

Museum of Charms and Fetish Objects in Nigeria: Contemplations about Imagination, Culture and Related Areas

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ABSTRACT

On the assumption, upon which perception may be considered as an associative integration of available memory pictures or archetypes as universal thought forms, the deep ecological, cross-cultural and holistic approach is conceived for two complementary areas of research: 1) contemplations about the anthropological traits of imagination, symbolic meanings of museum objects, culture, archetype image symbols and induced associations; 2) meditation on the notion of man in the language and culture of Igbo people in Nigeria, and group visual art expression. These contents are discussed with reference to some knowledge in archetypology, neuroscience, semiotics, fine and other arts, psychoanalysis, sophrology, museology and other related areas. Culture is considered as a way of life which embraces the customs and beliefs, arts, rituals, mentality, religious leaning of the people and historically transmitted patterns of symbols. Three subjects, who graduated in philosophy and/or theology at the Nigerian University, were involved in these activities. Their role in the research workshops extended to that of active participants as listeners, observers and researchers. Museum collections are considered as traditional religious objects, as artistic or ornamental objects, as charms and fetish objects. In a broader sense, and with a review on psychoanalytic theory of object relations and other related areas, some contemplation is shown about the complex history and meaning of the word charms, fetish and related terms, and about creativity, beliefs and human coping mechanisms with various problem areas. In this context, the importance of the catalytic role of education and the heritage mission of the Nigerian museum is highlighted. Research activities were carried out in the Museum of Charms and Fetish Objects in Main Campus of Madonna University and National Pilgrimage Centre in Elele, Nigeria.

Key words: conscience, culture, archetype image symbols, induced associations, creativity, heritage

Introduction

Charm, fetish and related terms

Various interpretations of the terms *charm* and *fetish* exist. The word *charm*, for example, basically applies to something believed to work a spell repelling evil spirits or malign influences or attracting favorable ones. It may be used, in reference, to an incantation, a word, or a form of words as well as to an object. In its extended application to a quality in persons or in things it connotes a power to attract or allure that is suggestive of spell working. Symbolic meaning of the terms *charm*, *fetish*, *talisman*, *amulet*, as well as others, are comparable when they designate an object believed to be endowed with the virtue of averting evil or bringing good fortune. The word *fetish* may be applied to an object, either natural (such as a snake or an

animal's foot, or clay wing, bovine horns, tongue, skull and others) or artificial, a human made object that has the power over others, which is held sacred in the belief that a supernatural spirit has entered into it and invested it with the power to bring success, luck, and freedom from evil to its owner or worshipper. *Talisman*, unlike *fetish*, presupposes a degree of enlightenment, a knowledge of astrology and other occult sciences, and a belief in magical power. In extended use it may be applied to an object felt to exert a magical, and usually happy influence. The word *amulet* is usually applied to something worn or carried on the person because of its supposed magical power to preserve one in danger or to protect one from evil and especially from disease. It is considered that the term *fetish* (Lat. *facticius* / Fr. *fétiche*) derives from Portuguese *feitico* which in mediaeval times referred to the objects like amulets, charms, talismans, wood figures, spells and other

magical practices. The word fetish was in this time, a Portuguese label for “less valuable” Western African art. The Portuguese explorers and merchants who travelled to West Africa in the fifteenth century, applied the term *feitico* to an array of African religious objects commonly found in the coastal communities¹.

In the theory of Auguste Comte (1798–1857) French philosopher and sociologist, fetishism lay at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder, followed by the theistic phases of polytheism and monotheism, and is a belief in the magical power of these objects in which are the spirits, demons, or some magical powers. In the “Analysis of the Self”, psychiatrist Kohut² wrote about the term fetishism, symbols, and archaic layers of the collective consciousness. Essentially, fetishism is attributing an inherent value of powers to an object. There is also an assumption that such objects may lead to feelings of well-being, if not to actual changes in the body. In “Essays about the Ethnopsychiatry”, Devereux³ wrote that the process of perception and imagination should be considered throughout the relation of the development of the collective consciousness in the existent and imaginary, the seen and unseen world, as well as some aspects of the fetishism cult in the mind of contemporary man.

Based on the results of various studies in neurosciences on brain functions, aesthetics, art, culture and communication, French neurologist Lemarquis⁴ presumes that the terms charms and fetish objects, therefore, amulets, talismans and other, have been known since ancient times. According to his interpretation, amulets date back to prehistoric times and can be made of different types of materials, animal or vegetal origin, minerals, and precious stones. For instance, Otzi, also called Iceman, discovered in 1991, the natural mummy of a man found frozen in the Ötztal Alps (on the border between Austria and Italy) who lived sometime between 3350–3100 BC, had a leather bag around his neck that housed items for protection. Sea urchin fossils, used as pendants, have been found in the Neolithic sites of the Bronze and the Iron Age. The Persians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Greeks, Hebrews relied on the power of scarabs mounted in the gold setting, ribbons with knots, the Eye of Horus, gemstones, fragments of papyrus or parchment on which holy letters or texts were written, for the purpose of warding off influence of evil luck. In the year 1393 Saint John Nepomuk was drowned in the Vltava River by the order of the King Wenceslaus IV, because as the King’s wife confessor he refused to reveal the secrets of the confessional. The tongue of Saint John Nepomuk as a stone amulet mounted in a silver setting is considered as protection against evil tongues and gossip. During the reign of the Medici family, Marcile Ficini (1433–1498) was head of Plato’s Academy at Florence. He used astrological talismans and studied the influence of music and colours for the cure to diseases, as was already practiced by the ancient Egyptians. The clergy of Aix-la Chapelle offered Napoleon the talisman that Charlemagne was wearing around his neck. French archeologist Eugene Lefebvre (1838–1908) de-

scribed the symbolism of the talisman Hand of Fatima and Hamsa, which was found in Iran. The German historian Weigall⁵ wrote that on the last day of his reign, the Roman emperor Nero (37–68 AD), rushed to his dormitory to find a snakeskin talisman which he received in his childhood. The Emperor was in the belief of the magical power of the mentioned object, and hoped it would help him save himself from the danger that was imminent.

Considering the contents of various studies, it is possible to reveal, that ethnologists, artists, scientists, mystics, museum curators, psychiatrists, educators, scholars of comparative religion, poets, and others, engaged with the concept of art, medicine, culture and religion, still use their own special approach and media in interpreting symbolism of charms and fetish objects. Equally important is the fact that in the studies of various authors, both of fetish and traditional religious or cult objects, were built on a dearth of knowledge. It seemed necessary then, that research on symbolism in charm and fetish objects be devised on the comprehension of the relationship between anthropological traits of imagination, culture, and other related areas, as well as with the heritage mission of the museum, where various collections of charms and fetish objects, as well as other historical documents are stored.

