

***Kòkòrò* (Insects) in Yoruba Tradition: Cultural Symbolism and Applications in Contemporary Ceramic Design**

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Abstract

Kòkòrò (insects) are integral to Yorùbá cultural traditions, embodying symbolic meanings associated with spirituality, morality, environmental consciousness, and indigenous knowledge. However, their adaptation in contemporary ceramic design has received limited scholarly attention. This study investigates the cultural symbolism of selected *Kòkòrò* and explores their application as sources of inspiration for contemporary ceramic forms and surface decoration. A qualitative research design was adopted, integrating literature review, observation, and studio-based ceramic experimentation. The findings reveal that the formal and symbolic attributes of selected insects provide valuable design resources for innovative ceramic expressions while preserving their cultural significance. The study concludes that adapting *Kòkòrò*-inspired motifs into contemporary ceramics promotes cultural heritage preservation, expands creative possibilities in ceramic practice, and demonstrates the relevance of indigenous knowledge to contemporary art and design.

Keywords: *Kòkòrò; Yorùbá culture; Cultural symbolism; Contemporary ceramics; Indigenous knowledge*

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Background to the Study

Culture forms the foundations of every society by shaping collective identity and providing the means through which knowledge, beliefs, values, artistic traditions, and social practices are transmitted from one generation to another. Beyond serving as a repository of customs and practices, culture embodies the intellectual and philosophical systems that shape how people perceive, interpret, and interact with their social and natural environments. In recent years, increasing scholarly attention has been directed towards the preservation and revitalisation of indigenous knowledge systems as valuable resources for sustainable development, cultural resilience, and creative innovation within the visual arts and design disciplines (Omilani & Bada, 2024; Akikuolie, Ogunbode, Adekiya, & Fapohunda 2024).

Among Africa's numerous cultural traditions, the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria possess a remarkably rich indigenous knowledge system that continues to influence their philosophy, artistic practices, and social organisation. Yoruba cultural traditions encompass a wide range of symbolic expressions manifested through language, oral literature, mythology, religion, architecture, sculpture, textiles, pottery, metalwork, performance, and other visual arts. These symbolic traditions are not merely aesthetic embellishments but constitute important vehicles for communicating philosophical ideas, moral values, ecological knowledge, and collective historical experiences (Abiodun, 2014; Drewal & Drewal, 1983; Lawal, 2001). Contemporary studies further demonstrate that Yoruba indigenous knowledge continues to provide valuable insights into environmental stewardship, cultural sustainability, and knowledge transmission within modern society (Omilani & Bada, 2024).

One of the distinguishing features of Yoruba culture is the extensive use of symbols to communicate abstract ideas through observable elements of the natural environment. Plants, animals, birds, rivers, celestial bodies, and insects are assigned symbolic meanings that extend beyond their biological existence to represent moral virtues, social relationships, spiritual beliefs, and philosophical concepts. Such symbolic associations reflect the Yoruba worldview, which perceives humanity and nature as interconnected components of a unified cosmological system. Rather than existing independently, the natural environment functions as a source of wisdom, ethical instruction, and artistic inspiration that continually shapes cultural identity and creative expression (Lawal, 2001; Abiodun, 2014). Recent scholarship equally emphasises that Yoruba symbols remain significant cultural resources for preserving indigenous identity and inspiring contemporary artistic practices despite increasing globalisation and cultural transformation (Labode et al., 2024; James, 2023).

Within this symbolic framework, *Kòkòrò* occupies an important place in Yoruba indigenous knowledge. In everyday Yoruba usage, the term *Kòkòrò* may broadly denote insects, worms, bugs, or other small creeping organisms. However, for the purpose of this study, the term is operationally restricted to insects in order to establish conceptual precision and maintain analytical consistency throughout the investigation. This operational definition is essential because the wider semantic interpretation of *Kòkòrò* encompasses organisms beyond the scope of the present research. By limiting the discussion to insects, the study provides a more focused examination of their cultural symbolism and their relevance to contemporary ceramic design.

