A STUDY OF NEO-TRADITIONAL YORUBA WOOD CARVING IN IBADAN AND OYO TOWNS, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

By

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A thesis submitted to the Postgraduate School, Ahmadu Bello University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts (M.A. History of Art).

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January, 1991

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated with love to my Grandfather, Mr. Sylverster Cole (1908 - 1989), My Parents Engineer Gabriel I. and Mrs. Dorothy Mae Oluonye, My husband Mr. Murphy Ighodaro Ajayi, to my sisters, to John and to Lee, Angelo, William, Franklyn, Izosa, Leslie and Gabriela, all of whom remain a great source of inspiration.

DECLARATION

I, Ajayi Sylvia Obiamaka hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me and is a record of my own research. It has not been presented in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated by quotation marks or indentation and sources of information are specifically acknowledged by means of references.

.....
Ajayi, Sylvia Obiamaka

CERTIFICATION

This thesis entitled "A STUDY OF NEO TRADITIONAL WOOD CARVING IN OYO AND IBADAN TOWNS" by AJAYI SYLVIA O.(Mrs.) meets the regulations governing the award of the Higher Degree of Master of Arts (History of Art) of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The research is therefore, approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my profound gratitude to those who have contributed in various ways towards the success of this thesis.

First of all, I am most grateful to my husband Mr. Murphy, M. I. Ajayi for his understanding, support and encouragement and for all the pains taken towards making this thesis possible.

My appreciation also goes to my major supervisor Dr. D. O. Babalola for his constant guidance, dedication and sincerity.

Dr. B. K. Olorukooba, I will not forget, I wish to thank him for his assurance and good counsel as co-supervisor to this project.

To Mr. Gabriel S. Bamidele, I am most grateful for all the time given me and for the knowledge passed onto me on the art of Yoruba Wood Carving. I say a big thank you.

The following people have been of great assistance to me in the realization of this thesis: Mr. Gabriel,

I. Oluonye, Mrs. Nkechi M. Ize (Iyamu), Dr. and Mrs. E. L. Imasogie, Mr. Gani Odutokun, Mallam A. R. Salihu, Mr. Segun P. Ikhide, Mr. Tunde Babalola and Mr. Asoro of the Bendel Arts Council, Benin City, Bendel State, Nigeria.

I am also thankful to Alhaji AbdulRasheed A. Ogunsanya of Dean's Office, Faculty of Environmental Design, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria who typed this project.

Finally, my greatest thanks goes to God Almighty with whom all things are possible.

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Neo-traditional wood carvers of Ibadan and Oyo towns in Oyo State, Nigeria. It aims specifically at examining the characteristics and function of the art as well as ascertaining whether or not original innovations exist or whether the artists are merely imitating traditional art works. It further aims at finding out the significance and contribution of Neo-traditional art to African contemporary art.

Writers on contemporary African art are examined and significant findings are made through questionnaire, oral discussions and tape recorded interviews conducted during field work. The study revealed the following:

- that the art forms have a composition of a wealth of symbols, patterns and motifs which are important and functional in Yoruba tradition;
- that the art forms are broadly cylindrical and are usually carved directly from logs of wood and that a part of the figure is very seldomly joined, pegged, glued or nailed together;

that the Artists deliberately alter size and other characteristics of their figures like frontality and rigidity of pose for aesthetic and symbolic purposes.

Following the findings, further suggestions for proper documentation and the encouragement of literary works for the promotion of the Neo-traditional art form are made,

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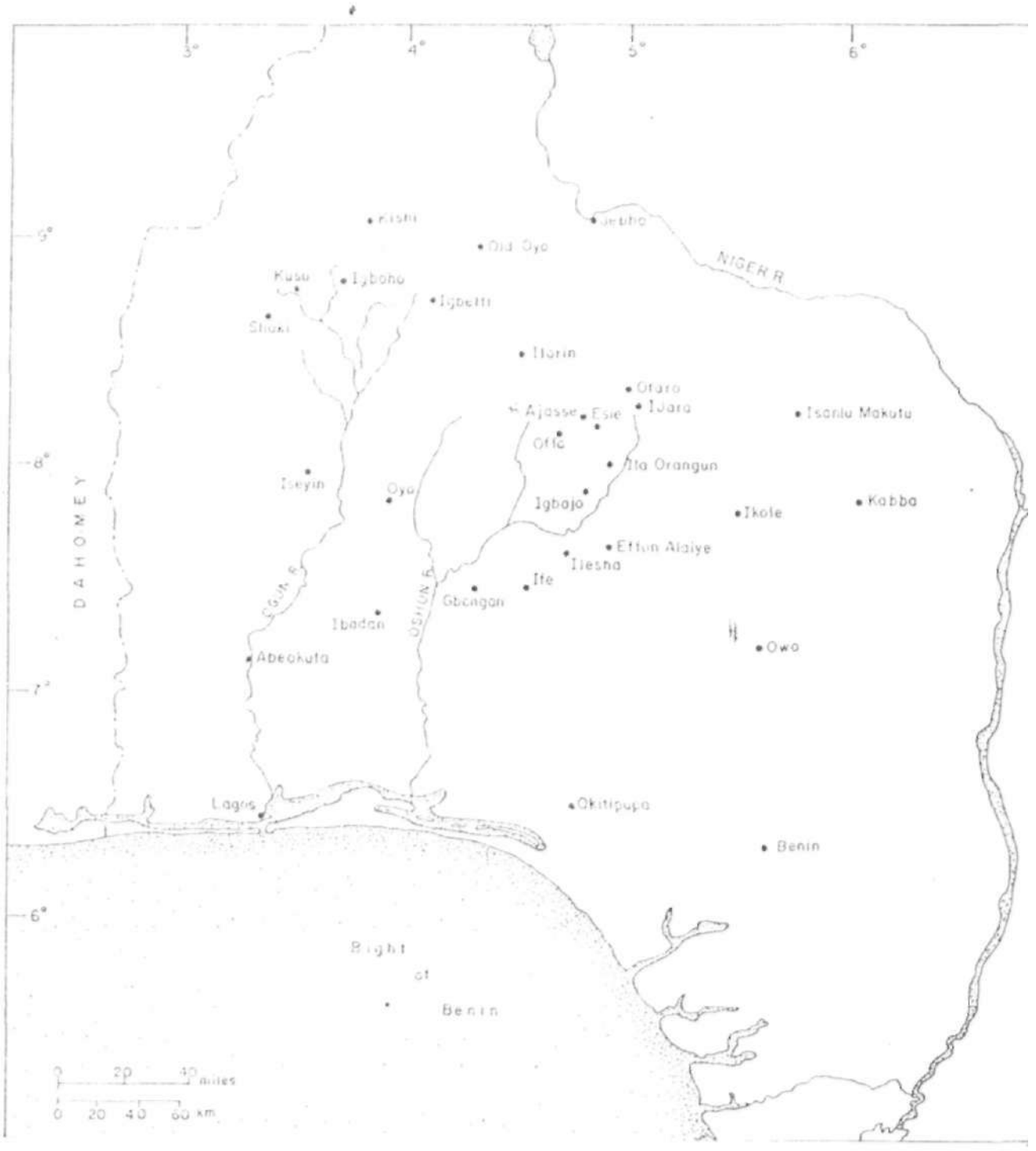


FIGURE 1: Map Showing Ibadan and Oyo Towns.

<u>The Stone Images of Esie.</u> Phillips,

(1978)

CHAPTER - ONE

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to examine the Neo-traditional art style of Yoruba wood carvers in Ibadan and Oyo towns, Oyo State. Webster's Dictionary of the English languate, (1979) defines the word "traditional" as follows; one who observes tradition or believes in its authority; also one who believes in tradition.

Neo-traditional art is characterised by obvious traditional form; deep meaning and a transitional function in contemporary Africa. This category of art is not mass produced or individually copied, rather it is singularly created. Artists working in this style draw from history and direct their traditional skill to new purposes. "They utilize traditional forms to suit contemporary times by drawing inspiration from the past and infusing it into modern life" Bamidele,(1979). Wood carvers express aspects of Yoruba culture which are worthy of respect many of which continue to enjoy considerable acceptance in contemporary cultures. They not only know the traditions of their society, but strive to maintain their culture by adopting and developing it.

Neo-traditional art is sometimes referred to as traditional art. This art style however, not purely traditional because the artist today no longer functions

in a traditional system but a modern one[1]. In pre-colonial times, the arts were created primarily in the service of religious cults and divine kings. It was essentially functional in nature as well as decorative and was woven inextricably into the fabric of life. It was made to express and support fundamental spritual values that are essential to survival of the community. The traditional carver may not have regarded his sculpture as an aesthetic object or art for art's sake; the aesthetic role was probably never an end in itself. Artists' works were considered 'beautiful' only if it fulfilled its various roles in their immediate society. Segy,(1958) supports the diversified role of sculpture when he observed that "African carvings had a definite role in the life of the African: without them in many cases he could not have functioned in his society. Perhaps he could not have survived". However, Sieber,(1971) argues that "traditional African art for the most part can be considered a positive intergrated cultural manifestation reflecting and reinforcing the basic values of the culture that gave rise to them". Even though the main purpose for the creation

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1. In pre-colonial times, the artist was fully integrated into his own society producing objects for his own society which were understood by all. Such artists were trained in an apprenticeship system and did not experiment with new ideas but produced his subjects within the norms of tradition. Art objects were created for religious purposes, Oyelola (1980).

of African traditional sculpture was religious and utilitarian, there are however, some exceptions to this purely religious role. Some of the sculptures were made for personal protection like the Ejori figure in Ijaw, believed to give power to he who keeps it in his home. Some were also made to "serve as records of history and tradition... histories and ancient wisdom passed down by word of mouth were recorded by the artistic language of symbols" (Price,1976).

In contemporary society, the purpose of Neo-traditional art may not be for rituals as was the case in traditional society. The patrons of this category of art;

> ... are for the most part not associated with the religions for which Yoruba sculptural forms forms were created contemporary carvers feel freer to alter forms, as there is no code insisting on their conformity to group values as expressed through sculptural form. The carvings are moving further away from their original function; Ludwin,(1977).

Although artists still carve horn blowers, Ibeji's, house posts and dieties such as Sango, Oya, Obatala and Eshu (just to name a few), such sculptures are not fulfilling the same purpose as was the case in the past, the artist does not satisfy the client for religious purposes. They are sometimes carved on patron's request. Neo-traditional sculptures are mostly aesthetic in role.

They also serve to document historical events and everyday scenes. In Mbah's opinion (1984) Nigerian contemporary art like other visual arts involves "new concepts, new patterns of thinking and perceiving not dialectically as in a lecture of text-books but through experience which re-orients the beholder". The Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carver is no longer working in traditional techniques to create works which are immediately understood in his society, rather he is using new techniques to create works for people with cultural backgrounds that differ from his own. Modern instruments different from those used in the past, new ideologies and thought contribute to the change from the purely traditional style. Modern Yoruba wood carvers often produce tourist or export objects; these objects unlike traditional art are produced not on commission but in quantity for an unknown clientele. Sieber,(1971) states that "although financial rewards can accrue from this activity, the traditional 'tribal' recognition and the patron artist relationship have vanished". The manner of training received by the majority of Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carvers differs from the training of the earlier set of apprentices. The traditional carver "went through an apprenticeship process, where artistic training was usually hereditary" Agim,(1989). The Neo-traditional apprentice like the

traditional carver also learnt through an apprentice system. According to Bamidele,(1979) "most of the apprentices are from different parts of Yoruba land and are without prior knowledge of the trade. These apprentices are more exposed to foreign influence, patrons and new values". This is yet a further move away from the traditional approach.

The uniqueness of Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carving; its characteristics, philosophy and geographical restrictions suggest the need to examine the art form which this study sets out to do.

1.1 PERSONAL OBSERVATION

The influence of traditional religion on artistic expression has decreased tremendously, this no doubt offers more freedom and challenges to the Neo-traditional carver.