The term heritage may be perceived as incorporating a wide range of non-material aspects, not only in the form of knowledge and practices, but also as values and beliefs⁶. In studies on philosophy of education, Chukwu⁷ thought that consciously or unconsciously, human decisions, both intelligent and otherwise, are always based upon beliefs. Moses ben Maimon (1138–1204) commonly known as Maimonides, a Hebrew philosopher, also a preeminent physician and astronomer, thought that one should believe in that which is not in contradiction with mind, but also that is not possible to explain all. Everything in the universe, known and unknown, comes from the same source, and everything is in the consciousness, according to French Philosopher Voltaire Marie Arouet (1634–1778). In philosophy, anthropology, theology, medicine, physics, social sciences, and humanities, as well as arts, contemporary thought or thinking as a cognitive and self-regulative process is conceived as a part of the cosmic development of consciousness and analytical – synthetic nature of Man’s spirit. It is on these assumptions that the following considerations have been based.

Consciousness and analytical-synthetic nature of Man’s spirit

Man has always attempted to get into the meaning of the creative act, all to the deepest strata of his consciousness and archetypal images of his internal visions. And Hermes Trismegistus speaks to Asclepius: A great miracle, Asclepius, is Man! A being worthy of all admiration and honor, a being turning into the nature of God, as if he is God himself, and shows the nature of demons if he realizes that he is born with demons⁸. In the Christian tradition, theologian and philosopher of Italian origin, Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), in his *Epistola de*

Incarnatio Verbi^a, writes as follows: “when the Word was made flesh^b, He assumed a nature. And only this nature is signified by the word “man”; moreover, it is always a different nature from the divine nature”. Jalal al – Din Rumi (1207–1273), probably the greatest of Sufi poets, thought Love is the energy behind the evolution of human consciousness, and a dynamic force producing all worthwhile development and creativity in human beings. He taught that the true Self should not be identified with the ego conditioned by society and environment, and that the real essence of man is the product of the universe in evolution. The concept of archetypes and its correlates, that of collective unconscious, are among the better-known theories developed by Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961). Jung believed that all humans shared a collective unconscious and universal archetypes common to all cultures. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) an Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis elaborated a theory of consciousness and ventured to develop a model of psychic structure comprising different components of consciousness in man – id, ego, and superego. All three functions can operate with degrees of intensity at all levels of consciousness. He presented the notion of the ego as a center, mediating and coping with the outer and inner world.

The body, the mind, the consciousness, and the soul are the same thing called human beings, forming an existential unity, is a concept of Alfonso Caycedo (1932 – 2017), a Columbian neurologist and psychiatrist, using the proverb *Ut Conscientia Noscatur*, which means for consciousness to be known⁹. In collaboration with Ludwig Binswanger (1881–1966) the Swiss founder of phenomenological psychiatry, Caycedo became familiar with the method of investigation of consciousness proposed by Husserl (1859–1938), and Heidegger (1889–1976) which influenced the direction of his own research in that field. On the sources of Plato’s (427–347 BC) reflections on the virtues, and some Eastern and Western practices and philosophies, Caycedo has created an elegant neologism, sophrology (Greek *sophrosyne* – healthy state of mind characterized by self-control, moderation, and awareness of one’s true self). Various authors describe sophrology as a blend of Eastern and Western practices, techniques, and philosophies, and as a transformational tool that may bring balance back to body and mind, allowing us to connect more deeply to our spirit, the authentic driving force within us, that gives our lives meaning and substance^{10,11}. In an Indian journal for human sciences, Pandey¹² described sophrology as the science which studies the human conscience, its modifications, and the means of varying it with a prophylactic, therapeutic and teaching aim. In the book “Arts and Sophrology”, recently published in Croatia, sophrology is described as a complementary science and philosophy of the new epoch, focused on the deep ecological, cross-cultural, holistic, transdisciplinary, bioethical,

and deontological approaches, aimed at studying the human conscience and life potentials¹³.

Roberto Assagioli (1888–1976) was an Italian psychiatrist famous for developing and founding the science of psychosynthesis (*synthèse mentale*), as a spiritual and holistic approach to researching conscience and behavior in human beings. Assagioli felt that love, wisdom, creativity and will all be important components that should be included in any kind of education, therapy, and research. He pointed out the importance of studying various arts for the purpose of expanding the consciousness of man¹⁴. Charles R. Kelley^c, chose the word Radix, from Latin meaning – root or source, referring to that mystery of source which underlies all movement, feeling and growth in a person and life. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1888–1955), French philosopher and Jesuit priest, conceived the idea of the Omega Point (a maximum level of complexity and consciousness towards which he believed the Universe was evolving) and developed the concept of noosphere as a sheath made of human thoughts enveloping the planet¹⁵. Connecting the current knowledge of psychoneuroimmunology and physics with traditional interpretations of Ayurvedic medicine, Chopra¹⁶ has recently written about the ability of one type of awareness (the mind) to spontaneously correct an error in another type of awareness (the body).

A thirst for the infinite, for cosmic consciousness, for union with Absolute, has possessed many minds in various cultures for thousands of years. Some have taken their place in the story of mankind as founders or as leaders of religions, some as reformers, philosophes, poets, artists, scientists. In this context we also discover the work of a Nigerian university professor Emanuel Edeh, a Catholic priest of the Holy Ghost Congregation. Edeh believed that in African philosophy we are dealing with practical theoretical science¹⁷. He received many awards in Africa, Europe and America and was nominated also for the Nobel peace prize. The application of his philosophy of theory and action propelled him to embark on the establishment of numerous institutions and projects in Nigeria, among which is the establishment of Madonna University, National Pilgrimage Centre, International Sanctuary in Elele, as well as the Museum of Charms and Fetish Objects in Elele.

Museum of Charms and Fetish Objects in Elele

At the end of the last century, after the devastating Nigeria – Biafra war, the effects were still deeply engraved in the lives of the people. There were still shattered and broken men and women, families were immersed in seemingly unsolvable disputes and quarrels.

^aAnselm of Canterbury “The Incarnation of the Word” In: Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury. Translated by Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (The Arthur J. Banning Press, Minneapolis, 2000).

^bLat. *Verbum caro factum est*, John 1:14.

^cCharles R. Kelley (1922- 2005), was a philosopher of science, an explorer of the life force, and an applied experimental psychologist supporting a holistic therapy. “Radix” is the fundamental energy or life force that moves, pulsates and finds form in each of us and in all of nature. Freeing the flow of radix in an individual brings aliveness, insight, self awareness, discovery, resolution and acceptance. <https://ebokly.com/radix-journal-1978-1983-charles-r-kelley-2/>.

