaat korik, tan gaat korik; Konbaboung tan gaat korik, tan gaat korik, tan gaat korik</i>	Black Hawk, come for a fowl, come for a fowl; Black Hawk, come for a fowl, come for a fowl	A man has died.
5	<i>Yet dapann kan pa, pan likilii; yet dapann kan pa, pan likilii.</i>	Recalling of pito debt without paying, pay the money; recalling pito debt without paying, pay the money.	A woman has died.
6	<i>Sanpantik naa pookunkun, sanpantik naa pookunkun</i>	Baby’s mother, cute little woman, baby’s mother, cute little woman	Panegyric (praise) for a dead woman
7	<i>Sikin, sikin, sikin lim; sikin, sikin, sikin lim</i>	Go down, go down, go down deep; go down, go down, go down deep.	Lowering the corpse into the grave

⁴⁶ Ekpo and Sidogi, *The De-Africanization of African Art*.

IB-q, IB-g, IB-h and IB-p stated that indigenous Bimoba people play *gingana* (drums) with instruments such as *yerii* (fifes), *siyarrii* (maraca) and *lanwokla* (gong-gong) to communicate and educate communities about events. Drum sounds signal festivals, enskinment of chiefs, or death, including the deceased's gender. They added that *gingana* support *jokit*, which teaches creativity and critical thinking. IB-r and IB-s (personal communication, 11th September, 2024; 15th December, 2024) explained that *jokit* was night entertainment where songs of praise, criticism, and innuendo taught moral lessons and guided spouse selection.

Table 5: Sample *jokit* songs in Moar and English translation by IB-r and IB-s

C/N	Moar	English Translation
1	<i>N Chambaa Kpo</i> <i>N Chambaa kpo ki n loor nyaak nba yee;</i> <i>N mun ki dii far boor lana?</i> <i>Mii bua nyamuukun ki bi boo</i> <i>Mii bua tammɔnnin ki bi boo</i> <i>I mia n chambaa kɔɔ Tong a mii?</i> <i>Mii bua nyamuukun ki bi boo</i> <i>Mii bua tammɔnnin ki bi boo</i> <i>I mia n chambaa nyii Leek a mii?</i>	My Father Died My father died and I joined a terrible family; What suffering have I not gone through? When I am weeding, they lash me; When I am ploughing, they lash me. Do you think my father is from Tong? When I am weeding, they lash me; When I am ploughing, they lash me. Do think my father is from Leek?
2	<i>N Dman Doo Munn Kɔnkiauko</i> <i>N nman doo munn kɔnkiauko</i> <i>Ha hoo yee kɔnkiauk tuu huatee waa (2x)</i> <i>Kɔnkiauk tuu huatee waa</i> <i>kɔnkiauk kaa sanɲannaa (2x)</i>	I Am Like a Hawk of a Town I am like a hawk of a town Haa hoo! as jeered and hooted at a hawk (2x) A hawk is always jeered and hooted at A hawk has no good name (2x)
3	<i>Mii Tee Mɔk N Janɲaa</i> <i>Mii tee mɔk n janɲaa</i> <i>N jan yoonuu daar tan baar</i> <i>Pookper kan yir takɔruk waanuu poorpo yee</i> <i>N janbɔɲ sii lii nan pipebbir</i> <i>Kin ji waa nan turinkabɔɲaa (2x)</i>	When I Get My Wife-To-Be When I get my wife-to-be On the day of her marriage An old lady won't wear a hat to follow her My wife-to-be will lead on a motorbike as I follow with a black saloon car (2x)
4	<i>Ghana Binn Sapaamm</i> <i>Ghana binn sapaamm</i> <i>Kwame Nkrumah binn sapaamm</i> <i>Pɔɔpir sinsirii li yaa pɔɔpiri ya garukaa (2x)</i> <i>Sapaanmɔmm yoo gbenna nyik languur nyaakaa</i> <i>Kanpiakobuk nba ki bi daantin bargbeɲa</i>	Ghana's Era Young Ladies Ghana's era young ladies Kwame Nkrumah's era young ladies With protruding stomachs and very rude (2x) Good ladies are married leaving the hairless ones full of insulting words
5	<i>Tuukpaar Duut Kombian</i> <i>Tuukpaar Duut Kombian-yee</i> <i>N kin yin nan nɲmia narmii (2x)</i> <i>N yin nan Dungun janbɔɲ</i> <i>Kuu fiin gann ki wannin</i> <i>Kpinkpannii sennin yandaan</i> <i>Ki n nyuu ki tenn ki senna</i> <i>Loor duun, loor duuna, n janbɔɲ guuntinna yee</i> <i>Jakpakir nman bik yee, n janɲaa</i> <i>N jan ya u kan guurin yee</i>	Tuukpaar Duut Kombian Tuukpaar Duut Kombian Whom have I not competitively sung with? (2x) I sang praises to my ebony fish from Dungun And she gracefully displayed her fins Kpinkpannii offered me wine of wisdom I drank and reserved some for you The car has sparked, the car has sparked My ebony fish must wait for me An unmarried man is like a child, my ebony fish My ebony fish says she is in hurry and can't wait
6	<i>Bi Bukit Sɔɔ Ya Gbiar</i>	They Have Seized Someone's Hoe