The writer observed that the composition of Neo-traditional wood carving is different from the purely traditional approach. Their works tend to be more challenging in that they are more delicate. Such artistry is characterized by more elasticity and movement and a more decorative surface of the figures. After viewing a wood carving titled "Olumeye" produced by Bamidele, Gabriel in the home of Mr. Gani Odutokun the writer

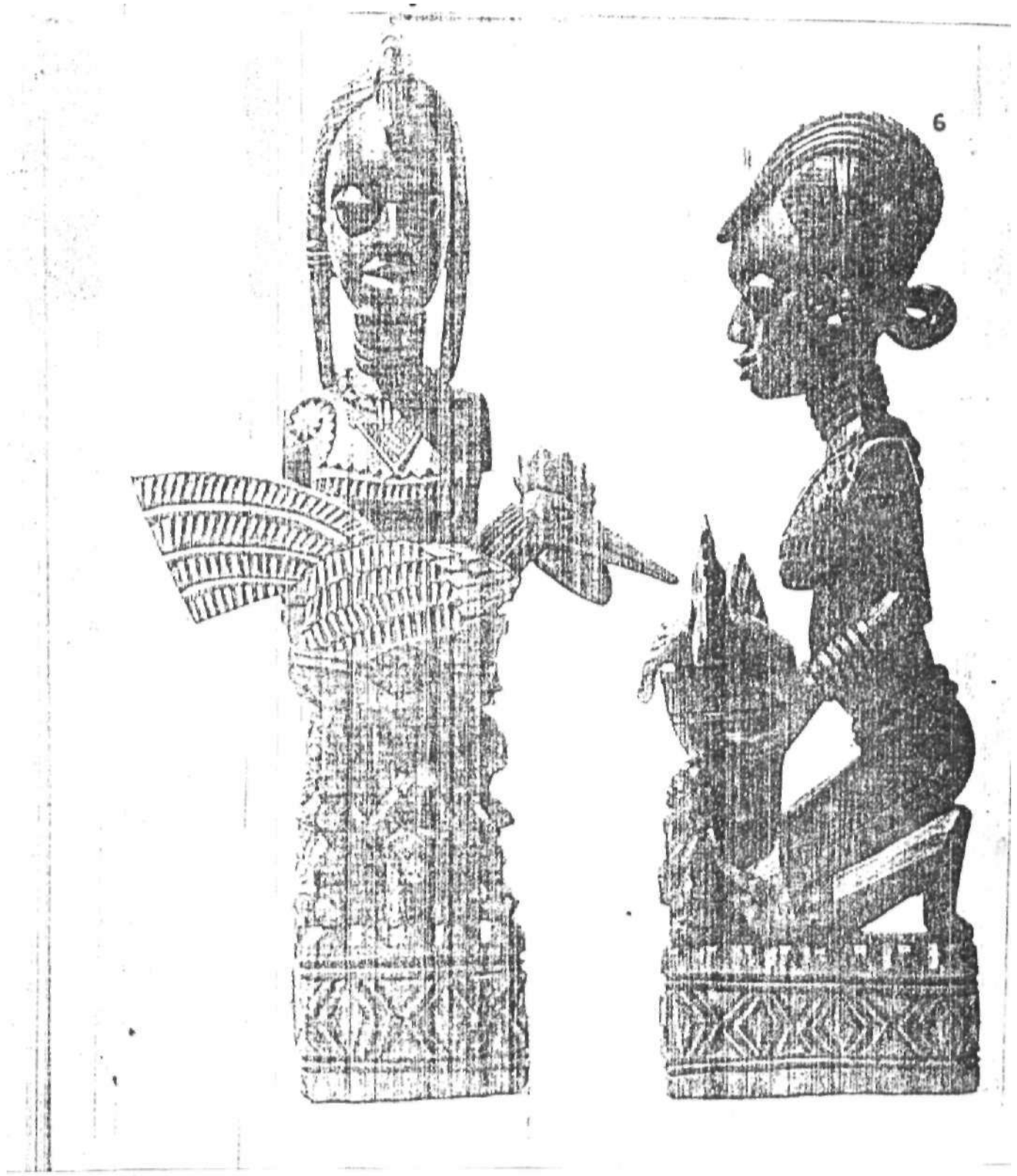


PLATE 1: Title: "Olumeye" by Gabriel Bamidele, Medium Wood 1976.

became interested in the development (see Plate 1). Although Bamidele is academically trained, his work may strongly suggest characteristics of Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carving. Bamidele's carving technique resembles a relief carving with divergent aesthetic appeal made by Emmanuel Odekunle which is in the writer's collection (see Plate 2). One aide of the relief carving is reminiscent of a carving tradition before 1960, while the other side is similar to the Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carving trends.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study is to investigate characteristics of Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carving to determine the extent to which it differs from the traditional forms. Specifically, this study will examine finishing, themes, functions and innovations in Neo-traditional art.

1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The writer's objective are:

i. To examine Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carving in Ibadan and Oyo towns for its characteristics and function.



PLATE 2: Title: "Warrior on Horse-Back" by Emmanuel Odekunle, Medium Wood (Oroo), Size: 28½ centimetre.

ii. To ascertain whether or not Neo-traditional art forms are modern experiences or copies of traditional works.

iii. To find out the significance of Neo-traditional art to African contemporary art.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

i. The findings of the study are important for a number of reasons. Even though several studies have been made by various writers on contemporary Yoruba wood carving, One may speculate as to whether or not artists producing in the Neo-traditional manner are creating innovative forms different from the purely traditional or whether or not they are simply imitating. This study will contribute to literature on the subject of Neo-traditional wood carving in the areas covered by the researcher. The study is important because it could help to clarify the existing confusion between purely traditional and Neo-traditional art. The findings of this study could also help to confirm the existence of innovations in Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carvings.

ii. The findings of this study may help to ascertain whether or not the carving culture is still active in the area covered by the researcher. This study could help in the identification and documentation of certain decorative costumes that were used as subjects of wood carvers in the past.

1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to wood carvers living in Ibadan and Oyo towns who have acquired their skill through an apprenticeship system. The researcher has chosen to limit the study to Ibadan and Oyo towns for the following reasons: Ibadan and Oyo towns have a long and active tradition in wood carving. Also, Ibadan and Oyo towns are urban areas and largely populated by wood carvers working there.

1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This project consists of six chapters. Chapter one is the introduction to the research problem, purpose and objective, significance of the study and scope and limitations of the study. In chapter two, the writer reviews related literature on art since 1960. Chapter three discusses the method of approach in this research

work. Chapter four contains summary of interviews and the analysis of works. The researcher's findings is contained in chapter five. It reveals the modern experiences of traditional Yoruba wood carvers in Ibadan and Oyo towns. Chapter six contains the writer's recommendations and conclusion.

CHAPTER - TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The development of contemporary art in Africa has been treated by various writers, some of whom include; Herskovits,(1962); Willet,(1971); Mount,(1973); Beier,(1983) and Odutokun,(1984).

Herskovits begins by discussing the earliest influences on traditional art in Africa which he traces to European occupation in Africa and to Islam. The colonial master's view of African artistic talents was described in terms that ranged from "child-like and grotesque" to "savage and bestial". The influence of Islam was no better.

Herskovits states that rediscovery and integration of African arts was of significance since Africans were first able to restore to themselves a sense of cultural achievement. He asserts that this 'discovery' is dated from around the end of the first world war and is often ascribed to artists in Paris who rejected European conventions in their search for new forms. They recognised the aesthetic qualities in African art. The impact of African art in Europe and America was immediate and theinfluence of African art was seen in the works of the expressionists.

The author goes on to discuss a comparable movement which had been developing in Germany. A publication called "Der Blaue Reider", written by Painter Kandinsky and Franz Marc in 1912, featured works produced by Africans. Mention is made of the first book on the aesthetics of African sculpture written in 1915, titled "Negerplastik" by Carl Einstein published in Munich. Herskovits states that "wood carving by no means burst on the art world as a sudden revelation but goes further than is ordinarily indicated. He writes that;

> African sculpture had been first acclaimed as an art by a group of painters living in Paris at the beginning of the century; Vlaminck Mattise, Derain among others spent much time in the Old Trocadero Museum... by 1908, the collection of Henri Mattise counted a source of 'Negro' statues, and Derain, Braque, Picasso owned African masks.

These artists were greatly influenced by African art, and contributed immensely towards the development of the cubist movement in Europe.

Now that African wood carving had been accredited with aesthetic worth by Europeans, a new vista of appreciation was opened and a re-examination of aesthetic theories that broadened the scope of art history to include the entire range of aesthetic activity had been stimulated.

The discovery of African art was debated by critics and art historians and many misconceptions about it arose. It was believed that the finer forms of African art were made in the past, and that its meaning and aesthetic impulses which inspired its creation were beyond the comprehension of non-Africans and only it's classical examples were of artistic value[2]. Herskovits writes that the craze for wood carving did not encourage interest in other media in which African art also masked the understanding of the continuities, both past and present, in African art.

Nevertheless, the discoveries in Northern Nigeria of terra cotta pieces from the Nok Culture dating back almost 3,000 years, brought about changes in the concepts, regarding the time given to African art and created room for more intensive study. Increased knowledge of African life and culture brought about the observation that contemporary African artists were continuing to create works in various media and not marely copying "classical"

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2. Better known styles were labelled as "classic". The category of "classic" included only the wood carvings from those regions which were represented in earlier collections and in art dealers show rooms, to the exclusion of art produced elsewhere in Africa and was also the cause of incorrect assignment of provenience to many pieces (Herskovits, 1962).

forms from a tradition that had ceased to exist when its religion and mystic sanctions were disturbed. The artistics were now exposed to new techniques and values while works produced were no longer limited to the community to which the artists belonged. The introduction of a money economy, coupled with changes in religious and social sanctions for art created a broader market for the artist.

Interest in African art had spread over the years from its recognition by European - Avant Garde Artists and critics to wider acceptance, as part of the resources of the world. The existence of a wider market reflected this. The existence of a wider market also made known the fact that wood carving areas extended beyond its earlier known areas of production[3].

According to Herskovits, the growing interest in African art served as a stimulus to the African artists who now began to experiment with new forms. In Nigeria for example, miniature realistic wood carvings appeared,

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3. Before the existance of a wider market. It was believed that figures and masks and other manifestations of African art came from the contigious areas of the Congo, the Guinea Coast and the Western Sudan. The plastic arts of Eastern and Northern African were sparsely represented, if at all (Ryder, 1964).

which depicted personalities, both European and African and others in a new medium - thorns of the cotton tree. European techniques of water colour and oils become widely used by the artists.

Herskovits has given a very precise, and clear picture of the development of African art and thought. His book will prove useful to historians, artists and art lovers for a long time.

Willet (1971) discusses some of the factors which have influenced African traditional arts, the strongest influences being Christianity and Islam. He also classifies contemporary African art into various categories. The first group of artists consists of those who received their training in an apprenticeship system. The next group, Willet terms the folk artists or workshop artists consisting of artists who had no previous training in art but who were introduced to art through exposure to art materials and their use. The third group consists of those who have received their training abroad or in Africa by expatriates. According to the author, the Western-trained African artists are going through a phase of varied experimentation, inspired by the art of other continents and consequently, their art is no longer clearly

African. He claims that African artists are being absorbed into the cosmopolitan world of modern art which owe's its character mainly to the stimulus of traditional African art. However, there appears to be some element of contradiction in Willet's conclusions. This is because if the Western-trained artists are being absorbed into the cosmopolitan world of modern art and modern art is stimulated by African traditional art, then it is only logical and correct to say that the Western-trained artists is also influenced by traditional African art. On the whole Willet's summary and classification of contemporary African art is commendable.

Mount,(1973) gives a more comprehensive survey of African contemporary art. His study constitutes a detailed investigation of a vital component of any culture namely its art. Through Mount's study, he was able to observe four distinctive categories of art produced in Africa in recent decades:

(a) Art produced in traditional styles;

(b) Mission inspired art;

(c) Art designed for sale to tourists; and

(d) Art of new media and techniques and personal expression.

According to Mount, art produced in the traditional style is a thing of the past. This type of art continues in a few isolated areas. He goes on to say that the majority of traditional African art is sculpture made of wood and that sculpture was until recently produced in a wide variety of styles and techniques.

Mount is of the opinion that the religion and social traditions of Africa are in a flux, and that in many places they have almost completely disintegrated. As a result of this, it becomes difficult to find artists producing quality works like their ancestors. Therefore, the use of both traditional and contemporary scenes form the subject of much of the art, being produced. Modern technology and tools are used for finishing instead of local plants and locally made tools. Mount says that often the last skilled craftsman, if still alive, is too old to work, or his successors are so inept that their works are crude and worthless parodies of fine traditional sculpture. The author attributes the breakdown of African tradition and religion to the advent of the European colonial powers.

He states that the majority of todays African "elite" contributed to the disappearnce of traditional

sculpture, as many received their training in mission schools and their ideas often reflect the European concept of art.

According to him, the negative attitude towards the old art is beginning to shift particularly among young artists many of whom incorporate older elements into their works. For instance, some of the traditional themes have been retained and the basic processess of wood carving remains intact.

The author discusses at length what has happened to traditional art in several selected regions of sub-Saharan Africa. His research has found that traditional art styles;

> survive most strongly among the Benin, Ashanti and Fon Kingdoms and the Yoruba 'tribes' of the West Coast. Although in most instances, the media and technique, have continued practically unchanged by and large the quantity and particularly the quantity of production have diminished greatly in recent years. The Yoruba have maintained the highest quality of work while the art of the neighbours in Benin has surfered considerable degeneration in style.

The second category, "mission inspired art" consists of art works in traditional styles but based on Christian themes. The primary aim of this art is for religious teaching through the arts which often decorate the walls

of Churches. Mount says that mission inspired art began at the end of the fifteenth century and that by the seventeenth century, such works were no longer being produced and the old pieces lost their Christian meaning.

The author discusses the establishment of several workshops in Western Nigeria by the Catholic Church. The first began under the direction of Father P. Kelley of the African Mission School established in 1947, in Oye-Ekiti, Father Carrol and Sean'O Mahoney supervised the workshops together. They gathered together a small group of craftsmen and commissioned them to produce works on payment of fees. They produced liturgical objects for use in Catholic Churches.

The Oye-Ekiti Centre closed after a new Reverened Father took over from Father Kelley. Mount however, does not state the year of closure of the Centre but goes further to say that two smaller workshops were established by Sean'O Mahoney at Ondo and Father Carrol at Ijebu Igbo. The Centre concentrated on wood carving although contracts were given to other craftsmen and musicians.

The type of work produced by the Centres was a combination of European ideas and African form. The

themes are Christian but the technique and formal elements are Yoruba. Mount also discussed Lamidi Fakeye of Nigeria whom he says that he (Fakeye) is the best known artist to have been associated with the Nigerian Catholic Workshops, Fakeye demonstrates the success of Catholic Mission Workshops in Nigeria. In Mount's opinion, the Nigerian workshops have enjoyed considerable local success.

The third category of art, souvenir art, can be considered art only in the broadest sense. It is of importance in African mostly because of its economic significance. This type of art is produced mainly for tourists. There is little or no difference in the style of their work and it is almost impossible to pick out the hand of any individual craftsman.

The last category of art, (the emergence of a new art) embraces art being produced with new media and techniques and personal expression which is the most important type of art in modern Africa. It is usually produced by educated individuals and reflects an African Cum Western art school background, Mount says that many different styles in this new art have developed in modern Africa and that most of them have a combination of traditional African art and modern

Western influences. The presentation of this new subject matter is varied in style. No illustrations of the new art are given and one is not very sure what the new art really is. Although carvers within the scope of this study have not received Western education, characteristics of their art may suggest the emergence of a new art.