Virtually every family delved into the world of devilish charms and fetish objects to kill others, to avenge deaths and misfortune, to destroy neighbors. The depressing situation was compounded by lack of food, proper medication for the sick, homelessness, lack of education, and above all moral and spiritual support. Under these circumstances, the people resorted to applying “Juju” charms and fetish objects. The term *juju* has been applied to traditional African religions. In a general sense the term “juju” can be used to refer to magical properties with good luck. The term *juju* (French: *joujou*, Engl. plaything) refers to the spiritual belief system incorporating various objects, such as amulets and spells used in traditional religious practice, as part of witchcraft. In this gloomy environment of utter despair and disillusion, Emanuel Edeh was described as a special priest who returned to Africa, from his overseas studies in America¹⁸. He believed that knowledge is power just as the key to knowledge is education. This also applies to numerous questions raised by the philosophy of science, respectively deontology as a part of ethics, i.e., the science on what ought to be done. In this light, Edeh established the Museum of Charms and Fetish Objects in the Main Campus of the National Pilgrimage Centre and Madonna University in Elele, in Nigeria. The museum often witnesses visitors from all over Nigeria and foreign lands.

Aim of the Study

Since ancient times, man has gradually discovered that concepts and words are symbols, that speech marks all psycho-somatic and spiritual manifestation, and that is the primeval origin of the hermeneutics itself, that in the history of varied cultures as in the history of the individual everything depends on the development of consciousness. Claude Levi-Strauss⁴ was a French anthropologist whose work was crucial in the development of the theory of structuralism and structural anthropology. His ideas reached into many fields in the humanities, including philosophy.¹⁹ In his opus, structuralism has been defined as the search for the underlying patterns of thought in all forms of human activity. In *The Introduction to General Archetypology*, Durand¹⁹ indicates that numerous aspects of existence complement one another in the unique expression of actual man’s experience and self-awareness.

Contemplating African philosophy and a holistic view of the universe, Edeh²⁰ wrote that philosophy, theology, social theory, land, law, medicine, psychology, and other disciplines, all find themselves logically concatenated in a system so tight that to subtract one item from the whole is to paralyze the structure of the whole. Umberto Eco (1932–2016), Italian philosopher and semiotician proposed that every cultural phenomenon may be studied through communication, therefore, as the study of signs,

symbols, and communication behaviors. The symbols strike its roots in the most secret depths of the soul and can combine the disparate elements into a unitary impression. Symbols allow the people to go beyond what is unknown or seen, by creating linkages between otherwise very different concepts and expressions. Based on these assumptions, the principal aim in this paper was the contemplation about the anthropological traits of imagination, symbol meaning, museum collections, culture, and other related areas, and about the heritage mission of the Nigerian museum.

Methods

Study procedure and subjects

Keeping with the aim of the research, a basic outline of a research protocol was drawn. This kind of protocol is related to research involving human participants and entails systematic collection and multimodal analysis of data. The ideas behind this research were first presented within some of the lectures I held at International Conventions of Experts and Intellectuals at Madonna University. As part of the research, two complementary research workshops were organized with the following topics: 1) contemplations about the anthropological traits of imagination, culture, symbol meaning of museum objects, archetype image symbols and induced associations; 2) meditation and group visual art expression (joint picturing) about the notion of man, as “the good that is”, in the language and culture of Igbo people in Nigeria. These contents are discussed with reference to some knowledge in archetypology, semiotics, neuroscience, fine and other arts, psychoanalysis, sophrology, museology and other related areas. Culture is defined as the way of life which embraces the customs and beliefs, mentality, arts, rituals, religious leaning of the people and historically transmitted patterns of symbols. Both workshops had three subjects, aged 30–35 years, male, who graduated from philosophy and/or theology at the Nigerian university. Each of these subjects gave their consent to participate in the planned activities. Choosing and taking pictures of museum items were done under the assistance of the museum curators and other associates in the museum. Introductory lectures were held at the beginning of both workshops, to inform the participants about the purpose of research, theoretical framework, instruments, and methods which will be used. While examining archetypal image symbols and induced associations during guided imagination, or as Jung would say, active imagination, an innovative research tool was devised, a matrix with three mandalas. The role of the subjects in the research workshop was extended to that of active participants as listener, observer, and researcher. Permission to conduct research activities and publish the results was obtained from the founder of Madonna University and Rector of the National Pilgrimage Centre in Elele and his associates. Activities were carried out in the Museum of Charms and Fetish Objects (Figure 1), and in a special

⁴ Claude Levi-Strauss (1908-2009). Relevant works: *La pensée sauvage*. Paris: Plon, 1962; *Anthropologie structurale*. Paris: Plon, 1958.



Fig. 1. A sight in front of the museum of Charms and Fetish Objects in Elele.



Fig. 2. A building in traditional African style at the main Campus of Madonna University and National Pilgrimage Centre in Elele.

room for seminars and different activities (Figure 2) in a building in the Main Campus of Madonna University and National Pilgrimage Centre in Elele.

Projective hypothesis and object relation theory

Activities in the research workshops were based on object relation theory, which is considered a contemporary course (trend) of psychoanalytic theory. Within the framework of this theory, it is believed that an object is a person, thing, or mental representation which is gratified, or someone onto whom the subject project desires, wishes, or

other powerful emotions. A *projective hypothesis* is used, which holds that when confronted with an ambiguous or unstructured stimulus situation, people tend to project onto their own needs, and idiosyncratic ways of looking at the world. In other words, each person perceives external stimuli through a reflection of his or her attitudes, culture, age, sexes, understandings, and perceptual and response tendencies, and interprets the compounded perception of external reality²¹.

About the ISO principle, intermediary object, and preparation of the subjects for activities in the research-workshops

It is the opinion that the works of art (painting, drawing, dance, music, poetry...) may have the power to communicate complementary knowledge and states of consciousness. For instance, reviewing an article “Some Links between Anthropology, Ethnomusicology, and Music”, Benezon²² explained the concept of ISO principle. According to her interpretation it is a phenomenon of internal sound and movement that summarizes human sound archetypes. ISO (Greek – equal) means equal and sums up the notion of the existence of sound or a set of sounds or internal phenomena that are characteristic of human beings. It is the sound identity of a human group, the product of latent musical affinities in each one of its members. Therefore, deliberating on cultural and ethnic identity is inseparable from ISO – sound identity. It is a product of the global cultural system of which the individual and his group form a part. Considering also, that various art products can become transitional or intermediary objects which may become imbued with meaning beyond what they are. For example, a drawing, painting, or music, may become a transitional object, or according to Benezon, an *intermediary object*, which enables the subject to relate with his auxiliary Egos. Just as work of visual art may open the “inner eye”, so may music open the “inner ear” in self-awareness in the subjects. Using this hypothesis, musical instruments and the sound or sounds, accordingly music and rhythms they emit, may be considered intermediary objects, with the purpose to facilitate inducing new levels of consciousness and creative imagination in a person. According to this hypothesis, at the beginning of each workshop, participants were included in a short program of dynamic relaxation, also known as *sophronization* while listening to music. In light of psychosynthesis according to Assagioli¹⁴, the goal was the induction of aesthetic pleasure and contemplative or full awareness (*l'élargissement du champ de conscience*), a state of mindfulness in the participants. It feels appropriate to mention that different religious rituals are characterized by a similar process of preparation during which the participants progressively immerse themselves in the *sacred* spheres of action and open themselves for the emergence of the spiritual consciousness, new levels of psychosomatic homeostasis, aesthetic pleasure, catharsis, and transcendent harmony, which relates each person from the restraints of their individual egos. For these purposes a medley of melodies was recorded onto a