Throughout history, insects have served important ecological, economic, spiritual, and symbolic functions in many indigenous societies, where careful observation of their behaviour has inspired cultural meanings and artistic representations. Their behaviour, life cycles, organisation, adaptability, and interactions with the environment have inspired numerous cultural interpretations across the world. Within Yoruba tradition, insects frequently appear in oral narratives, folktales, proverbs, praise poetry, indigenous beliefs, and everyday expressions, where they function as metaphors for diligence, perseverance, cooperation, resilience, transformation, wisdom, productivity, and communal responsibility. For example, ants commonly symbolise hard work, discipline, and collective cooperation, while butterflies often represent transformation, renewal, and personal growth. These symbolic interpretations illustrate how close observation of nature contributes to the development of indigenous knowledge systems and enriches artistic creativity. Recent ethnobiological research similarly confirms that insects continue to occupy important positions within indigenous knowledge, medicinal practices, belief systems, and cultural identity among Yoruba communities in southwestern Nigeria.

The intimate relationship between Yoruba symbolism and artistic production has long influenced traditional and contemporary visual culture. Yoruba artists have historically translated natural forms and symbolic meanings into sculpture, pottery, textile decoration, wood carving, architectural ornamentation, beadwork, and body adornment, thereby transforming cultural knowledge into visual language (Willett, 2004). This integration of cultural symbolism into artistic practice has ensured the continuity of indigenous knowledge while simultaneously providing opportunities for artistic innovation and creative adaptation across successive generations. More recent studies further demonstrate that Yoruba symbolic motifs continue to inspire contemporary design practice, reinforcing cultural identity while responding to modern aesthetic and functional demands (Labode et al., 2024).

The growing recognition of indigenous knowledge systems within contemporary art and design scholarship has encouraged researchers to re-examine traditional cultural resources as valuable foundations for innovation and sustainable creative practice. Recent studies demonstrate that indigenous symbols and motifs are increasingly being reinterpreted across fashion, textile design, architecture, product design, and visual communication to strengthen cultural identity while responding to contemporary aesthetic and technological demands. These studies collectively affirm that indigenous cultural knowledge should not be regarded merely as historical heritage but as a living intellectual resource capable of informing present-day design thinking and artistic production.

Within Yoruba studies, considerable attention has been devoted to documenting indigenous symbolism, visual aesthetics, oral traditions, religious philosophy, and material culture. Recent scholarship has further reinforced the importance of Yoruba symbolic systems in preserving cultural identity and promoting sustainable cultural development. For instance, studies on Yoruba pattern designs and *Adire* motifs demonstrate that traditional symbols continue to function as visual repositories of indigenous knowledge and remain relevant for contemporary creative practice. These investigations reveal that symbolic motifs communicate historical

memory, moral philosophy, spirituality, and social values while providing designers with culturally meaningful sources of inspiration. Similarly, contemporary research within ceramic art increasingly emphasises the integration of indigenous cultural heritage into modern design practice. Practice-based studies have shown that translating culturally significant symbols into ceramic forms contributes to heritage preservation, strengthens cultural identity, and expands the expressive possibilities of ceramic design. Such studies also illustrate that ceramics provide an effective medium through which symbolic knowledge can be materialised into functional and aesthetic artefacts that communicate cultural narratives across generations.

Despite these important scholarly contributions, existing studies have paid limited attention to the cultural symbolism of *Kòkòrò* (insects) within Yoruba tradition and their application in contemporary ceramics design. Most studies concerning Yoruba symbolism have concentrated on *Adire* textiles, architecture, sculpture, visual communication, religion, and general indigenous artistic expressions, whereas relatively little scholarly attention has been directed towards the symbolic meanings of *Kòkòrò* (insects) within Yoruba tradition. Likewise, available studies on insects in southwestern Nigeria have primarily examined their ecological, agricultural, ethnobiological, or medicinal importance rather than their symbolic significance within Yoruba cultural philosophy or their potential applications in contemporary ceramic design. The limited scholarly attention given to *Kòkòrò* symbolism is significant because insects occupy important positions within Yoruba oral traditions, folktales, proverbs, myths, indigenous religious beliefs, and everyday cultural practices. Their behavioural characteristics including diligence, cooperation, resilience, adaptability, transformation, productivity, and perseverance, have long served as metaphors through which Yoruba society communicates ethical values and philosophical ideas. However, these symbolic meanings have rarely been systematically documented or interpreted from the perspective of ceramic art and design. Consequently, an important dimension of Yoruba indigenous knowledge remains underutilised as a source of creative innovation within contemporary ceramic practice.