Mount has presented a comprehensive and well documented study of contemporary art in Africa.

There have been many attempts by different writers to define and categorise African Neo-traditional art, Mount refers to four distinctive styles which he calls survivals of traditional styles; the mission inspired art; sourvenir art; and the new art. Odutokun,(1984) classifies contemporary African artists into three. The traditional artist/craftsman, the folk artists and the modern artist. He says that "the traditional artist has remained content with his occupation where he is still being patronised, however, some of them have started producing for the tourist market. Attempts have been made to find new commitments for this group of artist. Odutokun cites as example, the experiment carried out by Kevin Carrol in Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria, where traditional carvers were commissioned and paid

to decorate the Church for religious teaching through their art.

To Odutokun, the folk artists work for a larger public and are influenced by and largely exploit the resources from popular culture to appease their clientele. The folk artist produces decorative works for their clients. They also manufacture sign writing and minor advertisements for artists and other skilled self-employed persons.

The third category of artists, the modern artists are largely the college trained artists or others who are enlightened enough to be either inquiring or even philosophical in their attitude to work. According to the author, the modern artists are aware that they are being watched by society. They create with some measure of consciousness of their works' possible implication for the society of today and tomorrow.

Odutokun has adequately categorised contemporary African artists. His discription of the traditional artists/craftsman, the folk artists and the modern artist includes traditional art produced throughout Nigeria. Beier,(1985) discusses some contributions made by various individuals towards the development of

modern art. What is pertinent in this review is Beier discussion on John Clarke and also his views on the workshop established by the Catholic Church at Oye-Ekiti.

John Clarke, an English Art Teacher during the 1930s was of the notion that students in Omu Primary School where he taught were becoming alienated from their own culture. He was concerned about the preservation of the Yoruba tradition of carving under a system of education and therefore, set up an experiment in education at Omu Primary School. He tried to remedy the situation by employing the services of an important wood carver named Bamgboye, as a craft instructor in the school. The pupils were intended to combine old tradition with modern knowledge. According to Beier, (1985) the experiment did not succeed and the school simply failed to produce artists, neither the traditional nor the modern type. Beier states further that the art work of great Bamgboye soon degenerated into tourist souvenirs.

Leo Underwood,(1952) is of the same opinion as Beier concerning the decline of Bamgboye's art work. He states that "once the traditional carver becomes art concious... his powers of expression declines". Underwood refers to Bamgboye to illustrate his point.

To Underwood, Bamgboye produced "Epa" masks and many other fine works when he did not know he was an artist.

J. D. Clarke, also concerned about the preservation of the Yoruba tradition of carving, persuaded Bamgboye to come to Omu Primary School to instruct the boys in his art and the boys proceeded to work on traditional lines at Bamgboye's direction. According to Underwood, the work done subsequently under both boys and their master suffered. He states that;

> Bamgboye acquired an art consciousness, parting from the ordinary position of art in African life and soon became typical of the meritorious though lifeless work in European art craftmanship exhibitions Bamgboye is incapable now of producing work like that, he did under the old 'tribal' condition. His pupils did not pick up the expression of his old work"

It is possible that Beier drew inspiration from the writings of Underwood. Clarke appears to hold a different view from Underwood and Beier. He has this to say about Bamgboye;

> There was a better carver in a neighbouring village, but for two years he refused all inducements that were offered to persuade him to come as instructor... In the end, the Emir of Ilorin was asked to obtain the services of the particular carver for the school. He instructed the Chief to send him along and Bamgboye, one of the best of the remaining Yoruba carvers, has worked for

> the school ever since. He has never shown any disinclination to teach the boys all he knows...

The writer is of the opinion that perhaps Clarke would be in a better position to write on the subject of the standard of Bamgboye's work, since he was well acquainted with Bamgboye and knew the standard of his work. The writer assumes that Beier had not met Bamgboye and did not know enough about his background to be able to conclude that the standard of Bamgboye had fallen.

Beier goes on to discuss the workshop established by the Catholic Mission in 1947, in which "traditional" artists were commissioned on payment of fees to carve art objects inspired by Christianity. He says that this experiment was remarkable in as much as it was performed with considerable feelings and perseverance. The experiment came to an end in 1953. On the whole, Beier's article has been well treated, but his failure to examine more critically the art style of Bamgboye after his arrival at Omu Primary School, appears to be the major weakness in the article.

Although many studies have been made on contemporary Yoruba wood carving, by some scholars, specific literature from which extracts could be

documented for this project are very few. One may speculate as to whether or not artists producing in the Neo-traditional manner are actually creating forms different from the old or whether or not artists are merely copying. Literature relevant to this study, presently include that of Oyelola,(1980); Ogunwale, (1971); Haight,(1987); Bamidele,(1979); Ludwin,(1977); Carrow,(1955; 1967); Ojo,(1966); Babalola,(1989); Freyer,(1990).

In Oyelola's (1980), writing on contemporary Nigerian art, she deals with some of the factors that leads to the development of contemporary art in Nigeria; religion and colonialism. The colonial experience brought about the most far reaching changes in all domains of life, including that of art. Oyelola, states that;

> Nigerians were forcibly brought in contact with the culture of Western Europe where art had become a specialist activity of no direct concern to the average man, schools were set up by missionaries and the colonial government which taught an English curriculum. The teaching of drawing and painting featured prominently on the arts syllabus. This was the beginning of the divorce between art and life which took place in Nigeria.

The purpose behind art today has changed from what it was in the past. Many artists produce "art for art's

sake". Also expatriates form the majority of the patrons of Nigerian art. Mention is made of Oyelola of the change role of the artist who now uses new techniques to produce works for individuals with cultural backgrounds that differ from his.

Discussion is made of the experiment at Oye-Ekiti in 1947 conducted co-operatively by both Reverened Father Sean'O Mahoney and Reverened Father Carrol. The aim of the experiment being to study the adaptation of African crafts to Christian uses and to experiment in the field[4]. Oyelola points out that Lamidi Fakeye and Bamidele who were both sons of traditional wood carvers were employed at the centre creating works for use in the Catholic Church. Fakeye, who was an apprentice to Bamidele , produced carving for secular buildings including the old house of assembly in Ibadan. In Oyelola's opinion, the experimental project was successful to the extent that it re-integrated wood sculpture with daily worship.

The carvers made use of traditional techniques in the creation of new works. However, no mention is

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4. Father Carrol narrated stories from the Bible which the carvers endeavoured to illustrate. He also discussed technical details but avoided imposing his own ideas and emotions. (Ibid, 1980).

made of the new works and one is left wondering what the new works are. Oyelola's observation may substantiate the focus of the study in that many carvers still continue to carve in the mode of their ancestors, however, the carvers are creer to alter forms and will also carve to the patrons request. This is a further movement away from the traditional approach, whereby the artist was limited to the style he had learnt and practiced.

Reference is made by the author to the style of Lamidi Fakeye whom he says produced small sculptures of Yoruba gods and worshippers for decorative purposes. The author describes these statues as being stylized representations of human form with geometric decorations on the clothing and pedestal. He says that Fakeye also carves doors for public buildings and cities the ones at University Catholic Hospital, Ibadan as an example According to Oyelola, the same can be said about the works of Akin Fakeye, a member of the same family as Lamidi Fakeye and also Ola Odekunle. Both Akin Fakeye and Odekunle work in a similar style as Lamidi Fakeye.

Ogunwale,(1971) also discusses the subject of Lamidi Fakeye's work which he says are concerned with royalty - a Yoruba King complete with the paraphernalia

of office; courtiers at the King's Palace, women in different mood and forms. Yoruba gods and goddesses with scarification marks and hair-dos are represented as well. According to Ogunwale, all the Fakeye's out-lines are vivid, proportionate and without unnecessary embellishment. Ogunwale says this about Lamidi Fakeye; "Fakeye is a hard working man, a dedicated and truly Yoruba traditional artist. His work remains true to its origin. Although, he adopts new techniques and evolves new styles, this does not spring from a desire to imitate foreign influence".

Haight,(1987) acknowledges Lamidi Fakeye as a contemporary carver producing Neo-traditional art. According to the author;

> Fakeye is a man of paradox. As a Muslim, he continued his family tradition of wood carving and drew deeply upon traditional styles and themes... He is an artist who did not lose his way in the period of transition between colonial rule and independence but who during the era of liberation in his own person siezed the opportunity to become a world class artist through retaining and perfecting the essence of what was strong, vital and universally worthy of respect in Yoruba culture. He has transformed Yoruba wood carving without abandoning tradition, he has become the keeper or tradition without forgoing innovation.

Haight,(1987) observed changes in contemporary Yoruba wood carving as seen in works produced by Lamidi Fakeye. Changes in style are evident in "Sango's wife and Devotee". According to Yoruba tradition, the symbol for Sango is a double bladed axe which represents two thunder bolts. In this work Sango is shown symbolically as a man holding his wife aloft. Drumming devotees are present at his side who bring Kolanuts for sacrifice. Fakeye has also changed the emphasis of certain decorative touches as seen in "warrior on horse back". The warrior is shown in a necklace of coral beads which were very expensive and formally reserved for Kings or Chiefs of great importance. Haight points out that normally a warrior would not have dressed in such a manner. However, Fakeye portrays these beads on the warrior to illustrate his wealth and importance.

Ludwin,(1977) also pursued an investigation into contemporary Yoruba wood carving in Oyo city and attempted to determine the following: (1) The traditional techniques and procedures of Yoruba figurative carvings, (2) the impact of Western technology and imagery on figurative Yoruba carving and establish the accommodations made by image carvers whose

traditional patrons - the devotees of the Yoruba religion - have decreased significantly.

In Bamidele's (1979) discussion of contemporary carvers, he states that the traditional artist of the past years was a traditionalist who knew and executed his products according to the norms of his predecessors, his artistic out-put depended on his capacity to meet the demand of his people. The artists carving played an important role in the life of his people and served for social as well as ritualistic purposes.

Bamidele is of the opinion that modern carvers continue with traditional forms to suit modern Nigeria by drawing inspiration form the past and infusing it into modern life. It is the authors belief that the efforts of George Bamidele Arowogun led to the foundation of what is known as "Contemporary Traditionalist" Yoruba wood carving. Contemporary apprentices who are from different parts of Yoruba-land are usually without prior knowledge of the trade. Their urge to learn is primarily commercial. Even though, they learn through the apprenticeship system and acquired to certain degree, the skill of the traditional carver, their mode of learning is different from what apprentices like Lamidi Fakeye went through.

Carrol,(1967) has said of Yoruba sculpture that figures usually sit or stand and if they imply movement do so only in the most limited way. He observed that one does not find emotion in facial expression or in gesture. Craftsmen make no attempt to represent fear, anger or joy. He further states that Yoruba art illustrates scenes of Yoruba life but there is no time sequence, no attempt is made to build up a narrative whether of history or fiction. Carrol has said also that the human figure is supreme and that art produced by the Yoruba has very little in the way of background scenery or staging. A tree for example may be carved but only for the palm wine collector to climb it.

Ojo,(1966) examines some of the outstanding characteristics of contemporary Yoruba wood carving which he states is broadly cylindrical in form. Heads of figures are proportionally larger than other parts of the body. The works are symmetrical and noted for it's three dimensional treatment. Figures are carved from a single piece of wood. No attempt is made by artist to combine two pieces of wood. Forms represented are derived from nature. Distortion is shown in carving, figures are static and without motion and lack variation in facial features.

Babalola,(1989) has said that Neo-traditional art works;

> must have selected naturalism. Have emphasis on eyes... must have deep meaning traditionally, must be non-commercial. Profuse use of folklore entailed - there could be vertical composition, no over lapping of figures, work may be highly polished. The artist may or may not have academic training. Some carving is done along the grain of wood - may have symmetry of composition must have frontal pose.

Freyer,(1990) observes that Yoruba artists often depict important aspects of their culture. The artist endeavours to show how Yorubas think. To the author Yoruba art is diverse yet distinctive. Explaining the diversity yet distinctiveness of Yoruba art, Freyer referred to the Yoruba metaphor for their culture which is;

> the river that's never at rest... Like the river, you've got all the streams going in, but the streams don't change the river, but the river subsumes them, and in some places parts of the river are deep and slow moving and some parts move very swiftly. So the river keeps going and it may seem to change, but it always is somewhat the same... Like a river, you have streams flowing in that are influences from their neighbours or from outside.

CHAPTER - THREE

RESEARCH METHODS AND TREATMENT OF DATA

Apart from literature materials which assisted the researcher in conducting this study, the primary or field studies approach suggested by Fagg,(1960) in his study of "African Art" was also used. Fagg classified these studies into two groups - primary studies which in the authors words mean;

> Direct research carried out in the field and secondary studies that is these which are carried out else where, for example, in museums and university departments; using as their raw materials the results of primary studies and the specimens which are to be found in great quantities in museums and private collections throughout the world, some of them well documented in which case they would be regarded as primary evidence, a much greater part of them undocumented, so that only their internal evidence survives.

Fagg explains that all forms of cultural anthropology, including the morphological or technological study of objects and material culture, are in the last resort studies of human behaviour, and settlement. The importance of field work is pointed out by the author when he states that one should study artists in the field, to enable him to learn all there is to know about

the artist; according to him; "there is clearly great scope for anthropological and aesthetic research in Africa. The author is of the opinion that we may still reconstruct African art history in part with the help of younger carvers and other inhabitants of the surrounding villages and districts for a true account of the spiritual aspects of the art as well as the material ones. Collection of such material cannot be accomplished in short periods of acquaintance. Fagg,(1960) states that, training calculated to draw the full benefits from such field studies does not exist.and that there is very little time left to develop it. Fagg, also discusses the importance of Cameras, which he says aid in the collection of valuable information. He explains that;

> Good photographs are often hardly less useful to the comparative student than the objects themselves, and since the acquisition of carvings, unless they be freshly made is generally a lengthy business, the field student is probably better employed in expanding and documenting this photographic collection.