	<p><i>Bi bukit sɔɔ ya gbiar</i> <i>Bi bukit nasinsɔɔ ya gbiar</i> <i>Ɖanni naa ki u ji lin nyiir waabaunɔɔ ɲaa</i> <i>Kusaat-nyaata yia Laara,</i> <i>A musubonɔɔ nan ɲmandajuukaa</i> <i>Mɔb luun nan toorik siataa!</i></p>	<p>They have seized someone’s hoe They have seized one young man’s hoe That is why he vents his spleen on the youth Laar whose uncles are Kusasis, Dark anus like a wild dove Running mouth like honey on a baobab tree!</p>
7	<p>Min Kan Ko Nyagbann <i>Yenn yennee, min kan ko nyaagbann,</i> <i>Chamba yaa min ko nyaagbann,</i> <i>I ji ki mia nyaagbann mɔk siak ni wa mii?</i> <i>Kusaat-nyaata yia Laara,</i> <i>I ki gbiin baa yet ki n naasinyɔɔk</i> <i>bɔɔnaa, siakin tee nan simint bilikuu</i> <i>bonjinnaa</i> <i>A bilikuu bonjinnaa, simint bilikuu</i> <i>bonjinnaa (3x)</i></p>	<p>I Will Not Weed on a Millet Farm I will not weed on a millet farm My dad said I should weed on a millet farm Don’t you know weeding on a millet farm has waist pains? Laar whose uncles are Kusasis, Haven’t you noticed that my good friend has bent down to weed and his waist is like a cement broken block? A broken block, cement broken block? (2x)</p>
8	<p>Ma Won Loon Gann <i>Yenn yenn yee, a ma won loon gann</i> <i>Wa kookoo, kin da loot gann wa bɔlbii</i> <i>yee!</i> <i>Kin da laa ki buan nan sɔkdau na.</i> <i>Kusaat-nyaata yia Laara,</i> <i>A sapaanbɔn-nyinyilik yaa wun dɔɔr</i> <i>niantin daananta.</i> <i>Niantin daananta,</i> <i>Dɔɔr niantin daananta. (2x)</i></p>	<p>When I Closed the Door Yesterday When I closed the door yesterday and I heard knocking, I opened the door and she stealthily entered! I then laughed and bent down like a hand-plough handle. Laar whose uncles are Kusasis, An ebony shining lady slept with me for three days to deceive me. (2x)</p>
9	<p>Mii Boi Mɔk N Janɔ <i>Yenn yennee, mii boi mɔk n janɔ, n yaa</i> <i>janɔ kan ter muu yee; n janɔ kan ter muu</i> <i>diukin.</i> <i>Kusaat-nyaata yia Laara,</i> <i>A toor lin bui ye tokpimm!</i> <i>Ki toor ki lablɔɔ kpila nan waakper naa!</i> <i>A nant nan kurwaah, a nant nan kurwa</i> <i>ki ti sii ɲman ki tɔɔt nan namai naa! (2x)</i></p>	<p>Should I Have My Wife-To-Be Should I have my wife-to-be, my wife-to-be would not face fire; my wife-to-be would not face fire in the kitchen. Laar whose uncles are Kusasis, Pounding a mortar with a pestle to sound tokpimm! Pounding and turning her like a rolling anaconda! A bowl of meat for us to eat with relish and make a joyful savour like the sound of finger cymbals (2x)</p>

4. Biauk/Biat (local guitar/guitars)

Biat are played while singing songs to encourage dancers, praise people and their parents or grandparents, which teach people moral lessons and also help them to understand their history. For instance, IB-v played *biauk* with the following song for one of the researchers:

- a. ‘*Yim Loouk Lankom, yaa nyii sian: i din nyii Wakituk (Ouagadougou) nan Kunkotko, ki baar kar Kurjuak; ki nyii lej ki baar kar Lokperuk; yim nan Kurjuak Lankom, i kɔn bɔk pɔɔr paak ki bɔkit leeb Kurjuak ki i yaja ji gar sik Lokperuk ɲaan ki Kurjuak Lankom biar Kurjuak.*’ (personal communication, 2nd March, 2024).