The research problem addressed in this study therefore arises from the inadequate documentation, interpretation, and creative application of *Kòkòrò* symbolism within contemporary ceramic design. Although Yoruba indigenous knowledge provides a rich repository of symbolic meanings derived from the natural environment, existing ceramic design scholarship has not sufficiently explored how these meanings can be translated into ceramic motifs, forms, textures, and surface decoration. This gap limits opportunities for preserving an important aspect of Yoruba intangible cultural heritage while simultaneously restricting the development of culturally grounded approaches to ceramic design. Accordingly, this study is founded on the thesis that the symbolic meanings associated with *Kòkòrò* in Yoruba tradition constitute valuable indigenous knowledge that can be systematically documented, interpreted, and transformed into contemporary ceramic design. By translating these symbolic meanings into ceramic forms and surface applications, the study demonstrates how indigenous cultural knowledge can enrich contemporary artistic practice while contributing to cultural preservation, sustainable design, and the decolonisation of creative practice.

The significance of this study extends to several fields of scholarship and practice. First, it contributes to Yoruba cultural studies by documenting an underexplored aspect of indigenous symbolism and expanding scholarly understanding of the cultural meanings associated with insects. Second, it contributes to ceramic art and design by providing a culturally grounded framework for adapting indigenous symbolic knowledge into contemporary ceramic forms and decorative applications. Third, the study supports ongoing efforts to preserve intangible cultural heritage by recording symbolic meanings traditionally transmitted through oral literature, folklore, and indigenous belief systems. Finally, the study contributes to contemporary discussions on culturally responsive and sustainable design by demonstrating how indigenous knowledge systems can inform innovative artistic production while reinforcing cultural identity.

The paper proceeds with a review of the relevant literature, followed by the materials and methods adopted for the study. It then presents and discusses the findings before concluding with the study's key contributions and recommendations for future research. The aim of this study is to investigate the cultural symbolism of *Kòkòrò* (insects) in Yoruba tradition and explore its application in contemporary ceramic design. Specifically, the study seeks to: (i) examine the cultural symbolism associated with selected *Kòkòrò* in Yoruba tradition; (ii) identify and document the indigenous meanings attached to these insects; (iii) investigate how these symbolic meanings can be translated into contemporary ceramic motifs, forms, and surface decoration; and (iv) demonstrate how Yoruba indigenous knowledge can contribute to cultural preservation, creative innovation, and sustainable ceramic design.

The originality of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, which bridges Yoruba cultural studies, indigenous knowledge systems, symbolism, and contemporary ceramic design. Unlike previous studies that have examined insects primarily from ecological or ethnobiological perspectives, this study interprets *Kòkòrò* as a cultural symbol and a source of design inspiration. In doing so, it provides a framework for translating indigenous symbolic knowledge into ceramic practice, thereby expanding the repertoire of culturally derived design resources available to contemporary ceramic artists and contributing to the preservation and revitalisation of Yoruba intangible cultural heritage.