Fagg is of the opinion that photographs should be properly documented with such information as the name of the carver, village and any other useful information available about the use, function and age of the art forms.

The primary studies approach was also used by Mount,(1973) which is in the preface of his book: "African Art the Years since 1920". Mount noted the awareness of the world of the current transformation of Africa at a speed unequalled in the history of civilization. Realizing that a changing culture must give rise to new art forms, the author conducted research through sub-Saharan Africa to investigate these changes. He points out that for the most part, reliance was placed on information gathered in the field from the artists, primarily, from patrons, schools, museums personnel, government officials, church dignitaries and interested observers.

3.1 FIELD STUDIES

The researcher made a field trip to Ibadan and Oyo towns with an interpreter to acquint herself with the wood carvers and their establishments. The researcher visited the Art Councils in Ibadan and Oyo towns to find out the exact location of the carvers and their places of work. The researcher also visited Dr. Adepegba at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan to find out the location of wood carvers in the area. Once the location of wood carvers was established, data collection was undertaken.

3.2 SOURCES OF DATA

According to Ndagi,(1980); sources of data consist of two types; primary and secondary. Ndagi states that; primary data has been recorded by eye witness accounts of an event... secondary sources have been recorded by someone else who obtained his data indirectly. The primary source is more reliable than the secondary source because of the distortion caused as a result of passing on information through secondary sources. The primary sources of data was used by the researcher in conducting this study.

3.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher utilized the following instruments:

i. Tape recorded interviews
ii. Photographs
iii. Collected materials
iv. Personnal observations

Ndagi,(1984) has pointed out that; "interview is a technique used for collecting information from others in face-to-face contact. It is used when a researcher wants to obtain reliable and valid information in the form of verbal responses from respondents in order to

confirm or reject hypothesis", Questions were drawn up and used to guide the researcher in conducting discussions with the various selected artists. (see Appendix I). These were recorded on tapes. The recorded conversations were then transcribed into script form. The interview administered by the researcher through the aid of an interpreter to solicit information on Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carving was informal but structured. The researcher asked the respondents the same questions in the same sequence according to their function in the study. This method is important as it allowed for questions to arise as a result of issues raised and created room for unbiased answers. Furthermore, it enabled the researcher to obtain unbiased first hand facts and gave room for further explanation. The questions asked by the researcher were open ended. This method is also important as it exposed other salient issues inherent in the works of the artists, working within the scope of this study. As the researcher has no knowledge of the Yoruba language, the researcher sought the aid of an interpreter to assist in interviewing the wood carvers.

These interviews were in Yoruba and later translated into English with the help of an interpreter. Tape

recorded dialogue with the artists were later transcribed, read and reviewed. (see Appendix II). It is hoped that these tape recorded interviews will serve as research materials to enhance further study of Neo-traditional art.

These discussions sought to answer, among other things, the artists' themes, sources of inspiration, as well as use of media and characteristics. Other questions dealth with are function, patrons, innovations and signifi significance of Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carving.

3.3.1 Photographs

Colour photographs were taken of completed carvings for the purpose of recording and analysis of selected works. Photographs aided the researcher in making comparisons between traditional and contemporary work which further helped the researcher to make statements concerning innovation and synthesis in an attempt to ascertain whether a new art form has evolved or whether artists are merely copying.

3.3.2 Collected Materials

The type of data collected include catalogues, journals, books and newspaper articles relating

to the topic. These were objectively reviewed by the researcher. Also collected were art works. These serve as research material, worthy of presentation for the purpose of the researcher's study. They also helped in the formulation of the writer's recommendation and conclusion in this project.

3.3.3 Personal Observation

The researcher reviewed a range of the artists work over a long period of time and noted any observations. This was achieved by visiting the artist's studio. This approach is important in the analysis of different techniques, content and form development in Neo-traditional art. The researcher believes that this approach is crucial in order to attain an objective hypothesis.

3.4 SELECTION OF ARTISTS

As mentioned in chapter one, artist's were selected from two areas in Nigeria: Ibadan and Oyo towns. To ensure that the artists studied belong to a similar group, only those living in Ibadan and Oyo trained in an apprenticeship system were studied. A total of four artists were selected, two from Ibadan and two from Oyo.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data for this study were collected from exhibitions as well as from the studios of the artists interviewed. During visits to the artists' studios discussions were carried out with the use of a tape recorder and conversations were recorded (see Appendix II). Photographs were taken and write ups relating to the study were also used, as well as newspaper reviews, catalogues of exhibitions and articles from magazines, seminar papers and journal articles. The following libraries were consulted. The Department of Fine Arts; the Kashim Ibrahim and the School of Basic Studies Libraries of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. The library of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan was also consulted.

CHAPTER - FOUR

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

Akin Fakeye is from Ila Orangun, Oyo State. He is a wood-carver by profession and comes from a carving lineage. Both his father and Grand-father were engaged in the wood carving profession. Fakeye, an admirer of good carving, began his career after his primary education. He received his first instructions in carving from his father and elder brothers. Fakeye later served in an apprenticeship system (in Ila Orangun) under Lamidi Fakeye for a period of nine years where he mastered the basic techniques of wood carving. Fakeye was greatly inspired by Gani and Lamidi Fakeye from whom he developed his carving style. When the works of master and student are compared, the influence of teacher upon pupil is evident. According to Fakeye, to a novice their works are indistinguishable although an experienced eye could differentiate.

Fakeye has made a full-time career out of wood carving and presently heads a large and lucrative studio at his residence at Baraka Road, Ibadan town, with several apprentices. His work both stylistically

and technically is based on the Yoruba tradition of wood carving. The subject matter of Fakeye's forms are varied and consist of door panels with relief scenes, decorated boxes and free standing three dimensional pieces some of which include deities, such as Sango, Oya, Esu, Flutist and Herbalists to mention a few. Fakeye also uses his own personal ideas. He derives his themes from contemporary life and will carve forms to the specifications of his patrons. Many of Fakeye's themes have been selected for their popularity and their ability to attract patronage.

The tools employed by Fakeye include the axe, chisel and nails all of which enable him work quickly and efficiently. In the execution of his art forms, Fakeye makes use of various types of woods which are acquired from the saw-mills. The woods are commonly known as Iroko, Ofon, Oroo, Apa and Omoo. Ofon and Iroko are used for large works like posts and big doors, while Apa and Oroo are usually used for smaller works. These woods are choosen because of their durability. They do not warp or crack and are resistant to insects and water. Large pieces of woods are taken to a carpenters workshop for smoothening while smaller pieces are taken to the wood carvers studio where they

are cut with tools. When the carving's are completed, they are smoothen with sand-paper and polished with linseed oil and petrol.

A particular trend can be observed in Fakeye's sculptural forms. For instance much detailed pattern work is applied to pieces that are made with great care. Fakeye's forms are made to last and all are signed for the purpose of identification. There is emphasis on the eyes which appear bulbous, hair styles are elaborate, ears are simplified, they are mere triangles and the size of the head is larger in relation to the rest of the body. The figures are straight in their posses and faces between male and female and indistinguishable and ageless. Objects are carved from a single piece of wood and all sides are treated with equal attention.

Fakeye's art forms are produced to be sold as art objects; they are purchased mainly by foreigners and a few Nigerians who use them for decorative purposes. Fakeye has maintained his family tradition through his carving. His studio offers training and job opportunities for interested persons. Since Fakeye's art forms reflect aspects of traditional as well as contemporary life, such carvings therefore, help in

the documentation and preservation of various aspects of typical Yoruba culture.

Although traditional Yoruba motifs and stylistic treatment are applied by Fakeye to a variety of subjects both traditional and contemporary, Fakeye's sculptural forms may be described as modern creations and not copies of traditional works. A new art form arises which is a synthesis of the old and new. There is a noteable difference in Fakeye's art forms when his works are compared to traditional art pieces.

Ayodele Bankole is a wood carver from Oyo State. He began his career as a wood carver in an apprenticeship system under Akin Fakeye, Bankole served as an apprentice for a period of four years. After his apprenticeship, he worked for Fakeye for five years. Bankole was very much inspired by the good works of his master and others such as Gani and Lamidi Fakeye as well as Olu Taiwo and hopes to someday attain their standard. Although similarities in technique and subject matter can be observed between the art forms of Bankole and Fakeye, Bankole has developed a style that in clearly his own.

Bankole works full-time as a wood carver in Ibadan town and is the head of a small workshop with a few apprentices. The subject matter of Bankole's sculptural forms consist of mythological Yoruba gods and godesses, some of which include Elegbara, Ogun, Sango, Oya and Herbalists. Ibeji's are also depicted as well as contemporary every day scenes such as horse-riders, figures, presenting gifts, mothers caring for children, hunter's cultural dancers, flutists, drum beaters and water carriers. Bankole's selection of themes are based on their popularity as well as his own personal ideas, his themes are derived from the folk tales of his people, his environment and from the suggestions of his patrons. The types of woods used by Bankole in the production of his work are varied. The woods are purchased from the saw-mills and include Apa, Oroo, Iroko and Omoo. Apa is used for figures while Omoo, due to it's width is used for doors and panels. The woods are selected because of their durability and resistance to insects and also because they polish easily. After purchasing the wood, it is allowed to season for a period of about six months. After completion of a carving, the wood is polished with linseed oil which enhanced the beauty of the wood and helps prevent cracking. Bankole's sculptural forms

are made with great care and are highly embellished. Designs can be seen on garments, objects held in hands very often on bases upon which figures are posed. The head of his figures are usually portrayed slightly larger in proportion to the body. Female figures are designed with beautiful hair styles, while the eyes are bulbous in appearance, the ears are simplified, faces of male and females are similarly represented and age is not depicted. The distinguishing feature between male and female is observed in body structure and clothing. Although, figures are stiff and frontal in their stance it is not uncommon to find heads that look to the side. The carvings are made from a single piece of wood and all sides are treated with equal attention.

Although, Bankole's art forms are patronised by both Nigerians and foreigners, the majority of the purchases are made by foreigners. Bankole's sculptural pieces are not only aesthetic in role, they also help in the documenting and preservation of the Yoruba culture, they also serve as teaching aids for apprentices. Even though the influence from the past is evident in Bankole's art forms and though many of his subject matter are inspired by tradition, his

creations may be described as modern and not copies of traditional works. Bankole experiments with new ideas.

Emmanuel Odekunle is a Yoruba carver from Oyo State. He is a professional wood carver and comes from a family of carvers. Both his father and Grand-father were traditional wood carvers. Presently, Odekunle is the head of a lucrative wood carving studio in Oyo State, Odekunle began to carve wood at an early age, due to his father's encouragement. After he completed his formal education, he joined Father Kevin Carrol's Workshop and worked under the instructions of Bamidele Areogun for a period of three years. Odekunle opened his own wood carving studio in Oyo town where he works full-time and is still located there today.

In Odekunle's studio, traditional Yoruba motifs and stylistic treatment are applied to a variety of subjects which are both traditional and contemporary. Some of his subjects include free standing 3-dimensional pieces of the deities such as Sango, Oya, Esu, Obatala native healers as well as farmers at work, game players and wine tappers, Odekunle also carves decorated relief panels consisting of one scene as shown in Plate 2, relief panels which stand on a base

so that both sides can be seen, door panels carved with several relief scenes on one side only. Odekunle has selected some of his themes because of their popularity in the Yoruba culture, while others are everyday scenes that appeal to him personally. Odekunle's themes are derived not only from traditional as well as contemporary life but also from the bible history books and folktales. Some themes are inspired by specifications from clients.

Odekunle's sculptural forms are carved in seasoned hard wood, they are highly finished and are oiled to prevent cracking. These woods include; Omoo, Iroko, Apa and Oroo. These woods are selected because of their resistance to insects and their strength, (they do not split easily). Omoo and Apa are easy woods with which to work, they are relatively inexpensive and available, also they are capable of taking fine detail. Oroo is the most frequently used wood due to it's hardness, it is the hardest wood of them all. The woods are acquired from the saw-mills.

Art forms produced in Odekunle's studio are usually enriched with a variety of non-representational geometric patterns, which lend texture to the work.

Odekunle's free standing figures are frontal and static in appearance and are often carved fully or partially clothed. They have heads that are larger when compared to the rest of the body, large eyes, flat lips and simplified ears. The indistinguishable faces of male and female are expressionless. The distinguishing feature between man and woman is seen in fatherly and motherly roles. Female figures are depicted in fancy hair styles while the male is often caped. All the carvings are made from one piece of wood and all sides of the wood are treated with equal care.

Odekunle's art forms which are made to be sold as objects of art are patronised by foreigners and elite Nigerians; foreigners form the major buyers. These sculptural forms are purchased for their beauty and are used mainly for decorative purposes. The art forms produced in Odekunle's studio serve as models from which apprentices can learn, also when such works are grouped together, they form a large collection from which buyers can select. Since Odekunle's carving reflect both traditional and contemporary societies, they help to record and preserve various aspects of the Yoruba culture. They also enhance training and job opportunities as well as perpetuate the tradition of the artists family.

Although, Odekunle follows the traditional manners of representation, his sculptural forms may be described as modern and not copies of works produced in the past. Odekunle has devised a style of his own different from the purely traditional.

Oke Ogundepo is a native of Oyo State and is a wood-carver by profession, both his father and Grand-father were wood-carvers. Ogundepo started carving wood at an early age due to constant encouragement from his father. He was inspired by the work of his father and served as an apprentice under him for a period of eight years. Similarities between the work of father and son can be observed when their works are compared, however, Ogundepo has developed a style of his own.