disc: The Gymnopédies by a French composer Erik Satie (1866 – 1925), *Ave verum corpus* (Hail, true body born of the Virgin Mary) of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), Thus Spoke Zarathustra of Richard Georg Strauss (1864–1949), and relevant songs of African Music titled “Living Fountain of Life “, performed by an orchestra and the student choir at Madonna University.

Symbols and guided imagination in light of deep ecological, cross-cultural and holistic approach

Symbols are complex and their meanings have evolved within the consciousness of individuals or cultures. Mayo²³ as well as other authors who studied the development of pictographs and cuneiform writing, one of the earliest systems of writing invented by Sumerians in ancient Mesopotamia, wrote about this theme. Take for example in the early Sumerian culture, the ideograms for the terms – god, earth, man, woman, head, mouth, were pictorial representations of these objects. In that era, the concept of “divinity” (a god in general) in Sumerian was closely associated with the heavens, as is evident from the fact that its primordial shape in Sumerian imagination, was the picture (ideogram /pictogram) of a star. The primordial association of divinity in the minds of the Sumerian, was thus bright or shining hierophanies in the sky. However gradually, with the evolution of the minds and symbolic expression in Sumerian culture, pictorial representation for this term, and others, transitioned into more abstract cuneiform writings. These changes from pictorial representation to cuneiform symbols in the period from around 4000 BC to around 600 BC, are shown in Figure 3. Five thousand years later, Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)^e, a German Benedictine nun, a theologian, a scientist, a poet, and a visionary, said that God was *Lux Vivens / Living Light*. She used in her imagination, contemplation and description, archetypal image symbols and attributes closely associated with the terms light and heaven, in a way similar to what happened in the minds of ancient Sumerian.

What might this be, was the main question in inkblot technique perception and imagination, which was once the most widely used projective test, and is named after its creator Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach (1884–1922). There are ten official inkblots (accidental form, chance forms). Each of these figures has a near perfect bilateral symmetry. Five inkblots are of black ink, two are of black and red ink and three are multicolored, on a white background. The general goal of the test is to provide data about cognition and personality variables such as motivations, response tendencies, affectivity, and interpersonal relations²⁴. To analyze the answers from various subjects from a psychoanalytical aspect Rorschach used variables, such as, instinct, intuition, empathy, inspiration, creative mood, revelation, symbols, associative energy, imagination, etc.

^e In her illustrated work *Scivias*, describing her visions Hildegard frequently depicts her own visionary experience of the Living Light (*lux vivens*) and its shadow (Bruce Hozeski. Hildegard von Bingen's Mystical Visions. Santa Fe: Bear and Company, 1995).

The term imagination can be described as the thought process and communication mechanism between perception, emotion, and bodily or psychosomatic change. Image can be induced by conscious, deliberate behaviors (meditation, sounds, music, colors, touch, and body movements, etc.) as well as by subconscious acts (dreaming, reverie, hypnosis, sophronization, electrical stimulation of the brain, etc.). In his time, about the imagination, German doctor, and philosopher Paracelsus Theophrastus Aurelus ab Hohenheim (1583–1541) is quoted as having said the following: Man has an invisible and visible workshop... The visible is his body, the invisible one is his imagination (mind). The imagination is the sun in the soul of man. The spirit is the master, and the body is the plastic material²⁵.

It is considered that imagery or the stuff of imagination affects the body and the mind intimately on both seemingly mundane and profound levels. Take for instance, active imagination was originally a method of dream interpretation developed by Jung²⁶, in which a dream or motif is enlarged, clarified, and given meaningful context by comparing it with similar images from mythology, folklore and comparative religion. Guided imagination is one version of active imagination. Guided imagination is also known as *Katathym-imaginative approach* (Greek: *katathymes* – in the mind, created in subconscious), as well as *sophronization*²⁷. It is a holistic, psychodynamic, and multimodal approach, which consists of breathing exercises and dynamic relaxation, spoken instructions, eye movement desensitization, and body movements’ symbolization. Music and other audio-visual media can accompany these activities. The aim of guided imagination is to evoke and generate mental images that stimulate or re-create the sensory perceptions of sights, sound, smells, touch, as well as imagination or mental construct that the subject (participant in seance of education or therapy) experiences.











4000-3000 BC	1000-600 BC	Meaning
		god, heaven
		Earth
		Man
		Woman / female
		Head / mouth

Fig. 3. Some changes from pictograph to cuneiform symbols.

Guided imagination may precipitate various psycho-somatic reactions, therefore various emotions and feelings that can be projected into verbal expression, acoustic, that is, prosodic features of voice, body language, poetry, drawings etc.

Connecting the knowledge of different cultures and traditions, intuitive consciousness about the notion of human spirit and the connection of Man with Nature has a deep ecological, cross-cultural and cosmic dimension²⁸. While, on the one hand, the hierarchical relations in science are manifested in the development of traditional and new scientific disciplines, in the constant discovery of enigmas of Man and the World, the primeval and magical power of various forms of art, on the other hand, constantly enters the metaphysical field of experience as a form of life energy and self-actualization in an individual. Based on these assumptions guided imagination was used in both workshops, to release creativity within an individual, and as the dynamic production of inward images, in which the subjects are encouraged to observe these images, and to find associations to the image symbols. For those purposes matrix with visual configurations in three mandalas, and group visual art expression (joint painting / joint picturing) were used.

Group visual art expression

The rationale for investigation on joint painting is founded on the belief of researchers that esthetic, empathic and intuitive communication are key factors in the process of studying the symbolic meaning of drawing, respectively artwork. Correspondingly, Figure 4, shows the artwork of a group of students at the University of Zagreb, who were inspired with a lecture titled “Spirituality, Music and Traditional African Medicine”. The lecture was held by invited speaker Rene Agnero-Loes from the Ivory Coast. The group assignment was that by joint picturing or painting, one can achieve a meaningful and aesthetic whole. After a period of contemplation on the symbolic meaning of their joint artwork, and the question “What might this be?”, the group decided that the title “Beliefs, Hope and Joy of Life”, was the most appropriate title for interpreting the symbolic meaning of their joint artwork.