Literature Review

Yoruba Culture, Symbolism, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Yoruba culture is recognised as one of the most symbolically rich cultural traditions in Africa, possessing extensive systems of beliefs, philosophies, artistic practices, and indigenous knowledge transmitted through oral traditions and material culture. Cultural symbols in Yoruba society extend beyond decorative functions, embodying meanings that communicate social values, spiritual concepts, moral teachings, and collective identities (Abiodun, 2014). Yoruba artistic traditions therefore function as communicative systems through which cultural experiences and worldviews are preserved. Abiodun (2014) and Lawal (2001) both argue that symbolism is central to Yoruba artistic traditions. However, while Abiodun emphasises the relationship between language and visual culture, Lawal focuses on the philosophical foundations of Yoruba aesthetics. Together, these studies demonstrate that symbolic

representation functions not merely as decoration but as a means of communicating cultural knowledge. Despite these contributions, neither study specifically examines the symbolic significance of *Kòkòrò* (insects) or their application in contemporary ceramics design.

Indigenous knowledge may be understood as the body of knowledge, practices, and experiences that communities develop over time and transmit across generations through cultural traditions and everyday life (Oloruntoba & Afolayan, 2020). Such knowledge influences artistic practices, environmental understanding, and cultural expressions. Within Yoruba society, observations of nature, including animals, plants, birds, and insects, often serve as sources of cultural meanings and lessons.

***Kòkòrò* (Insects) and Symbolism in Yoruba Tradition**

Natural elements occupy important positions within Yoruba cosmology and belief systems because of their perceived connection with human existence and social life (Drewal & Drewal, 1983). Insects have historically functioned as symbolic elements within folklore, proverbs, myths, and oral narratives due to their behavioural characteristics and ecological roles. Within Yoruba cultural contexts, *Kòkòrò* may broadly refer to insects, worms, bugs, and other small creatures. However, for this study, *Kòkòrò* is operationally defined specifically as insects to ensure conceptual clarity and consistency.

Various insects possess symbolic meanings in Yoruba thought. Ants are associated with hard work, unity, discipline, and cooperation because of their collective behaviour, while butterflies symbolise transformation and renewal due to their developmental life cycle. Bees are associated with productivity and communal interaction because of their role within colonies. These interpretations demonstrate how traditional societies derive philosophical and moral meanings from nature (Kolawole, Bakare, & Yakubu, 2026). The symbolic use of insects extends beyond oral narratives into artistic and material expressions. Traditional African artistic practices frequently employ animal and insect motifs as symbolic representations of social values and environmental relationships (Adegbola & Adenubi, 2026). However, scholarly documentation remains limited regarding their adaptation into contemporary artistic practices. While the symbolic meanings of insects have been documented within Yoruba cultural context, the translation of these meanings into contemporary ceramic practice remains insufficiently explored. This creates an opportunity to examine how indigenous symbolism can inform ceramic design.

Contemporary Ceramic Design and Indigenous Motifs

Contemporary ceramic practice has increasingly drawn upon indigenous cultural themes and symbolic traditions as sources of creative inspiration, allowing artists to combine cultural heritage with modern design approaches. Contemporary ceramic artists increasingly employ inspiration from indigenous knowledge systems, traditional symbolism, and natural forms to create works that reflect cultural identity while responding to contemporary aesthetic and societal needs (Busari & Odetoyinbo, 2023). Through forms, textures, patterns, and decorative elements, ceramic works communicate meanings beyond functional purposes.

This shift aligns with global efforts to preserve intangible cultural heritage through creative practice and sustainable design approaches. Consequently, indigenous motifs have become valuable resources for innovation within contemporary ceramics (Labode et al., 2024). Such adaptations create relationships between traditional cultural values and modern artistic practices (Kolawole et. al., 2026). Indigenous motifs are visual elements derived from the cultural experiences, beliefs, and environmental interactions of a people (James, 2023). In African art, these motifs frequently originate from plants, animals, landscapes, and symbolic objects that embody historical, spiritual, and philosophical meanings (Busari & Odetoyinbo, 2023). However, more attention has been given to botanical and animal-inspired motifs than insect-inspired motifs.