Ogundepo, devotes plenty of time to his profession and is the head of a small studio in Oyo town with two apprentices. His work in terms of technique and style is based on the Yoruba tradition of wood carving. His subject matter consist of Yoruba gods, such as; Sango, Oya (wife of Sango) Esu, Ogun to mention a few. He also carves masks as well as contemporary scenes. Ogundepo selection of themes is based on their popularity in the

Yoruba culture, other themes are derived from newspaper articles and clients. Various types of woods are used by Ogundepo, some of which include; Iroko and Apa. These woods are selected because they are strong, highly resistant to insects, and do not crack easily. These woods are obtained from the saw-mills.

The wood is allowed to season before any carving is done. During the process of carving, engine oil is applied to the work which aids in preventing cracking.

Ogundepo's art forms are strngly built, well finished, well balanced and pleasant to view. His forms consist of male and females figures that stand, sit, kneel, dance and play. They have heads that are larger in proportion to the rest of the body, large eyes, fancy hair styles and ears that appear as mere triangles. Differenciation between male and female can be observed in body structure and clothing. Age is not represented. The figures appear up-right and rigid in their posses, and all carvings are made from one piece of wood.

Ogundepo's wood carvings which are aesthetic in function are patronized by both Europeans and Nigerians. His workshop provides work and training for interested persons, while his sculptural forms serve in recording

some aspects of the Yoruba tradition. Furthermore, Ogundepo's carvings serve as a source of inspiration for other carvers.

Ogundepo's sculptural forms are new and different from more traditional works and as such his works may be considered modern creations and not copies of traditional art.

4.1 ANALYSIS OF WORKS

4.1.1 Title: "Woman Presenting Kola-nut"

Bankole Ayodele (January, 1990). Size 32 centimetre, Media, Wood (Apa). It is presently in the collection of the artist. This is a carving by Ayodele Bankole an Ibadan based artist from Oyo State. He received his training as a wood carver in Ibadan, in an apprenticeship system under Akin Fakeye. The duration of his training was four years. After completion of Ayodele's apprenticeship, he remained and worked with Fakeye for five years. He later established his own workshop in Ibadan where he is presently based.

The carving on view represents a woman presenting Kola-nut. The artist makes use of decorative designs

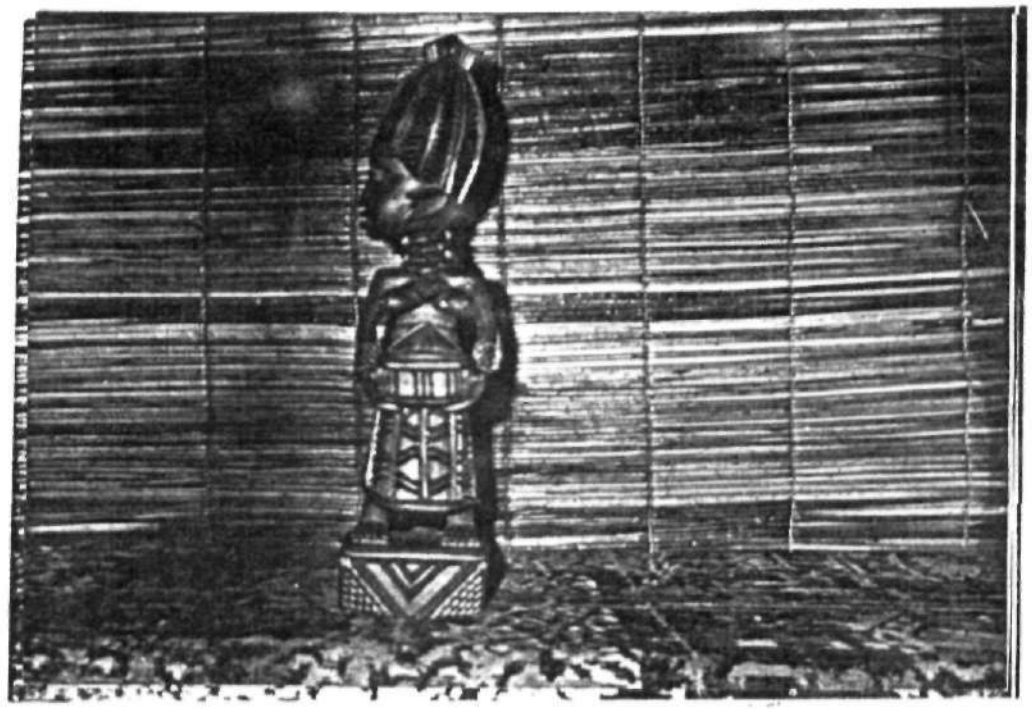
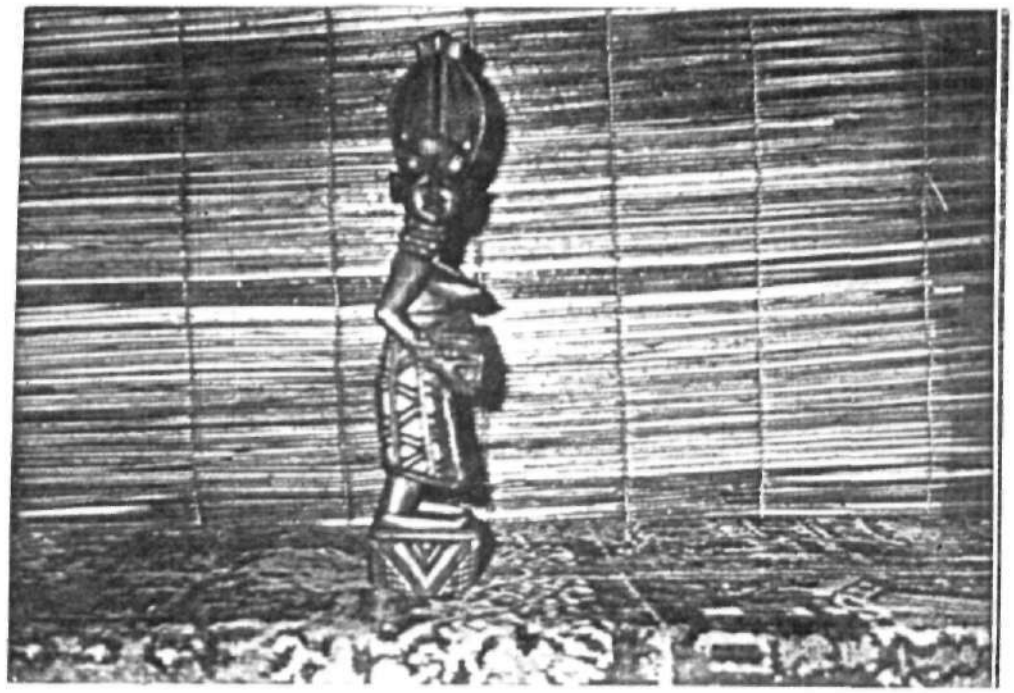


PLATE 3: Title: "Woman Presenting Kolanut" by Bankole Ayodele, Medium Wood (Apà), Size: 32 Centimetre.

and motifs in the treatment of the figures intricate, high-crested hair style, upon a head that is larger in relation to the rest of the body. The head turns to the side, the eyes are wide and bulbous and there is no indication of pupil. The nose and mouth are simplified while the ears appear triangular in shape. There is no indication of age and the face is expressionless. The neck of the figure is ornamented with four rows of decorated beads which terminates in a triangular shaped object that rest between uncovered breasts. Enclosed in the hands of the figure is a decorated box in which kola-nut is carried. Highly decorative designs are used by the artist to embellish an ankel length waist coat. Detailed designs and patterns are also used to decorate the base upon which the well balanced figure firmly stands. Arms, torso and legs are simplified. The use of decorative designs to embellish the entire sculpture contributes immensely to the appeal of the art.

Both theme and characteristics of the carving conform with the aesthetic principle used in traditional wood carving, however, innovations are apparent in the work. The artists struggle to defeat frontality and complete rigidity by the introduction



of a turning head is a deviation from the purely traditional approach. Furthermore, the carving functions as a purely decorative aesthetic art form rather than one which is ritualistic in purpose as was the case with more traditional sculptural works. The carving on view is carved from a single piece of wood and is executed by the use of tools which include mallet and chisels of different sizes, hammer, sand-paper for smoothening and knives, linseed oil is used to polish the completed art work. These sophisticated tools allow for more delicate, intricate, and precise design and finishing, which greatly enhances the beauty of the sculptural form.

4.1.2 Title: "Native Doctor"

Bankole Ayodele (December, 1989). Size 28 centimetre, media wood (Apa). It is located in the artists studio, Ibadan. The carving on view is of a native doctor carved from one piece of wood. Decorative patterns and designs are employed by the artist in depicting an elaborate hat on the head of the figure. On both sides of the cap are oval shaped medicine gourds. The eyes are bulbous and appear to be starring, while the mouth, nose and ears are simplified.

The face is without expression while age is not represented. Around the neck is a chain upon which a bulging oval shaped medicine gourd is hung. It rests upon an uncovered chest that reveals a porturding novel. Around each bending arm are eight rows of beads. In one hand is held a decorated horn shaped gourd in which medicine is contained. The gourd curves towards the bottom and connects to a cock that is held in the other hand of the carving. The figure is depicted in traditional attire which consists of a highly embellished ankle - length wrapper. The figure is frontal in pose and stands erect upon a decorated, well balanced base.

Changes from the purely traditional approach can be observed in the artist's treatment of the head. Although, Ayodele adheres to the traditional representation of the head, the size of the head in this carving is reduced, (compare with Plate 13). According to the artist, the reduction in head size "is an attempt not only to reduce the amount of wood being used, but also an effort to approximate more to real life". Bankole,(1990). This in the artist's opinion; "adds to the appeal of the work"[5].

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5. This knowledge was revealed to me during a formal interview with Bankole Ayodele,(1990), Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

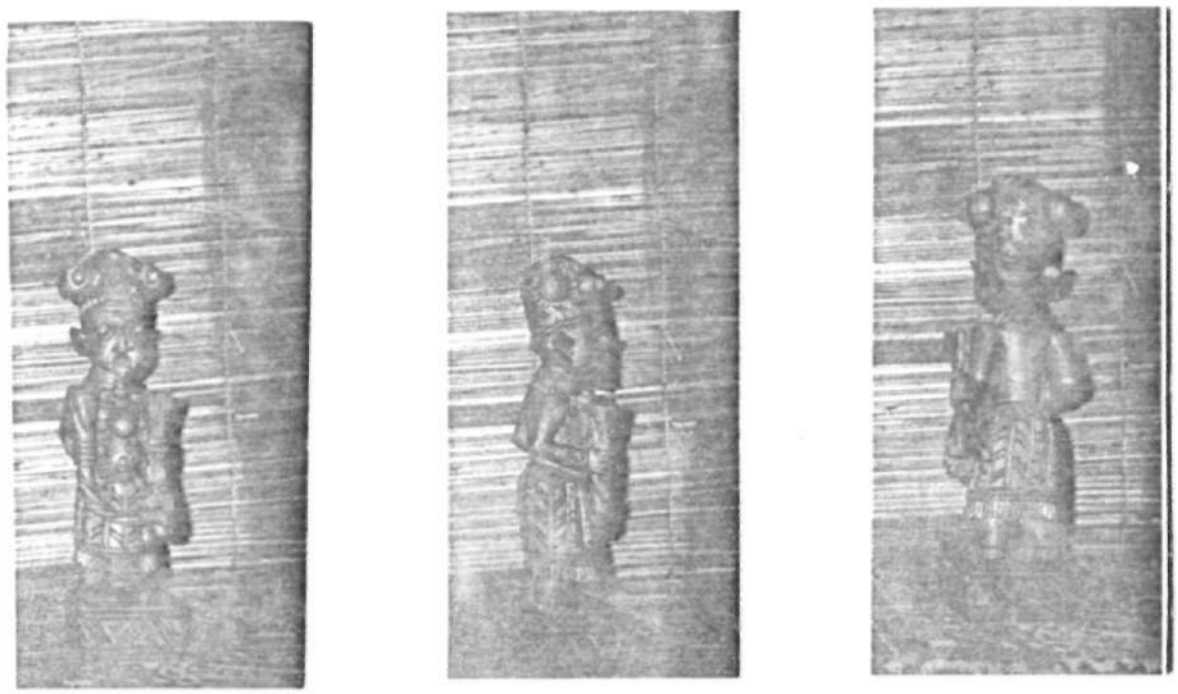


PLATE 4: Title "Native Doctor" By Ayodele Bankole, Medium Wood (Apa) 28 Centimentre.

Tools used by the artist in the execution of his sculptural forms are modern and highly efficient which reduces the amount of time and labour spent, as well as also allow for fine details, and finishing of a high standard all of which contributes to the aesthetic quality of the art form.

The carving is purely decorative in function as compared to more traditional art forms which were employed mainly for religious purposes.

4.1.3 Horn Blower

Title: "Esu Horn Blower" by Ayodele Bankole, (September, 1987). Size: 36 centimetre, media wood (Apa). It is presently in the artist studio in Ibadan.

The carving on view represent a horn blower for Esu. The artist has made use of highly decorative designs on an elaborate head-gear on the figure. The head-gear consists of a band embellished with zig-zag patterns. It goes around the head and extends down to the middle of the back terminating in a small mask. Two larger decorated masks are situated directly above the band each at the side of the figures head. These masks are separated by an 'n' shaped fluted structure which begins directly above the band at the centre of

the front of the head. It goes upwards over and around the head and ends at the back of the head. Within the space created by the fluted structure are thick criss-cross designs which are separated by open spaces thus, forming a pierced background. The head is slightly enlarged, while the eyes are large and with no indication of pupil, the long narrow nose flares outwards at the sides. The cheeks are puffed out indicative of the blowing action of the figure in whose hands are held a decorative horn. Around a slightly elongated slender neck are four rows of beads. The horn blower is depicted in traditional attire which consists of a highly decorative short sleeved shirt and knee length trousers. The figure kneels on one knee upon a decorated stool. The entire carving is created from a single piece of wood.