A detail explanation of this method was described in the co-authored paper “Group visual art expression (joint painting) and cross-cultural approach”, with a review of the use of this method in a Croatian-Brazilian project^{29,30}. This concept has also been used within the framework of the protocol for guided imagination and joint painting with the participants in the research workshops in Elele.

Matrix with three mandalas as a research tool

Jung thought that a mandala (a Sanskrit word meaning circle) an archetypal symbol (or psycho cosmogramme) was appropriate for studying the wholeness of the psyche. He believed that all humans shared a collective unconscious and universal archetypes common to all



Fig. 4. “Beliefs, Hope and Joy of Life”, group artwork, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 80 cm.

cultures in humanity³¹. Archetype (primordial image, imago) thought Jung, is the universal thought-form held to be common to many epochs and peoples. Jung defines the Archetype of the Self, a symbol of totality and wholeness as being the center and the circumference of the psyche. In numerous cultures (Tibetan, Tantrism, Buddhism...) with his powerful symbolism, and superb work of art per se, mandala represents the Absolute, the universe, Heaven, cosmic consciousness, perfection, wholeness, and totality of being. For example, in some schools of Tantra, meditation on the visual configurations and ornamented details in mandalas are used as a contemplative act and as a starting point for the unfolding of their crowded symbolism³². Jung explained that many things arousing devotion or feelings of awe, as for instance a Church, heaven, the sea or any waters, the underworld, the Moon, and the Earth are mother symbols. Image of the headdress of the Goddess Nut, also known as the goddess of the sky, mothers, Universe in the ancient Egyptian religion, was the hieroglyphic part of her name, a pot, which may also symbolize the uterus. In these contemplations, different hollow objects, such as mouth, shell, volcano, ovens, and anything of a like shape may be associated with mother archetype.³¹

In an essay titled “Passion, Love, and Eternity of Life”, Kahn³³ from the Medical University Institute in Calcutta, India, thus wrote: “Hindu and Buddhist civilizations (culture) gave the world a tender touch of humanism. The impulse and the idea of existence came from the supreme awareness of the finer sensibilities of body and mind. Instincts with the sap of life formed the infrastructure of the supreme quality of forms of body movement.

This gave unlimited bliss to the human soul.” In this context he cited a segment of an old Chinese poem written by poet Chuang Tzu (around 350 BC):

“This which fulfils the universe, I regard as my body. And that which directs the universe, I see as my own nature, and I hear silent music in these words, reminding me that cosmic breath is my next breath, and the cosmic dance is the next beat of my heart”.³³

Bernstein³⁴ and psychiatrist Judith S. Kestenberg studied body-dance movement and body language in education and psychotherapy, and stated, that with the onset of psychosomatic functioning the tension flow rhythms, such as sucking, embracing, urinating, defecating, is used for drive discharge, in such a way that oral, anal, urethral, and genital drives find their rhythms while development in human beings. French psychiatrist Devereux³⁵ in the book “Mythic Vulva” showed the stamp of the Sumerian goddess Ishtar and described some associations which were induced during meditation on the contents of the myth of Dionysus, the features of Aphrodite, Blessed Virgin, and various symbols in other cultures.

As physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking³⁶ liked to remind us, the germ of his idea of the “History of the Universe” appeared at the time when he was expecting the birth of his daughter. Thus, based on archetypal pictures (archetype image symbols) of the proprioceptive experience of birth and passing through the birth canal, Hawking developed an aesthetic scene of creation and the theory of the origin of the universe. In Edeh’s contemplations about the metaphysics and culture of Igbo people in Nigeria, the Earth because of its fertility is also described as the archetype of all forms of maternity, which holds a mysterious power³⁷. In studies on informatics, art, and aesthetics, Bense³⁸ considered there to be a primordial connection between erotic, spiritual and aesthetic impulses in the mind of Man.

In the light of these contemplations, and on the assumption that archetypes are a priori conditioning factors or predispositions for all forms of mental functioning, a matrix with special visual configurations in three mandalas, displayed in Figure 5, was conceived, as an innovative research tool for considering the induced association during guided imagination: MRAF – mandala with photographed images of ten accidental forms (chance forms) of Rorschach’s Inkblot projective technique; MSBS – mandala with photographed images of five pictographs and five cuneiforms symbols for terms – god, man, Earth, woman, head/mouth, that were used through different times in Sumerian and Babylonian culture (they are, pictograph symbols from approximately 3000 BC, and cuneiforms symbols for the same terms, somewhere around 600 BC); MCFO – mandala with photographed images of ten museum charms and/or fetish objects.



Fig. 5. Matrix with visual configurations in three mandalas (MRAF, MSBS, MCFO).

Matrix with visual configurations in mandalas is completed in collaboration with an academic painter graduated at the Academy of Arts at the University in Split in Croatia³⁹. Each figure (image) in the mandalas is labelled with a Roman numeral, which is located next to it. These labels are used for contemplating the symbolic meaning of induced associations. Closely related to this approach are some projective techniques such as Rorschach’s inkblots, various drawing projective techniques, and various thematic apperception tests, which engage the subjects in the projective and complementary analysis (working through) of presented visual configurations⁴⁰.

Results and Discussion

The following text will display the elaborated content of both research workshops: contemplations about complex animistic religious traditions and beliefs; the symbolism of museum collections with a revue on museology, education and heritage mission of the museum; thoughts, feelings and interpretations of induced associations, which were triggered by viewing mandala matrixes; meditation about the term man as “the good that is” with a review on Igbo metaphysics, and transformation of one form of consciousness into another.