Application of Cultural Symbolism in Ceramic Design

The adaptation of cultural symbols into ceramic design involves translating visual and conceptual elements into forms suitable for artistic production. Contemporary ceramic artists increasingly employ cultural symbols and motifs to create works that communicate identity, history, and philosophical beliefs, thereby transforming ceramics from functional objects into meaningful cultural artefacts (Kolawole et.al., 2026). Cultural symbolism therefore serves as an important source of inspiration for creative experimentation and design development. The incorporation of insect symbolism into ceramic practice presents opportunities for innovative artistic expression because insects possess distinctive forms, textures, movement patterns, and symbolic meanings. These characteristics can be transformed into ceramic motifs, sculptural forms, and decorative compositions while preserving associated cultural meanings (Niinimäki, Peters, Dahlbo, Perry, Rissanen, & Gwilt, 2022). Although previous studies have examined Yoruba symbolism and contemporary artistic practices, there remains limited literature on the integration of *Kòkòrò* symbolism into ceramic design. The reviewed literature demonstrates that although Yoruba symbolism and indigenous motifs have been widely studied, little attention has been given to the symbolic interpretation of *Kòkòrò* as a source of inspiration for contemporary ceramic design. This gap provides the basis for the present study.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative, practice-based research approach because it enables an in-depth exploration of cultural meanings, indigenous knowledge systems, and artistic practices while supporting creative studio experimentation. Qualitative research allows for in-depth understanding and interpretation of symbolic phenomena within social and cultural contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study employed descriptive and studio-based research methods to investigate the cultural symbolism of *Kòkòrò* (insects) in Yoruba tradition and examine their application in contemporary ceramic design. The descriptive aspect focused on understanding and documenting symbolic meanings associated with selected insects within Yoruba cultural practices, while the studio-based component involved the practical development of ceramic works inspired by the identified symbolic elements.

Study Area

The study focused on selected Yoruba communities in Osun, Oyo, and Ogun States, where Yoruba cultural traditions remain actively practiced. The Yoruba people constitute one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria and are widely recognised for their rich artistic traditions and symbolic cultural heritage (Abiodun, 2014).

Sources of Data Collection

Data for the study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources included:

Observation focused on the morphological features, movement patterns, textures, and behavioural characteristics of selected insects, which informed motifs development for ceramic production.

Secondary data were obtained from scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, academic theses, and other relevant literature on Yoruba symbolism, indigenous knowledge, entomology, and contemporary ceramic design.

Materials for Studio Production

The materials used for the practical ceramic production included:

Clay body (earthenware clay), Water, Modeling tools, Pottery knives, Wooden tools, rolling slab, Plaster molds, sketching materials (pencils, erasers, drawing sheets), Oxides, Glazes, Brushes, Kiln equipment, Measuring instruments, Digital camera for documentation.

Methods of Data Analysis and Studio Procedures

The study involved four stages:

Stage 1: Identification and Documentation of Selected *Kòkòrò*

Selected insects with cultural relevance within Yoruba tradition were identified through literature and observations. Their symbolic meanings and cultural associations were documented.

Stage 2: Visual Exploration and Motif Development

Sketches of selected insects were produced to examine their visual characteristics such as body structure, texture, movement patterns, wings, antennae, and body segments. These visual elements were simplified and transformed into stylised motifs suitable for ceramic application.

Stage 3: Design Development

Preliminary design concepts were generated using the developed motifs. Different arrangements and compositions were explored to determine suitable ceramic forms and decorative possibilities.

Stage 4: Ceramic Production Process

The ceramic production process followed these procedures:

Preparation of the clay body, Forming and modelling of ceramic pieces, Surface decoration using insect-inspired motifs, Drying process, Bisque firing, Application of oxides and glazes,

Glaze firing, Finishing and documentation of completed works.

The identified visual features were simplified through stylisation to ensure that they could be effectively adapted to ceramic surfaces without losing their symbolic meanings.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from literature, observations, and studio experimentation were analysed using descriptive thematic analysis, in which symbolic meanings were identified, interpreted, and related to their applications in ceramic design. The symbolic meanings of selected insects were interpreted in relation to Yoruba cultural contexts and subsequently linked with their applications in ceramic design. The visual and artistic outcomes from the studio works were evaluated based on symbolism, aesthetics, creativity, and relevance to contemporary ceramic practice.