Unlike the art forms created in the past, this carving functions as a purely decorative piece. Conscious attempt is made by the artist to create art forms that fulfil the aesthetic role. Bankole's works are superbly decorative.

The use of modern efficient tools which reduces time and effort, contributes considerably towards creating aesthetic works of a high standard.



PLATE 5: Title: ""Esu Horn Blower" by Ayodele Bankole, Medium Wood (Apa), Size: 36 Centimetre.

Further innovations may be observed in the artists introduction of greater flexibility noted in the treatment of the limbs and the legs appear more modelled, more flexible and more life-like when compared with traditional forms.[6]

The artists introduction of a pierced decorative head-gear enhances the sculptural effect of the carving. According to the artists, such structures in the past would have been solid, rather than pieced which in the writer's opinion is a further move away from the purely traditional approach.

4.1.4. Mother with child on Back

Title "Mother with Child on Back" by Ayodele Bankole (June, 1990). Size: 37½ centimetre, media wood (Apa). It is located in the premises of the artist in Ibadan.

This highly polished carving depicts a kneeling mother with a baby on her back. Against the above the sides of the enlarge head are two decorated ceremonial swords which are supported by an embellished loop shaped structure, held in the figures hands. The high crested

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6. According to Bankole, 1990; he approximates more to

hair style is beautifully adorned with beads. The eyes are large and their is no indication of pupil. The large ears, nose and moth are simplified, so also are the limbs. The face is expressionless and there is no indication of age. Around the neck of the figure are three rows of simply decorated beads from which a triangular pendant hangs. A baby looking to the side without stretched aims is tied on the mother's back with a wrapper that is enriched with detailed pattern work. The breasts above the wrapper are uncovered and the figure kneels upon a decorated stool.

This highly embellished carving purely aesthetic in role. The use of modern tools which are well manipulated has enabled Bankole to make use of detailed pattern work on the entire surface of his art form. In an attempt to approximate more to real-life, the artist introduces more flexibility in his carving. This is noted in the turning head of the baby as well as the bended legs of the mother. Although, the limbs are simplified, they appear more slender, more graceful and more modelled than that of traditional art forms.

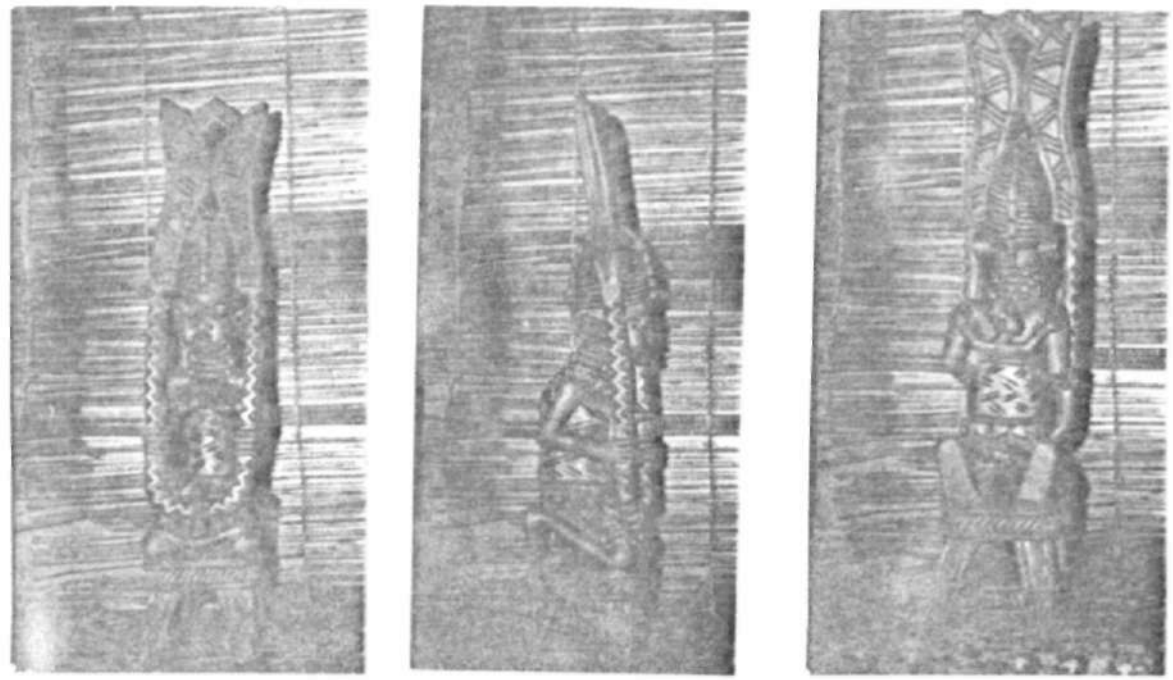


PLATE 6: Title: "Mother with Child on Back" by Ayodele Bankole, Medium Wood (Apa), Size: 37 Centimetre.

4.1.5 Oshun Worshipper

Title: "Oshun Worshipper" by Ayodele Bankole, (October, 1989). Size: 26½ centimetre. Media, Wood (Oroo). It is located in the workshop of the artist in Ibadan.

This carving made from a single piece of wood, depicts a kneeling woman, in frontal position, offering a cock for sacrifice. On the head of the figure, separated by a circular shaped object which protects the head as well as helps balance load, is carried an intricately decorated water pot. The head size is larger in proportion to the body. The delicate hair style is rendered with intricate patterns. The eyes are bulbous and no pupil is represented. The mouth and long narrow nose are simplified; long slender tubed shaped earings hang from the lobes of triangular shaped ears. Around a slender neck are several rows of grooved beads that end in a decorated triangular shaped medalian positioned between an exposed bosom. Enclosed in one hand of the figure is a cock while the other hand holds a decorated container filled with kola-nut. Around the waist, below a portruding navel, just above a highly decorated waist cloth, are rows of beads similar to the once around the neck. The well balanced figure kneels

upon a base which the artist has treated with detailed pattern work.

Although, this carving is inspired by tradition, its function is purely decorative. The carving like all Neo-traditional art has been made to be sold as art objects. Though the influence from the past is evident. Bankole's creation is different from art works produced in the past. The carving is made with great care and attention to detail. Through the use of modern tools, the artist has consciously and successfully enriched the entire surface of the elegant art form. With detailed designs. Bankole is more concerned with how his work will satisfy aesthetically.

4.1.6 Man on Horse Back

Title: "Man on Horse Back" by Ayodele Bankole, (December, 1989). Size: 28 centimetre, Media, Wood (Oroo). Presently in the collection of Dominica U. Gwam (Mrs.) Cleveland, Ohio, United States of America.

The carving on view depicts a horse-rider in frontal position. The eye are large and they appear to be staring, while the long slender nose and lips are simplified. A full beard is also represented. Upon a slender elongated neck are four rows of grooved beads

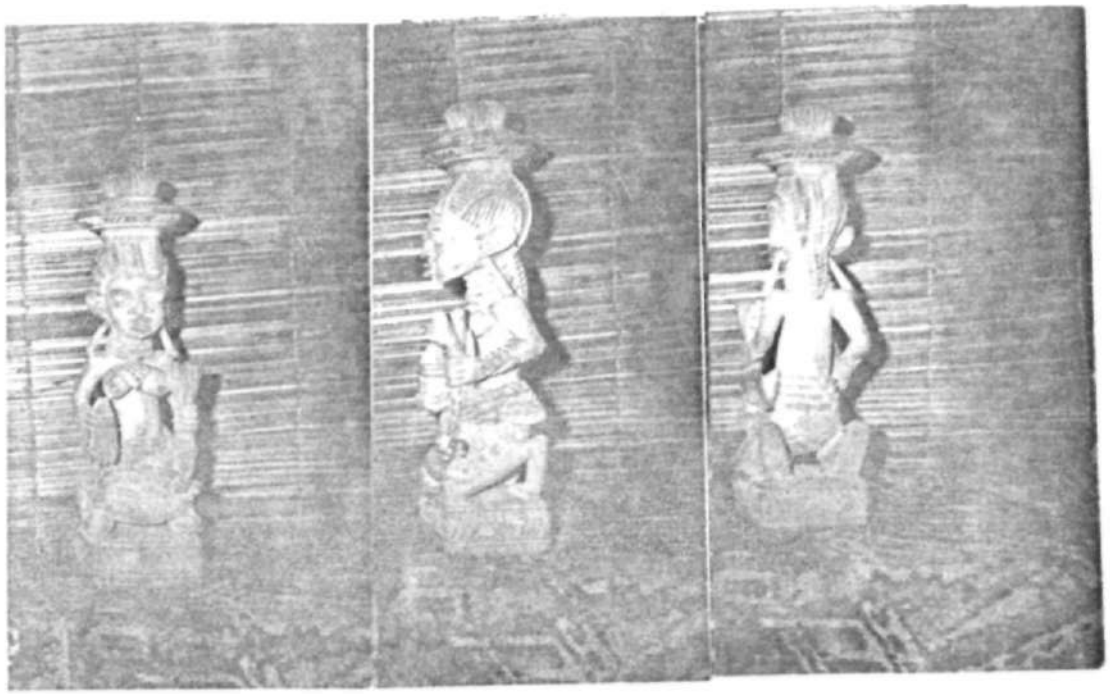


PLATE 7: "Osun Worshipper" by Ayodele Bankole, Medium Wood (Opoo)
Size: 26 Centimetre

from which a pendant that rests on the back of the rider hangs. The figure is dressed in traditional attire which consist of a short sleeve shirt and ankle length trousers. The artist makes use of highly decorative designs and patterns to depict a hat on the enlarged head of the rider. The hat is divided into four parts. At its sides are decorated masks while the front and back are designed with over-lapping structures with an open space formed at the centre.

Decorative design are also apparent on the band around the horses head and the reign which are held in the hands of the rider. Both rider and horse are posed on a decorated base.

Man on horse-back is a theme that has been practiced by wood carvers since traditional times. Bankole's art form is aesthetic in function. It is produced as an art object for sale to tourist and elite Nigerians who use the art for decorative purposes, hence, the artist's great attention to aesthetics. Modern tools contribute considerably towards intricate surface finishing and the aesthetic quality of the work.

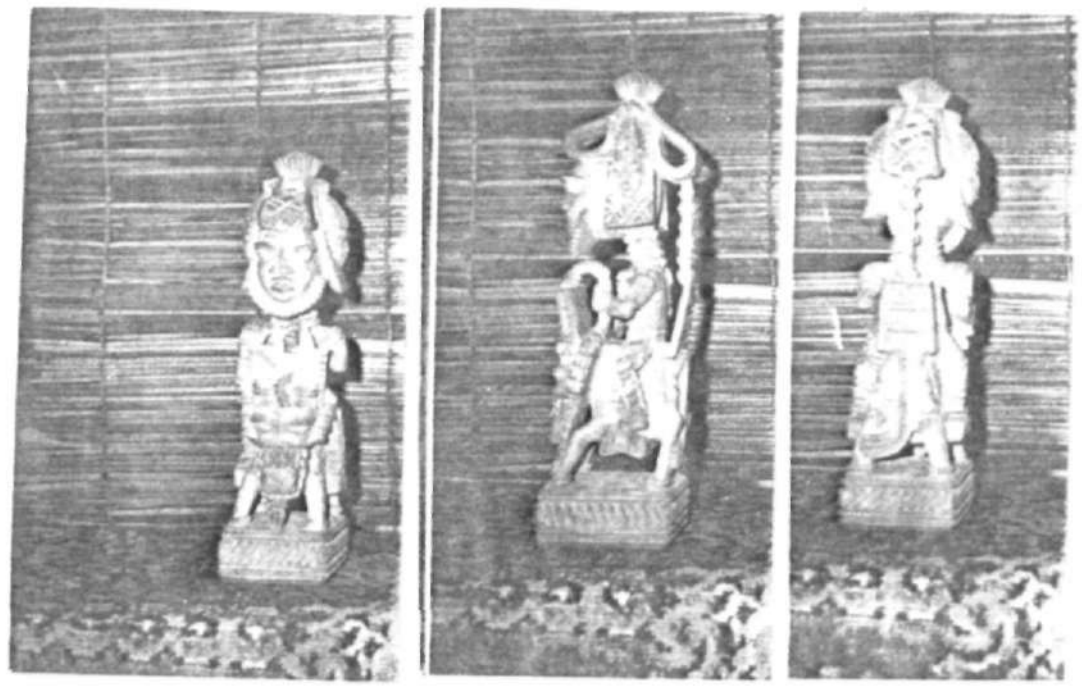


PLATE 8: "Man on Horse-Back" by Ayodele Bankole, Medium Wood (Oroo)
Size: 28 Centimetre.

4.1.7 Olumeye

Title: "Olumeye" by Emmanuel O. Odekunle, (June, 1989). Size: 33½ centimetre, Media: Wood (Apa). Presently in the artist's workshop in Oyo town.

This carving depicts a kneeling girl presenting a cock in which gifts are kept. The hair style of the figure is treated with detailed pattern work. The head is larger in proportion to the rest of the body and the eyes are large. The nose and wide lips are simplified, while from the lobes of triangular shaped ears hang earings that extend to the shoulders. Four rows of beads adorn the neck of the figure while the fifth row lie of portruding breasts. Decorative beads are depicted on the arms as well. The abdominal area like the breast is also exposed and tied around the waist is a decorated waist cloth. The limbs of the figure are simplified. Enclosed in the hands is a large highly embelished cock which faces the side.

4.1.8 Palm Wine Tapper

Title: "Palm Wine Tapper" by Emmanuel O. Odekunle, (May, 1989). Oyo town, Media: Wood (Apa). Size: 32 centimetre. It is located in the artist's collection.