Meaning in English:

- b. ‘You, Loouk Lankom, your origin: your forebears migrated from Ouagadougou and Kunkotuk; they settled at Kurjuak; from there, they migrated and settled at Lokperuk (in

Togo); they and Kurjuak Lankom fought over the liver of a dog and went their separate ways from Kurjuak; your forebears descended to Lokperuk, but Kurjuak Lankom remained at Kurjuak as their permanent settlement’.

5. *Loŋ/lonii* (gong/gongs)

According to IB-t, an elderly person at Najong No. 1 (personal communication, 5th January, 2024) said a *loŋ* drummer (*lonpɔɔrik*) also sings like the *biauk* player (griot) to encourage and praises dancers through which they learn moral lessons, their history, among others.

6. *Naamiak/naamai* (finger cymbal/cymbals)

Kɔnmɔna (dead Bimoba secret society initiates) were buried with *naamai*, and when someone got to where they were buried at the wrong hours, especially in the night, he or she would hear the sound of *naamai*, an indication that the ghosts of *kɔnmɔna* were prowling to haunt the living. *Kɔnmɔna* were people who died while undergoing *kɔnt* (a secret society ritual). IB-t opined that *naamai* were also used by hunters during hunting expeditions. When a hunter killed a wild animal such as a buffalo or an antelope, he made a sound with *naamiak* to inform or draw the attention of others.

Dicussion Summary

The findings indicate that the indigenous Bimoba sculptures embody strong aesthetic principles, such as abstraction, symbolism, spiritual resonance, and cultural functionality. Sculptures like *chicherii* exhibit high abstraction and minimalism akin to modernist art, yet serve deep ancestral purposes. Their stylised forms reflect the African aesthetic principles outlined by Clarke and Ekpo & Sidogi, especially spiritual symbolism, human resemblance, and reserved demeanor.⁴⁷

Educationally, these sculptures offer invaluable knowledge systems for teaching form, symbolism, cultural identity, and traditional craftsmanship. The use of locally-sourced materials and tools such as the adze, and the ritualised methods of production, provide insights into sustainable and contextual artistic pedagogy. This supports the assertion of Ezeanya-Esiobu that the transformation of Africa rests on acknowledging indigenous knowledge systems.⁴⁸

The study echoes Pyne, Osei, and Adu-Agyem on the therapeutic and instructive potentials of indigenous art and emphasizes the need to extend these values into formal art education.⁴⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Ghana Education Service (GES), in collaboration with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA), systematically integrate indigenous Bimoba sculptures into Creative Arts and Visual Arts syllabuses at all pre-tertiary levels to promote cultural identity, critical appreciation, and historical consciousness. Teacher training institutions should revise curricula to include the aesthetics and educational values of indigenous Ghanaian art forms, including minority traditions such as Bimoba sculpture, and strengthen pre-service and in-service preparation for culturally responsive teaching. The National Commission on Culture (NCC), the Centre for National Culture (CNC), and related institutions should expand preservation and advocacy through exhibitions, festivals, and public education to address negative perceptions. Community-based programmes in Bimoba areas should support skill transmission through collaboration with local sculptors, elders, and custodians. More interdisciplinary research is encouraged to deepen understanding of symbolism and pedagogy in indigenous Ghanaian indigenous sculptures.

⁴⁷ Clarke, “Khan Academy”; Ekpo and Sidogi, *The De-Africanization of African Art*.

⁴⁸ Chika Ezeanya-Esiobu, *Indigenous Knowledge and Education in Africa* (Springer Nature, 2019).

⁴⁹ S. Pyne, M. Osei, and J. Adu-Agyem, “The Use of Indigenous Arts in the Therapeutic Practices,” *International Journal of Innovative Research & Development* 2, no. 11 (2013): 464–74.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that indigenous Bimoba sculptures are a rich repository of cultural, religious, and aesthetic significance, reflecting the Bimoba worldview, spiritual values, and everyday life. Rather than primitive artefacts as often misconstrued in Western ethnographic accounts, they represent a sophisticated system of belief and visual communication grounded in ancestral reverence and community identity. Works such as *tingbana*, *chicherii*, *yerii*, *pataa*, *baun*, and *gingana* demonstrate diverse symbolism and functions within Bimoba society. Their aesthetic value is inseparable from utilitarian and spiritual contexts, where beauty lies in craftsmanship and cultural meaning. Educationally, these sculptures support art instruction, moral education, and intercultural dialogue. Integrating them into Visual Arts curricula can preserve indigenous knowledge, promote cultural pride, and strengthen contextual learning.

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