The selected insects were chosen purposively based on their documented symbolic significance in Yoruba oral traditions, folklore, and indigenous cultural practices, as well as their suitability for visual adaptation into ceramic motifs.

Results and Discussion

Identification and Symbolic Interpretation of Selected *Kòkòrò* in Yoruba Tradition

The study identified selected insects that possess cultural and symbolic significance within Yoruba traditions and explored their adaptation into contemporary ceramic design as shown in Table 1. Findings indicate that insects within Yoruba cultural thought are not merely regarded as biological organisms but also function as symbolic carriers of moral values, social concepts, and indigenous knowledge systems. Observations from literature and visual studies revealed that the characteristics and behaviours of insects contribute significantly to their symbolic interpretations within cultural contexts. The symbolic meanings attached to selected insects as shown in Table 1 provided conceptual foundations for the development of ceramic motifs and forms. The adaptation process involved translating insect structures, movement patterns, and symbolic associations into visual elements suitable for ceramic production.

Table 1: Selected *Kòkòrò* and Their Symbolic Meanings in Yoruba Tradition

Selected Insect (Kòkòrò)	Symbolic Meaning	Observed Characteristics	Proposed Ceramic Application
Butterfly	Transformation and renewal	Wing patterns and metamorphosis	Surface decorative motifs
Ant	Hard work and cooperation	Collective movement and organisation	Textured ceramic patterns
Bee	Productivity and communal life	Honeycomb structures and social interaction	Relief surface decoration
Cricket	Communication and alertness	Sound production and movement	Decorative carvings
Dragonfly	Adaptability and change	Wing structures and movement	Sculptural ceramic forms

The findings demonstrate that Yoruba insect symbolism provides an underexplored source of inspiration for ceramic practice. Unlike conventional floral or geometric motifs commonly employed in contemporary ceramics, insect-inspired motifs introduce culturally grounded visual narratives that strengthen artistic identity while contributing to the preservation of indigenous knowledge. Similar observations by Lawal (2001) indicate that Yoruba cultural symbolism frequently derives meanings from nature and environmental relationships.

Motif Development and Design Exploration

Visual exploration of selected insects resulted in the development of stylised motifs for ceramic application. During the motif development process, the anatomical features of insects, including wings, antennae, body segmentation, and movement patterns, were simplified and transformed into visual compositions suitable for ceramic surfaces as shown in Plate I-V. The transformation process moved from realistic representation to stylised abstraction to create forms adaptable for contemporary ceramic practice.

Conceptual Framework for Motif Development

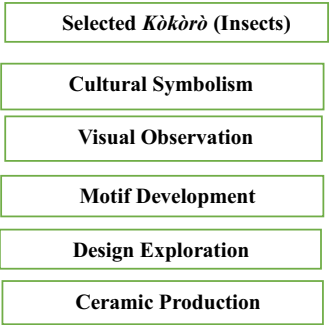


Figure 1: The framework illustrates how indigenous cultural knowledge derived from insect symbolism progresses through observation, motif development, design exploration, and ceramic production to generate culturally meaningful artistic outcomes. **Source:** Researcher, 2026.

Natural Insect



A

Stylised Motif with CAD



B

Plate I: Natural Insect and Stylised Motif of a Butterfly



A

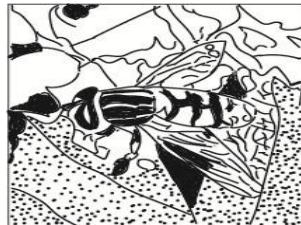


B

Plate II: Natural Insect and Stylised Motif of an Ant



A



B

Plate III: Natural Insect and Stylised Motif of a Bee



A



B

Plate IV: Natural Insect and Stylised Motif of a cricket



A



B

Plate V: Natural Insect and Stylised Motif of a Dragonfly

Plate I-V: Natural insects and Stylised Motif drawn with Computer-Aided Design (CAD)

Source: Researcher, 2026.