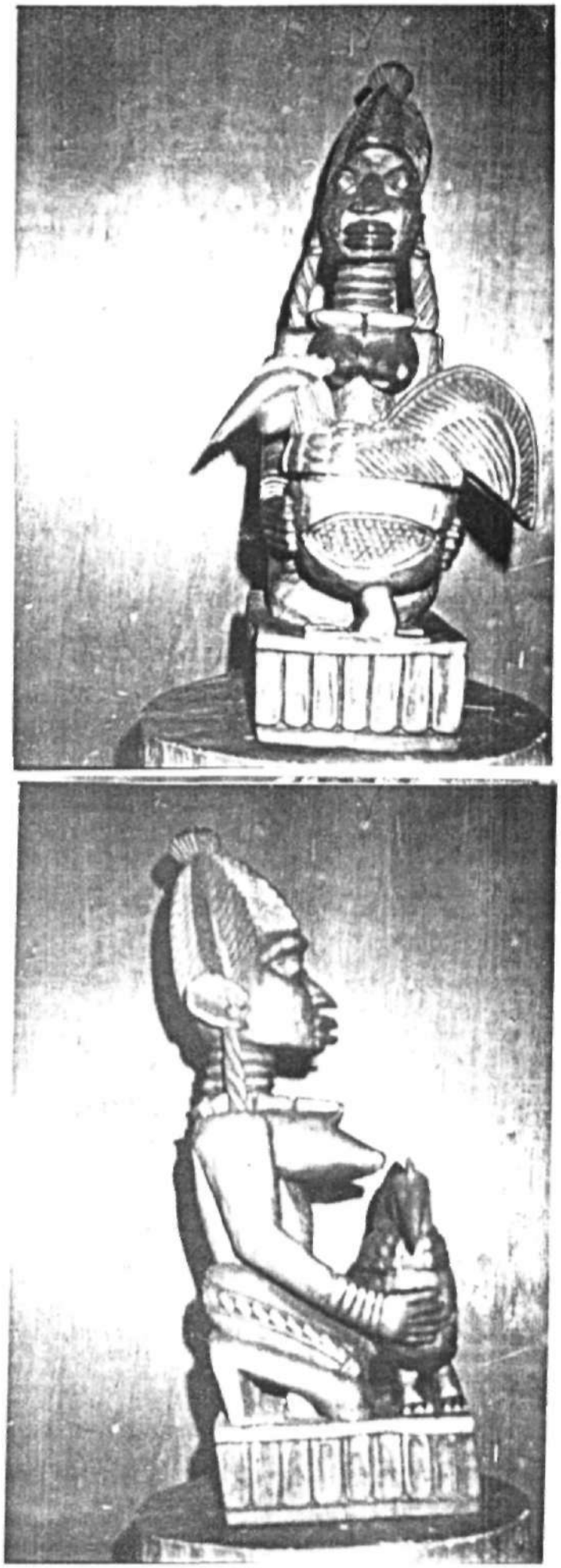


PLATE 9: "Olumeye" by Emmanuel O. Odekunle, Medium Wood (Apa)
Size: 33⅓ Centimetre.

The carving on view represents a palm wine tapper. Upon the figures enlarged head is a calabash in which palm wine is carried. Around the neck of the calabash is tied a rope which is held in an up lifted arm (in traditional carvings arms are held firmly at the sides of the body) of the tapper[7]. The eyes are enlarged and the nose, mouth and large ears have been simplified.

The figure is dressed in decorative attire which consists of a cap, long shirt and angle length trousers. Around the figures neck is a long rope from which two calabashes located at the chest and back regions hang. Around one shoulder is a rope that extends to the knees while on the other shoulder is a shorter rope from which a calabash is hanged. The figure stands erect on a well balanced decorated base. Plate 9 exhibits a traditionally inspired carving while Plate 10 is a theme derived from everyday contemporary life. Both carvings are decorative objects, which are admired for their aesthetic quality. The artist's consciousness of aesthetics as well as modern tools, contribute towards the fine execution and detailed pattern work exhibited on these art forms.

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7. This, I learnt during an interview with Emmanuel Odekunle (1990), Oyo town.

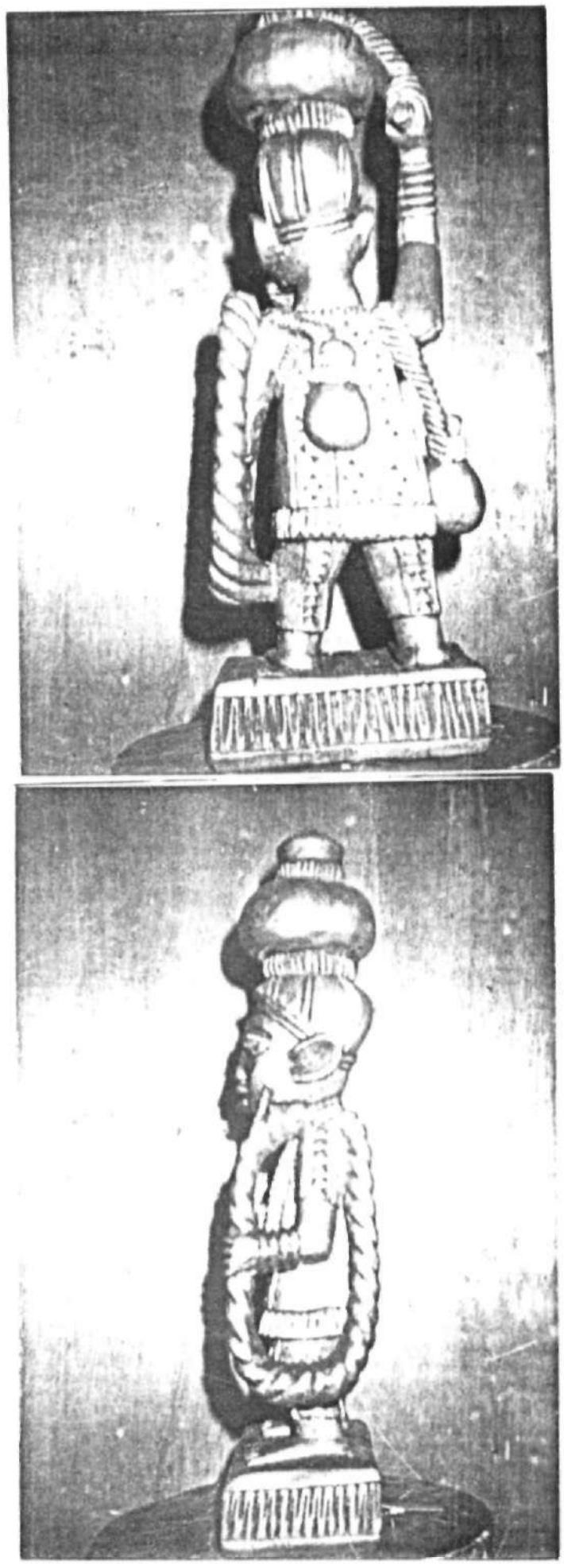


PLATE: 10: Title: "Palm Wine Tapper" by Emmanuel O. Odekunle, Medium Wood (Apa), Size: 32 Centimetre.

4.1.9 Woman Presenting Kolanut to a Herbalist

Title: "Woman Presenting Kolanut to a Herbalist" by Emmanuel Odekunle, (October, 1988). Size: 38 centimetre. Media: Wood (Oroo). It is presently located in the collection of Mrs. Mackie, Ize-Iyamu, Cleveland, Ohio, United States of America.

The carving represents a woman in profile with a child on her back presenting gifts in an ornamented box to a healer who is depicted in frontal pose. The healer holds in one hand what appears to be a decorated staff, while in the other is a medicine gourd which depicts the healer's profession. The staff is as long as the figures are tall and serves not only to separate the woman and child from the healer but also to divide the scene into two. Both figures are clothed in highly embellished attire which consists of a long sleeved shirt, sash and trousers in the case of the male and a shirt, waist cloth and decorative beads on the arms of the female. The composition as depicted within a decorated circle which is enclosed within a triangle that is also embellished with detailed pattern work.

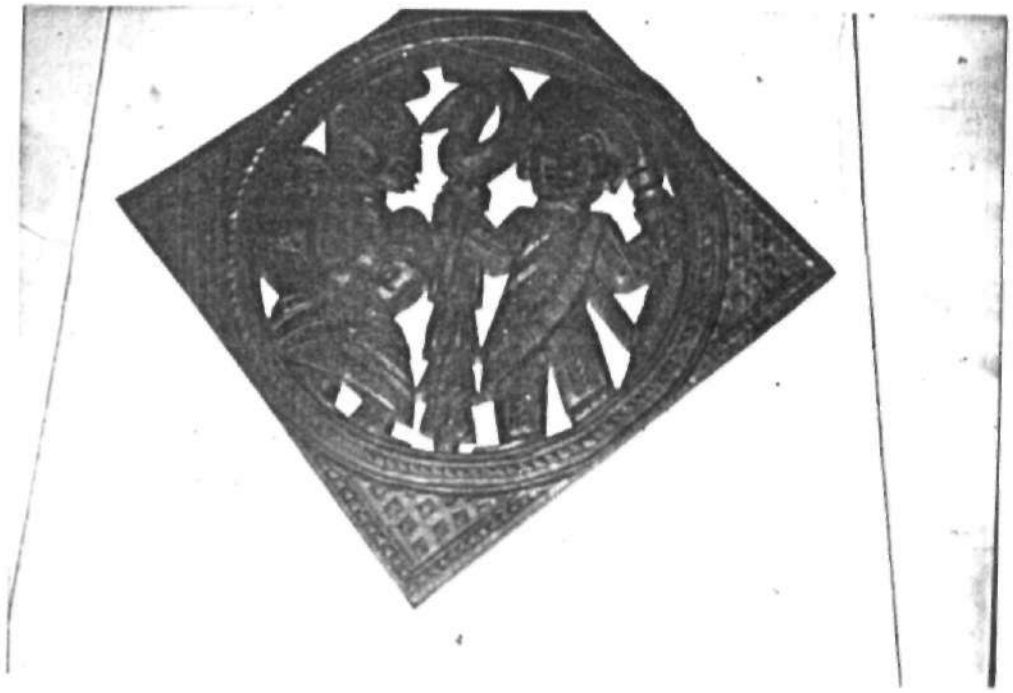


PLATE 11: Title: "Woman Presenting Kolanut to a Herbalist" by Emmanuel O. Odekunle, Medium Wood (Oroo), Size 38 Centimetre.

4.1.10 Warrior on Horse Back Followed by Flutist

Title: "Warrior on Horse Back Followed by Flutist" by Emmanuel Odekunle (November, 1989). Size: 29 centimetre. Media: Wood (Apa). It is located in the artists collection.

The carving depicts a warrior on horse-back who is followed by a flutist. The warrior who is in profile is depicted with an elaborate hair style. His attire which consists of a high neck collar, a long sleeved shirt and ankle length trousers, rides majestically on a horse. Two long swords adorn the body of the warrior, while in an upraised hand a dane gun is carried. The flutist behind faces in the opposite direction of the warrior. The flutist like the figure before him is also in traditional dress consisting of an intricately designed knee-length shirt, which is tied at the waist with a decorative belt and trousers. In one hand is grasps the horses tail, while the other holds the flute from which the figure blows.

The scene is depicted within a decorated circular frame within which are two highly embellished horizontal lines, one situated directly above the head of the warrior while the other forms a base upon which the horse and flutist stand.

4.1.11 Farmers at Work

Title: "Farmers at Work" by Emmanuel O. Odekunle (December, 1989). Size: 24 centimetre, Media: Wood (Apa) presently in the collection of Dorothy U. Oluonye, Benin City, Bendel State, Nigeria.

This relief carving represents a man and a woman harvesting fruits. Both figures are in profile. They are dressed in decorated attire. The male in shirt and trousers and the female in a wrapper that is tied around her chest. On the enlarged head of the woman is carried a decorated box into which fruits are packed while the head of the male also enlarged is adorned a cap. The eye of both figures are large while nose, ears and lips are simplified. The scene is enclosed within a square frame that is decorated with geometric patterns.

Plates 12 and 13 are illustrations of art works that are inspired by traditional as well as contemporary life. They also represent some of the techniques employed by Odekunle in an attempt to create more variety in his work. The use of efficient modern tools coupled with a desire to create more aesthetical art forms has resulted in the artists careful planning and execution of his work as well as the use of more intricate design. These relief panels produced also differ from



PLATE 13: Title "Farmers at Work" by Emmanuel O Odekunle, Medium Wood (Apa), Size: 24 Centimetre.



PLATE 14: Title: "Mother Surrounded by Children" by Akin Fakeye, Medium Wood (Apa), Size 30 Centimetre

traditional reliefs because the panels are pierced through. One can see through the place so that the wall forms the lowest background layer of the relief.

4.1.12 Mother Surrounded by Children

Title: "Mother Surrounded by Children", by Akin Fakeye (January, 1990). Size: 30 centimetre, Media: Wood (Apa). Presently located in the studio of the artist.

This carving depicts a seated mother surrounded by four children. Two at her side and one at her front and back. The mother carries a large decorated basin on her head which is proportionately larger when compared to the rest of her body. The hair style is treated with intricate, patterns. The eyes of the figure are extremely bulbous with no indication of pupil and they appear to be staring straight ahead. The long slender nose flares at the bottom while the closed lips are simplified. From large ears hang earrings that extend to the shoulders. The serene face of the figure is ageless and lacks emotion. Around the neck is a single row of ornamented beads which lie on uncovered breasts. Supported in the hands and on the knees of the mother is a baby who with one hand holds



onto the crossed leg of the mother while the other rests upon the breast. Tied around the mother's back in a highly embellished waist cloth is another child that looks to the side. A kneeling child, carring a bowl also with a head turned to the side is present at the side of the mother. Located at the other side of the mother in frontal pose is another standing child who holds the feet of the baby on the mother's lap. All the figures are well balanced on a decorated circular base.

