


Chapter 8

Adornment and Cosmetic Allurements Among the Yoruba Women in the Past and Contemporary Time in Ifa

Samuel Kayode Olaleye

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9285-2598>

University of Ibadan, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Adornment is an additional accessory or decoration worn to enhance the beauty of the wearer. It may also define cultural, social, and religious status of a community, tribe, state, or country as a whole. As a result, every human, particularly Yoruba women of Southwestern Nigeria want to look beautiful and attractive. It is an age-long issue that cuts across every part of the body. Among many natural materials that were used in the past for this purpose are Buļjei-Randia Maculata, Osuļn-Camwood, etc. However, in the contemporary time, adornment has gone beyond imagination. It has become a fashion to bleach the skin with skin-lightening creams of all kinds that are injurious to the skin all in the name of beautifying the body. One may then ask, What are the factors responsible for this? The study made use of data gathered through rapid research approach in Ibadan City, Nigeria, where Facebook, WhatsApp, phoning, and quick in-depth interviews of 10 Babalaw-Ifaì priests, 10 men, and 10 women, and their responses were analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

Adornment is a thing which adorns, embellish, enhance, beatify, prettify, trim, emblazoning, elaboration, enrich, garnish, gild, frills, decorates the body or puts finishing touches to enhance the beauty of a person. From the beginning and origin of mankind, people were trying to beautify themselves and for centuries, West Africans have turned the human body into living art with different kinds of adornments including hairstyling that carries more than aesthetic meaning. Other adornment accessories include tattoos of different kinds, creams to make the skin smooth and glow, earring, anklets, nose ring, neck chains, jewelleries of all kinds, beads and so on. Clothing, which is part of this adornment, has always

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-8827-0.ch008

helped one to look beautiful with an aesthetic appearance by wearing beautiful garments. There four major theories of clothing which are modesty, immodesty, adornment and projection theory. The question that one may possibly ask is which these theories are humankind upholding today? People walk naked on the streets without any form of shame all in the name of fashion. This does not apply to clothing alone. Rather, to the most dangerous of them all which is skin tone and bleaching creams and soaps which is very common among women in the contemporary time that is dangerous for the skin because of the negative effects on the skin pigment (Cobb, 2019). It is on this note that the paper tries to make a comparative analysis of adornment and cosmetic allurements among the Yorùbá women in the past and contemporary time particularly through *Ifá* Divination as found in *Ì wòrì-Wó nrín* to know where we got it wrong.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ADORNMENT

An adornment is some ornaments or accent that makes a person or thing look more attractive. Adornment is a generally exercise around the world, beginning from feathers or bone, to modern accessories, such as jewelry (Bouchot, 2010). Items of adornment are also not limited to ordinary people in the society. They are used by warriors, and by other members of the military to show rank or achievement. In Africa, kings, chiefs and other title holders also adorn themselves to reflect their titles and class they belong in the society. According to Angela Naumov (2021), adorning the body with paints and dyes, both temporary and permanent, has been a wide practice around the globe and across centuries. The purpose for these decorations has ranged from culturally significant rituals and ceremonies to simple beauty practices. For example, *Lawsonia inermis* (commonly known as the henna tree, mignonette tree and the Egyptian privet) is a flowering plant native to much of the south of Asia. The leaves are used as a dye to colour cloths, leather and parts of the body including the hair, fingernails and skin, resulting in a rich, deep chocolate tone when finished. However, in Hindi, it is used as part of a marriage rite. The bride to be is beautified and blessed in preparation for the wedding (Naumov, 2021).

The Padaung Tribe is famous for their neck rings, which are placed on the woman when she is a child. The tribe is known by many different names, but the most recognisable are the Long Neck Tribe or the Giraffe Tribe. The neck rings which is used to look attractive to their husbands are made from brass is placed on the neck and each year, additional one is placed. Besides attractiveness, the rings are used to prevent divorce and adultery because rates of divorce and adultery are very low in the tribe. Once a woman is caught with any of these offences, the rings are removed and since the neck muscles become weak, when the rings are taken off, the woman's neck is so weak that she has to lie down for the rest of her life. We should note here that it is not all the Karen tribe that use neck ring as part of their tradition (Loveridge, 2022).

Adornment is done to make someone beautiful. However, this is not so in the case of Apatani tribe in India because their women are too beautiful and therefore venerable to abduction by other tribes around them. They therefore device means to make them less attractive by body modification by wearing nose plugs and tattoo their faces. The Mursi tribe of southwestern Ethiopia is famous for body modification art peculiar to their women, the lip plate or plug that is also known as lip ornaments. The plate showcases the status of the women in their tribe because the bigger the plate the more important the woman in the society. The Suyu tribe in India, it is their men that pierce their lips to make themselves more attractive while the women go for two plates (Loveridge, 2022). From religion to cultural reasons, all over the

7 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/adornment-and-cosmetic-allurements-among-the-yoruba-women-in-the-past-and-contemporary-time-in-ifa/354752

Related Content

'Birds of the Same Feather,' Shattered Hopes: Case of Zimbabwe Post 2018 Harmonised Elections

Obediah Dodo (2018). *International Journal of Civic Engagement and Social Change* (pp. 30-40).

www.irma-international.org/article/birds-of-the-same-feather-shattered-hopes/224021

Building Theories-in-Practice on Social Innovation in Disability Nonprofit Organizations

Rachel Taylor and Nuttaneeya (Ann) Torugsa (2022). *Research Anthology on Physical and Intellectual Disabilities in an Inclusive Society* (pp. 143-172).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/building-theories-in-practice-on-social-innovation-in-disability-nonprofit-organizations/289058

Child Marriages in Rural Zimbabwe

Jeffrey Kurebwa and Nyasha Yvonne Kurebwa (2018). *International Journal of Civic Engagement and Social Change* (pp. 40-54).

www.irma-international.org/article/child-marriages-in-rural-zimbabwe/204935

Demystifying Deafness: Helpful Information for Classroom Teachers

Jamie L. McCartney (2022). *Research Anthology on Physical and Intellectual Disabilities in an Inclusive Society* (pp. 510-540).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/demystifying-deafness/289075

Speaking With Trunks, Dancing With the "Pink Elephants": Troubling E-Racism, E-Classism, and E-Sexism in Teaching Multicultural Teacher Education

Christine Clark and Gwen Stowers (2020). *Multicultural Instructional Design: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1343-1362).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/speaking-with-trunks-dancing-with-the-pink-elephants/231403