Ceramic Production Outcomes

Studio experimentation produced ceramic forms incorporating motifs inspired by selected insects. Surface treatments, relief patterns, engraved lines, and textural elements were used to visually communicate symbolic concepts associated with *Kòkòrò* as shown in Plate VI-X.

Table 2: Contemporary Ceramic work Developed from Selected *Kòkòrò* Motifs and Their Symbolic Interpretations

Ceramic Work	Insect Source	Design Features	Symbolic Representation
Ceramic Vase A	Butterfly	Curvilinear wing motifs	Transformation and growth
Decorative Tile B	Ant	Repetitive textured patterns	Cooperation and diligence
Ceramic Bowl C	Bee	Honeycomb-inspired surface patterns	Productivity
Ceramic Pot with Lid D	Cricket	Curved antenna forms, Stylised cricket head	Communication and alertness
Sculptural Form E	Dragonfly	Extended wing structures	Adaptability

The ceramic outcomes demonstrated that insect-inspired forms can generate visually engaging and culturally meaningful designs.

Stylised CAD Motif



A

Ceramics Production Outcome



B

Plate VI: Stylised CAD Motif and Ceramics Production Outcome of Butterfly



A



B

Plate VII: Stylised CAD Motif and Ceramics Production Outcome of Ant



A



B

Plate VIII: Stylised CAD Motif and Ceramics Production Outcome of Bee



A



B

Plate IX: Stylised CAD Motif and Ceramics Production Outcome of Cricket



A



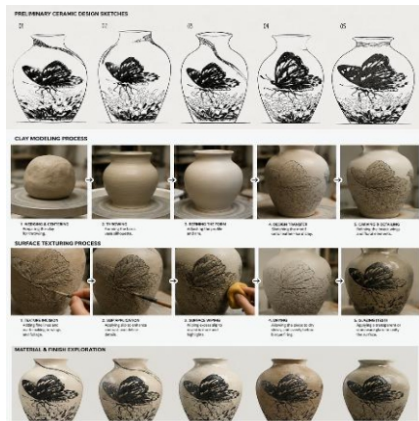
B

Plate X: Stylised CAD Motif and Ceramics Production Outcome of Dragonfly

Plate IV-X: Stylised CAD Motifs and Ceramics Production Outcome.

Source: Researcher, 2026.

Preliminary Ceramic Design Sketches Incorporating Insect Motifs



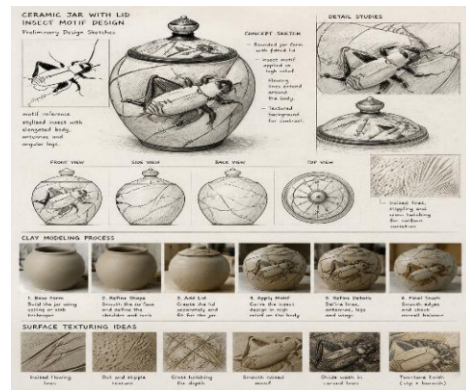
A



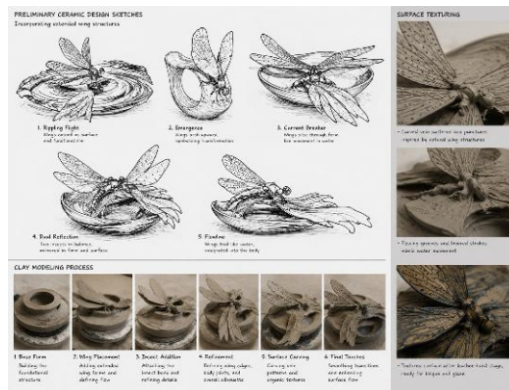
B



C



D



E

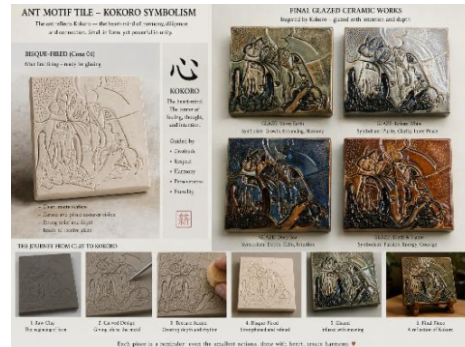
Plate XI: Preliminary Ceramic Design Sketches Incorporating Insect Motifs and Clay Modeling Process and Surface Texturing.