Contemplations about complex animistic religious traditions and beliefs

It is believed that a spiritual belief of the people, respectively African traditional religion, has been rightly referred to as the womb of the people’s culture, and plays a key role in their perception, imagination, and beliefs. The traditional African religions or traditional beliefs of African people are oral rather than scriptural and are passed down from one generation to another through folk tales, songs, and festivities, and include belief in an amount of higher and lower gods, belief in spirits, use of magic and traditional African medicine. It is considered that traditional African religions are not only religious, but a worldview, a way of life. Traditional Africans basically view the universe as comprising two realms, the visible and the invisible realms. Although most of the Africans today are adherents of Christianity or Islam, African people often combine the practice of their traditional beliefs with the practice of these religions.⁴¹

One should keep in mind that traditional African religions, or traditional beliefs, also have elements of fetishism, shamanism, and veneration of relics⁴¹. In those circumstances, we discover the inherent power of arts, rituals and communication projected in various museum collections of charms and fetish objects, that speak about the symbol meanings of various objects, and provide to visitors an insight into the cultural history, customs, tradition, doctrines, and spiritual beliefs of the people. For example, the visitors of the museum can also see fetishized human and cow skulls, that were used in Juju traditional spiritual belief ceremonies and rituals, as well as miscellaneous other items, for example, various masks, that were used during harvest celebrations, initiations, and funeral rites. The beauty, power, and the symbolism of Igbo masks, and many other sculptures and items, can be seen in the Museum’s collections which represent the thousands of years of Igbo people and other African traditions. Primarily, masquerades are thought of by Africans as powerful sacred symbols. As a sacred symbol, with a rich religious significance, they also serve to symbolize the spiritual authority that eradicates social evils. During various festivities, a vast variety of wooden sculptures and masks to personify the specific nature of spirits, represented as humans, animals or other beings are used. The rituals encapsulate and express for traditional African groups vital information

relating to their different areas of awareness, intuitive, physical, aesthetic, and normative. One should keep in mind that the rituals are a feature and symbols of all known human societies and cultures, they appeal to the emotional components of the psyche, providing satisfaction for human metaphysical needs and the product of imagination. The power of the ritual resides not as itself as such, but in the supernatural beings to which the object primarily refers. Various rituals during initiations or in honor and homage to ancestral spirit, in the glorification of god, during weddings or funerals, or with the purpose to improve fertility, bringing luck to the harvest and courage in grief, are used to heal the body and the mind.

Traditional Africans rely on speech forms such as myths, proverbs, wise sayings, and songs, as well as art-forms like music, rhythm of the drums, dance, sculpture, masks, and various other ritual objects, to preserve and impress their beliefs, ideas, and values in the mind of successive generations.¹⁷ For example, songs, dance, and music which consist of complex rhythmic patterns are used in ritual and religious traditional ceremonies, to pass down stories from generation to generation. Music in Africa is very important when it comes to religion, and it is a highly rhythmic music. The meaning which the music communicates involves the awareness of the tendencies, resistances, tensions, and fulfilments embodied in art. And when African drummers practice their art, it is as if they too are changing the world and touching the human spirit through the rhythm and music of the drum. Figures 6 and 7 display the scenes from very attractive music-dance and drum performances of the students from the Madonna University, during an International Convention of experts and intellectuals, which was held at the Main campus in Elele.



Fig. 6. Drums performance at one of the international festivities at the Madonna University in Elele.

Despite many unknowns, authors that have conducted studies on art and fetish objects exhibited in various museums of anthropology, find that these objects were both religious and artistic, as well as African and uni-



Fig. 7. Dance performance at one of the international festivities at the Madonna University in Elele.

versal. Based on their interpretations these objects were rooted in the oldest and most honorable of African religious traditions, and as an account of their history, one of the greatest and deepest forms of spirituality of our time which partakes in the universal value of Man.

Within the framework of the research workshops, some artistic and deep spiritual significance of museum objects as traditional religious objects was noted. That is, the aesthetics of traditional African sculpture was once a powerful influence, among the European artists who formed an avant-garde in the development of modern art. Artists such as, Henri Matisse (1869 – 1954), Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973) and others, blended the highly stylized treatment of the human figures with painting styles derived from post-Impressionist works of Paul Gauguin (1848 – 1903), Edouard Manet (1832 – 1883) and others. While these artists knew nothing of the original meaning and function of the African sculptures they encountered, they instantly recognized the archetypal and spiritual aspect of the composition and adapted these qualities to their own efforts to move beyond the naturalism that had defined Western art.

Within the research workshops the participants were also encouraged to deliberate on some aspects of joy of life, well-being, but also on existential anxiety of contemporary man, who is confronted with ecological disasters, separation syndrome, predictable and unpredictable consequences of various events. Within this reference given to consider is the complex history of word fetish and fetishism, as the attribution of inherent value, or powers, to an object, with a review on creativity in man and his coping mechanisms to various problem areas. Regarding that, some aspects of the contemporary traits of fetish communication in the world are considered, for example, the symbolism in music, body language, painting, body image modification with decorative and / or symbolic making tattoo designs, and a specific meaning pertinent to the wearer, different technological objects from the new era of communication and so on.

Museology and education

The metaphysical symbol has already appeared in pre-history in man's drawing in wood, clay, or stone, and in various way appeared in various cultures and in the mind of philosophers, artists, mystics, doctors, scientists, who even today in the time of the technical mythology of the third millennium are searching for the sources of infinite Logos. Therefore, the symbolism of various museum objects was deliberated through the program workshops, with a review on contemporary approaches and methods in museology as a scientific discipline, which deals with the development of various fields of museum activity, such as curating, public programming and education, including cross-cultural research studies⁴². Figure 8 shows some museum collections as they are exhibited in the exhibition halls. In communication with the participants of the workshops, some observations and suggestions were made on how to exhibit the items of the museum inside the museum complex in accordance with contemporary concepts and methodology in museology.

In this context it is considered that it would be advisable that a museum exhibition catalogue be published, with adequate descriptions of each museum object. The foreword of the catalogue should contain a brief description of the museum's history and fundamental thoughts of the founder and custodian about the heritage mission of this institution. The museum objects should be listed in numerical orders, each object being succinctly identified, whenever possible, by country of origin, ethnicity, the object's name in both its native language and English, a picture of the item (object) and a brief description of the ritual that object was used in. This data would be useful as information to the visitors during various international events in Elele, but also in a broader sense, as a convenient research tool for complex cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary studies into the symbolism of various museum objects, which are, at the same time, signs and witnesses from different cultures and traditions that were left by man.



Fig. 8. Miscellaneous charms and fetish objects in one of the museum exhibition halls.

Images in mandalas: thoughts, feelings, and induced associations

It is considered that people have a general cognitive ability to understand what they see. At the same time, visual literacy implies various questions of perceptions, cognitions and involves cultural traits and relations. Within the framework of the psychoanalytic theory, it is presumed that various associations (associative word, terms, symbols) are conditioned by factor such as unconscious processes, as well as the occurrence of certain associations can be presumed as a component of instinct, needs, emotions, schooling, views and attitudes of a certain person.

Deemed that perception can also be called an associative integration of available engrams, memory pictures, that is archetypes as the universal thought forms. Ayers⁴³ thought, for instance, that an archetypal energy can no longer be known in its totality, only its images that appear symbolically in dreams, myths, imagination, art, poetry, and other cultural forms. Thus, the thoughts, the feelings, the sensory experiences, and intuition are intertwined in man’s traits of imagination and interpretation through various symbolic contents. In this context, the unique nature of a symbol is that it gives access to deeper layers of reality which are otherwise inaccessible. Based on these assumptions, the subjects in the workshop were invited and encouraged to observe images in the matrix with

three mandalas, and to share their thoughts, feelings, and associations about the image symbols in mandalas. For this purpose, they were asked to choose one or two figures (shapes) in each mandala that caught their eye at first glance. Within the context of guided imagination, the answers of the subjects were interpreted as induced associations to the archetype image symbols, with the assumption that archetypes are a priory conditioning factor or predisposition, the substructure for all forms of mental functioning. These data are shown in Figure 9.