Source: Daniel K.P, 2026.

Bisque-fired ceramic works and final glazed ceramic works



A



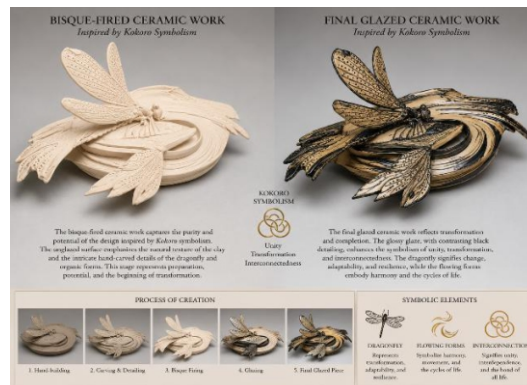
B



C



D



E

Plate XII: Bisque-fired ceramic works and final glazed ceramic works inspired by *Kòkòrò* symbolism. **Source:** Daniel K.P, 2026

Discussion

The findings reveal that *Kòkòrò* within Yoruba tradition possess significant symbolic and aesthetic values capable of contributing to contemporary ceramic practice. The symbolic interpretations identified in this study, support previous assertions that Yoruba artistic traditions derive meaning from interactions between culture and nature (Abiodun, 2014). The

relationship between insects and cultural symbolism indicates that indigenous knowledge systems remain important sources of artistic inspiration. The findings also suggest that insect-inspired motifs provide opportunities for innovation in ceramic design because insects possess unique structural features and symbolic associations. Through stylisation and adaptation, these characteristics can be translated into ceramic forms while maintaining cultural significance as shown in Plate XI. Furthermore, the use of *Kòkòrò* symbolism within ceramic design as shown in Plate XI, contributes to cultural preservation by documenting indigenous knowledge and creating contemporary visual expressions derived from traditional values. Similar studies have emphasised the importance of integrating indigenous cultural elements into contemporary artistic practice for cultural sustainability (Labode et al., 2024). The study therefore establishes that the symbolic and visual characteristics of insects as shown in Plate XII, provide important creative resources for ceramic design and artistic development.

Conclusion

This study examined the cultural symbolism of *Kòkòrò* (insects) within Yoruba tradition and explored their applications in contemporary ceramic design. The study established that insects possess significant symbolic meanings within Yoruba cultural contexts and function as important elements for communicating indigenous knowledge, social values, and philosophical ideas. Findings revealed that selected insects shown in Plate I-V, are associated with concepts such as transformation, cooperation, productivity, communication, and adaptability, with such meanings derived from their observable characteristics and cultural interpretations. The study further demonstrated that the visual and structural characteristics of insects provide valuable sources of inspiration for contemporary ceramic practice.

Through observation, motif development, and studio experimentation, symbolic meanings associated with *Kòkòrò* as shown in Plate VI-X, were translated into ceramic motifs, decorative patterns, textures, and sculptural forms. The adaptation of these cultural elements into ceramic design showed that indigenous symbols can be reinterpreted into contemporary artistic expressions without losing their cultural significance. The findings also indicate that integrating Yoruba cultural symbolism into ceramic practice contributes to the preservation and documentation of indigenous knowledge systems while promoting innovation within contemporary art and design. The use of culturally derived motifs strengthens artistic identity and creates opportunities for sustainable creative development rooted in local heritage. Therefore, the study concludes that *Kòkòrò*-inspired ceramic designs possess both cultural and artistic relevance and can serve as effective means of preserving Yoruba cultural heritage while expanding contemporary ceramic design possibilities. Future studies may further investigate additional symbolic elements within Yoruba traditions and explore their applications across broader areas of visual arts and design practices.

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