For example, in the MRAF mandala, subject A has at the first glance chosen the figure labelled I, which is in fact a figure on the first plate in Rorschach’s inkblot test based on perception. In the MCFO mandala, the same subject has chosen Figure I, a circular ornamental object, and figure VIII, the wing of a large bird. In the MSBS mandala his attention was grabbed by figure I, a pictograph symbol, as a star-shaped ideogram indicating a god in general, the supreme father of the gods in Sumerians, and figure VIII, cuneiform symbol for the term man.

In the MCFO mandala, subject B has chosen at first glance figure X, a sculpture of a man’s body and figure V, sculpture of a woman, that he described as probably some artistic work. In the MSBC mandala he has chosen figure VII, the cuneiform symbol for the term man. He has also chosen the figure marked X, which is a cuneiform symbol for head and mouth.

Subjects	MRAF	MCFO	MSBC
A	I	VIII	I VIII
B	X V	X V	VIII X
C	IX VI	VI III	I VIII

Fig. 9. Induced associations to the image symbols.

In the MRAF mandala subject C has at first glance chosen figure IX. In the MCFO mandala he has chosen the figure marked V, commenting that this is some fetish item, and the figure (visual configuration) marked III, a mask with bird’s feathers. In the MSBC mandala he has chosen Figure I and VIII. Figure I is a picture of the star, as an ideogram for the Sumerian word sky or heaven, and as a star shaped ideogram indicating a god in general in Sumerian. Figure VIII is a cuneiform symbol for the term man.

Meditation on the notion of man as “the good that is”

Philosophy states that being and the fundamentals of being *unum* (one), *bonum* (good), *verum* (true) and *pulchrum* (beautiful), mutually identify each other: *ens et unum bonum convertuntur*⁴⁴. The term attribute (Lat. *attributum*), that is used to describe an important feature of an occurrence, item, or substance, we find in the philosophy of Aristotle (384–322), Descartes (1596 – 1677), Spinoza (1632–1677) and others. In various contemporary

sciences, as well as arts, and in different research, an attribute can be a characteristic of an object, person, personality trait, thing, which may be closely related to various variables, such as, beautiful, and ugly, healthy and sick, light and dark, good and evil, but also a distinctive trait of transcendental objects.

We can assume that in the mind of man, since ancient times of human consciousness, some questions have appeared, such as: Who am I? What can I hope for? What can I do? Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going? Thousands of years later, such questions will still be pondered by German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and French painter Paul Gauguin (1848–1903). This refers also to the primordial experience of existential anxiety, that will be described by Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1865) as “the constant struggle of being against non being”. In his contemplations on language and culture of Igbo people in Nigeria, Edeh³⁷ also cites questions like Kant’s and Gauguin’s. For example: Who did this? (*Onye melu idea?*) or: What things created human beings? (*Kedu ife kedu madu?*), and in doing this refers to *Chineke*, the Igbo word for the highest of the supersensible beings, unmade maker of all beings in Igbo metaphysics.

Edeh considered that a scrutiny of what is called metaphysics reveals that metaphysics is not a doctrine. Rather, metaphysics is a manner of questioning with respect to the meaning of reality, being, life, and self-consciousness of human existence. In the book, “Towards an Igbo Metaphysics”, which was published in the Igbo language, as well as in English, French, German, Italian and Portuguese, Edeh deeply examined etymology of the word *Mmadu*, meaning human being, in the language of Igbo people in Nigeria, to conclude, that this word in its primordial form was *Mma-di*, meaning, “the good that is”. This original form *Mma-di* formed the core of African metaphysics. The above metaphysical and existential implication of man’s nature as “the good that is” portrays a very serious ontological quality of human relations as members from the same descendants. According to Egbekpalu,⁴⁵ Edeh’s contemplations, *Mma-di* (the good that is) and *Mma-ndu* (in Igbo language – the beauty of life), could therefore be considered in both their axiological and aesthetic dimension. The notion of man as *Mma-di*, respectively, as the “good that is”, translated in German, “*das existierende Gute / das existierende Gute sein*”, in French, “*le bien qui est*”; in Italian, “*bene che esiste*”, is intended as practical demonstration of man as a universal being. This notion as universal goodness entails universality of existence and universality of purpose. On that trail, Edeh’s concept of man as “the good that is”, can be considered as an attribute for the event of Revelation of primordial self-awareness on one’s own existence, not only for Igbo man, but, according to Jung, considering general archetypal terms, which are common to all humanity. A rhetorical question could be raised – is it possible?

We find the incentive for such thoughts in some cross-cultural examples. In a ritual during the birth of a

female child in the culture of African Himba tribe, semi-nomadic people, living in northern Namibia and in southern Angola, the child is given by the parents the name *Watohangi*, which in the Himba language means “brought by goodness”. Chinese reverence for nature reaches its most aesthetic and philosophical expression in Taoism. Lao Tze (6th century BC) founder of the Taoist philosophy and contemporary of Confucius (551–479 BC) believed that the Tao cosmic ethical and logical principles represent the first cause of being and life. The Tao is the principle of order in the universe. In the yin and the yang, the dark and the light, the feminine and the masculine, principles in the universe merge and interact in the harmony of man’s self-awareness of his mind and body, that we can also describe as “to be is the good that is”.

This experience of primordial self-awareness in man, could be described as primordial man’s capacity for introspection, and the ability to recognize oneself as an individual separate from environment and other individuals, therefore, as a primordial awareness of man on one’s own body, nature, feelings, urges and desires. And Alexander Pope (1688–1744) in his “Essay on man”, wrote:

“All Nature is but art, unknown to thee. All chance, direction, which thou canst see; All discord, harmony not understood; All partial evil, universal good; And spite of pride, in erring reason’s spite, one truth is clear: Whatever is, is right.”

The thought, to be is “the good that is”, we also discover in the theory of psychosynthesis by Italian psychiatrist Assagioli, who considered that nature is always trying to re-establish harmony.¹⁴

Transformation of one form of consciousness into another

It is believed that the essence of any phenomenon in an individual consciousness has an aesthetic character, and aesthetic knowledge is the result of metaphysical intuition permitting that being. All people are potential alchemists of the spirit in that the transformation of one form of consciousness into another is the essence of art and imagination. It is considered that expression in art stimulates fantasy, creativity, and spontaneous unconscious imagery. It offers the possibility of creating self-reflection, an image of oneself and one’s world, from which it is possible to separate to gain distance. Based on that assumption, the previous contents deliberated through the research workshops, were incentives to the participants to try to show through joint picturing their thoughts on the archaic term of man, such as in the Igbo culture, as “the good that is”. Through intuitive, empathic, and aesthetic components of consciousness, the participants in the workshop achieved in creating a meaningful and aesthetic whole, their joint artwork, shown on Figure 10.

During the activity of joint picturing, the term empathy, respectively aesthetic empathy, is considered as the capacity to understand or feel what another person is

experiencing from within their frame of reference. This was a discovery of the aesthetic and functional meaning of some lines, colors, blotches, or some shape in creating the joint drawing, respectively joint artwork. The notion of intuition is thought of as the ability to acquire the knowledge to understand something instinctively, without any need for conscious reasoning. Observing their joint artwork, the subjects expressed the following associations: thinking, confusion, variety, creativity, unity. Answering the question, “What might this be”, that is, what title do you think would suit your joint design, respectively artwork, the subjects proposed that the title “Unity and Creativity”, could be appropriate for their joint painting.

The symbolism of this let’s abstract painting, the subject described, as their thoughts, which are like ocean waves, that in different shapes come from a distance, crash, leave and once again return, to finally catharti-

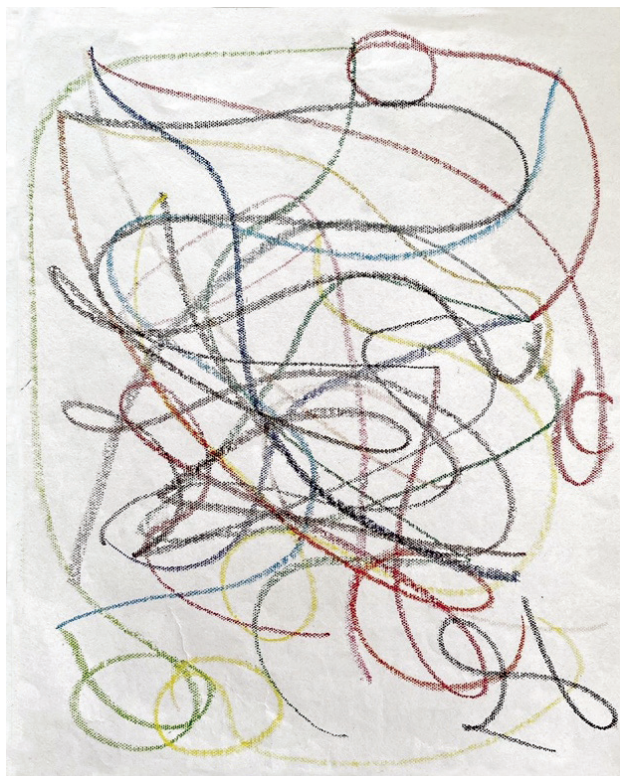


Fig. 10. Group joint artwork, “Unity and Creativity” (oil pastels, cardboard, 50 x 50 cm).

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cally rest. Poetry is speaking picture, painting silent (mute) poetry (Lat. *Poema pictura loquens, pictura poema silens*) as stated by Simonid from Keos (558–488 BC) a long ago. If we think about that, as the sound emphasizes what is still dumb in man, in a similar way it is possible to consider the symbolism of colors, shapes, music and sound of words, as well as new questions in our research on man, as “the good that is”.

Conclusion

Museum collections of charms and fetish objects are considered as traditional religious objects, as art and ornamental objects, and in a broader sense, in the light of psychoanalytic theory of object relations and other related areas, as an intermediary object (respectively auxiliary ego) in man beliefs, creativity and coping mechanisms of various problem areas.

In a deontological sense and in light of Caycedo's thoughts “For conscience to be known”, an innovative cross-cultural and holistic approach, shown in this work, could serve as an incentive for further more complex and multidisciplinary research in this and other related areas. In this light, as well, their experiences as active participants, listeners, observers and researchers, the participants in the research workshops were perceived as marvelous, and as an attractive amalgamation of knowledges from various disciplines in science and art, the content of which is reflected also in other fields which have not been directly addressed in this paper.

Since man perceives himself as the subject and the object, in the existence of an individual there is a dynamic process of symbolic encounters between Man and the World. In this context, the importance of the catalytic role of education and the heritage mission of the Nigerian museum is highlighted.

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MUZEJ ČAROLIJSKIH I FETIŠ PREDMETA U NIGERIJU: PROMIŠLJANJA O IMAGINACIJI, KULTURI I SRODNIM PODRUČJIMA

SAŽETAK

Pretpostavka, prema kojoj percepcija može biti razmatrana kao asocijativna integracija dostupnih memorijskih slika odnosno pralikovka, kao univerzalne misaone forme, korištena je u koncipiranju dubinsko-ekološkog, trans-kulturnog i holističkog pristupa za dva komplementarna područja istraživanja: 1) promišljanja o antropološkim obilježjima imaginacije, o kulturi, simbolici muzejskih predmeta, arhetipskim slikama i induciranim asocijacijama; 2) meditacija o pojmu čovjek u jeziku i kulturi Igbo naroda u Nigeriji, i grupno likovno izražavanje. Ovi sadržaji, razmatrani su s osvrtom na spoznaje u arhetipologiji, semiotici, neuro-znanosti, likovnoj i drugim umjetnostima, psihoanalizi, sofistologiji, muzeologiji i drugim disciplinama. Kultura je razmatrana kao način života koji obuhvaća običaje i vjerovanja, umjetnost, rituale, mentalitet, religioznost i povijesno prenesene obrasce simbola. Tri subjekta, koji su završili studije u području filozofije i / ili teologije na nigerijskom sveučilištu, bili su uključeni u ove aktivnosti. U istraživačkim radionicama, ovi sudionici su imali ulogu slušatelja, promatrača i istraživača. Muzejske kolekcije su razmatrane kao tradicionalni religiozni predmeti, umjetnički i / ili ukrasni predmeti, čarolijски i / ili fetiš predmeti. U širem smislu i s osvrtom na psihoanalitičku teoriju objektivnih relacija i druge discipline, potaknuta su promišljanja o kompleksnoj povijesti i značenju riječi fetiš i srodnih pojmova, o stvaralaštvu, vjerovanju i čovjekovim mehanizmima suočavanja sa raznim problemskim područjima. U svezi s time, istaknuta je važnost katalitičke uloge edukacije i baštinske misije nigerijskog muzeja. Ove aktivnosti su ostvarene u Muzeju čarolijских i fetiš predmeta u glavnom kampusu Madonna Sveučilišta i Nacionalnog hodočasničkog centra u Elele, u Nigeriji.