Differences between this carving and traditional art forms may be observed in Fakeye's use of fine detailed pattern work in the execution of this purely decorative work. A lot of care has been placed on accuracy and finishing which contributes towards creating a high standard which adds to the aesthetic quality of the art. The artist introduction of the crossing of the mothers' leg not only lends more flexibility to the carving but also helps to diemphasis complete rigidity in the work. The turning of the heads of the children at the side and back of the mother helps to defeat complete frontality in the works.



4.1.13 Carved Box

Title: "Carved Box" by Akin Fakeye (September, 1989). Size: 46 centimetre, Media: Wood (Apa). It is located in the artist's workshop.

The carving is of a box, decorated with relief scenes on each of its sides. It is used not only for decorative purposes, but also for the storage of personal effects.

4.1.14 Kneeling Man with Beard

Title: "Kneeling Man with Beard" by Oke Ogundepo (October, 1988). Size: 33 centimetre, Media: Wood (Oroo). It is in the collection of the artist.

This carving is of a kneeling man holding a beard with both hands.

The figure is depicted with an enlarged bald head, bulbous staring eyes, a broad nose and thin lips. Scarification marks on the face are also depicted. Held in both hands of the figure is a beard which begins directly beneath simplified ears and ends at the abdominal area. The figure kneels upon a decorated stool that is closed at the base. Within the space created is a ball.

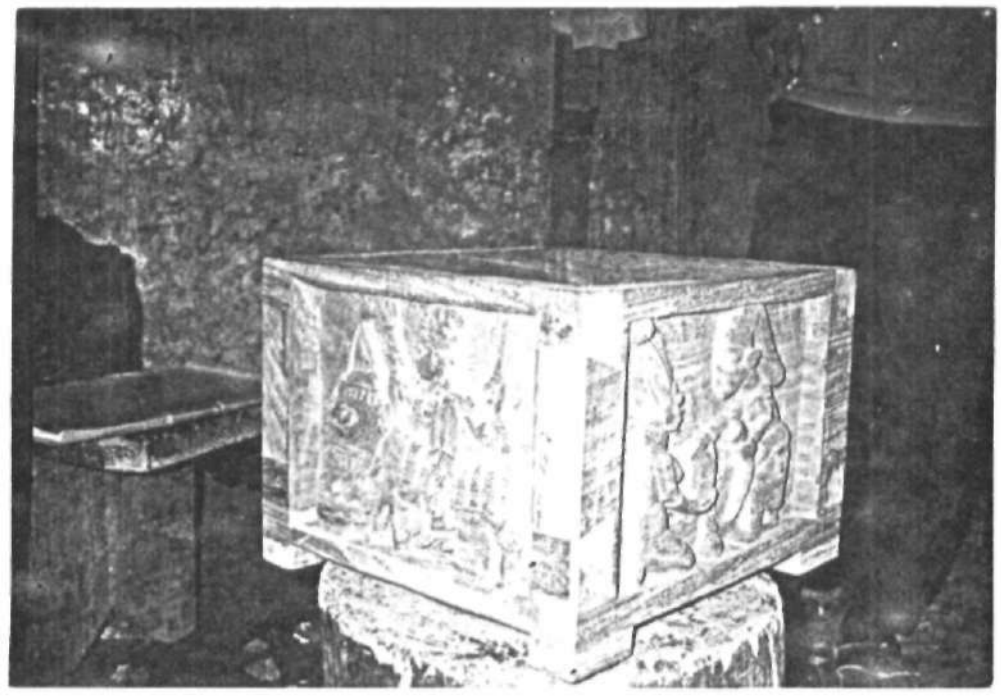
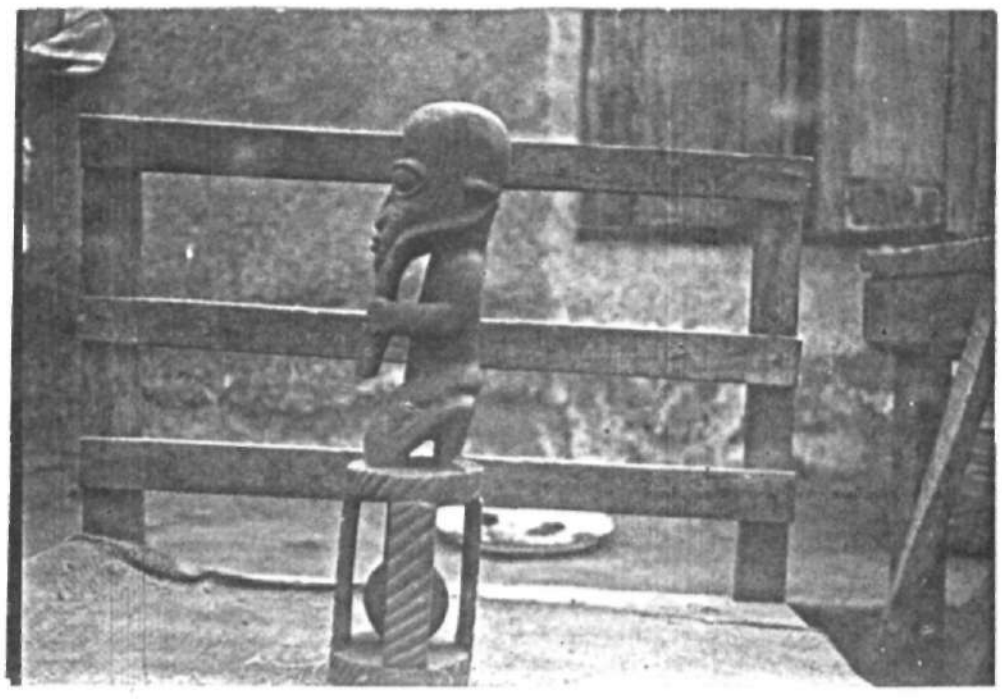


PLATE 15: Title: "Carved Box" by Akin Fakeye, Medium Wood (Apa), Size: 46 Centimetre.



PLATE 16: Title: "Kneeling Man with Beard" by Oke Ogundepo, Medium Wood (Oroo), Size: 33 Centimetre.



The artist's consciousness of his art form as an art object rather than one created for religious purposes is reflected in this carving which serves not only as an aesthetic object but also as a toy.

4.1.15 Ball Players

Title: "Ball Players" by Oke Ogundepo (August, 1989). Size: 24½ centimetre. Media: Wood (Apa). It is presently located in the artist's studio.

This carving illustrates two children in profile playing ball. They are dressed in contemporary attire which consist of tee-shirts, knickers, socks and canvas shoes.

The heads of the figures are slightly enlarged while limbs especially the arms are very much simplified. Both figures as well as the ball are positioned on a base.

This carving inspired by contemporary life is purely decorative in function. It was commissioned by a primary school in Oyo town for the adornment of its gates. This is a move away from the traditional practice.

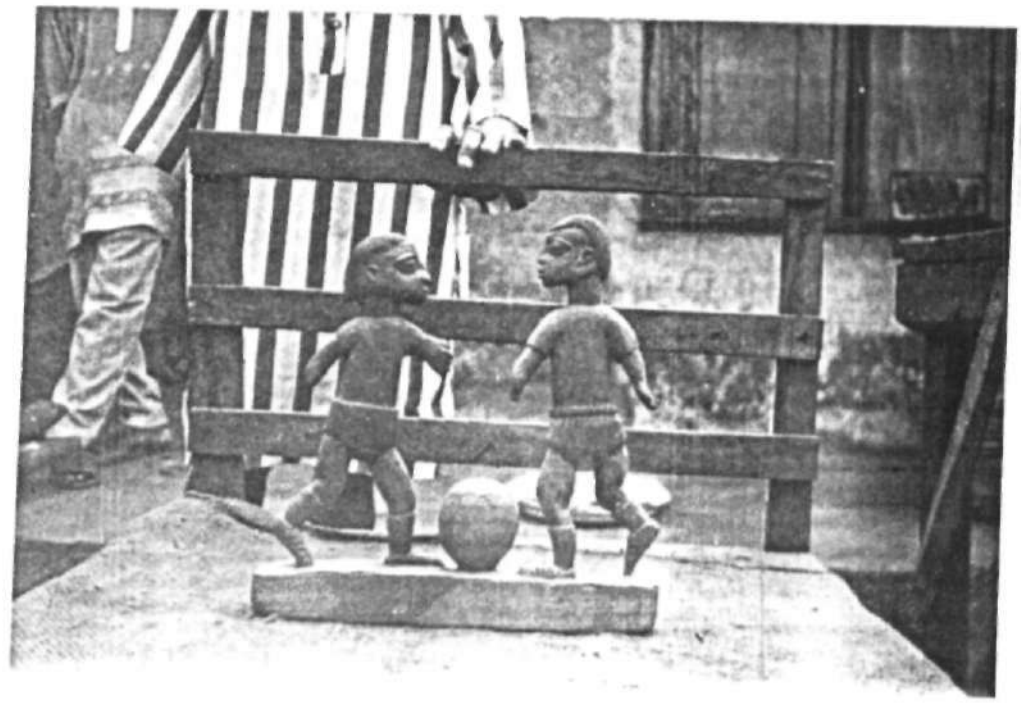


PLATE 17: Title: "Ball Players" by Oke Ogundepo, Medium Wood, (Apa)
Size: 24½ Centimetre.

CHAPTER - FIVE

5.1 FINDINGS

Until the researcher visited the production site of Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carvers in Ibadan and Oyo towns, it could have been argued that the art form is basically a continuation of the traditional carving approach. Having interviewed the artists discussed in chapter four, the researcher found out the following:

The art forms usually have a composition of a wealth of symbols, patterns and motifs which are important and functional. Everything which could possibly be carved is embellished with a more or less intricate pattern, Lamidi Fakeye is one of the adherents of the Neo-traditional style who has produced so many sculptures in Nigeria and abroad. Lamidi Fakeye's "Mother and Child" as shown on Plate 18 emphasises the point. The artist makes use of highly decorative designs and motifs which contribute immensely to the appeal of the art. Lamidi Fakeye employs the use of the fine detailed pattern work in the treatment of the mother's beautiful high-crested hair style and cicatrization patterns on the face; detailed design on the garments and the objects enclosed in the hands of the figure are also apparent.

Decorative designs are used by the artist as well to embellish the base upon which the figure kneels. All designs offer handsome visual contrast to solid areas of wood where they are juxtaposed.

Yoruba wood carving is broadly cylindrical in form. The carvings are usually from logs of wood. This characteristic is derived from the carvers knowledge and understanding of the wood that he uses. Artists practicing in this manner carve every object from one piece of wood instead of making them up, from separate parts. A part of a figure is very seldomly joined, pegged, glued or nailed together.

Artists working in this style deliberately alter size and other characteristics of their figures for aesthetic and symbolic purposes. For example, a woman's breasts may be enlarged to emphasise the fact that she has had children or to indicate procreation. The use of social perspective is applied by the carvers when it comes to composition; portrayal of eminent figures as larger and taller than surbordinate or less important figures is a general characteristic of Neo-traditional art, as shown in Plate 19. The sculptor depicts a warrior on horse-back with captives.



PLATE 18: Title: "Mother and Child" by Lamidi Fakeye, Medium Wood Size: 46.4 Centimetre. African art, Vol. x1 No 2 1971.

The size or the figures have been varied to indicate their importance in power. The largest figure is the victorious warrior; the important prisoner is about one-third as tall, while the less significant captive is smaller still when compared with the prisoner. In practice, this is the social practice of the Yoruba to recognise age, wealth and status generally.

Frontal pose is usually characteristic of Neo-traditional art. However, some Neo-traditional carvers in Ibadan and Oyo towns attempt to diemphasize the fully frontal approach of the traditional wood carver. Bankole's "Woman Presenting Kolanut" as shown in Plate 3 emphasises this point. The head of the figure is turned to the side. Frontality could suggest an act of reference and respect, a befitting posture in which to receive a power force. One exception to this is the carving of Epa figures which sometimes are carved to be viewed from all sides.

Indigenous scenes which illustrate the life of the Yoruba people in detail are often depicted by artists producing in the act form. The types of carving that could be seen include people presented in their "traditional" dress and drummers in their attire that suit their profession. Female figures



PLATE 19: Title: "Warrior on Horse-Back with Captives" by Lamidi Fakeye, Medium Wood, Size: 19½ x 14¼ x 4½. HAIGHT, 1987.

are often depicted with children on the back or at the breast. Tools and anecdotes of village life are depicted and animals are also represented.

Rigidity of pose is usually characteristic of Neo-traditional art. The poses of figures tend to be rigid and straight. (However, some contemporary wood carvers struggle to defeat or diemphasize this rigidity). An example of this can be observed in Fakeye's "Mother Surrounded with Children" (see Plate 14). The Yoruba statuettes Ibeji figures stand upright and firmly on the ground. There are regional variations in the form of Ere Ibeji. The most typical form is that of a nude sexually mature adult figure standing on a small base with arms at the sides and touching the hips or thighs. However, the figures from South-Western and adjacent areas of Yoruba land are often baseless, with arms hanging free at their sides and wearing carved clothing of various types. Some of the images are depicted with carved armulets, while some wear brass anklets and waist beads made of palm nut and brass bracelets. The hair style of most of the figures are usually elaborate and treated with detailed pattern work.

Figures are represented with exaggerated features which lack muscle and bone structure. A number of features such as the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hand, naval, genitals and feet are represented in stylized conventional forms. The eyes for example are always exaggerated and bulbous and appear to be fully opened and at times there is no indication of the pupil. A series of parallel cuts may serve to represent toes, while the eyes are often represented as mere triangles. Male and female figures are depicted in terms of genitals as seen in Plate 20.

Another feature characteristic of Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carving is the non-representation of subjects as of any particular age, also variation of facial expression is not depicted. Fakeye,(1990) explained that in Yoruba tradition, the artist avoids carving anything that resembles a human being too closely, lest that person, seeing it, should die. The heads of figures are usually portrayed larger than the rest of the body. This manner of representation could be attributed to the importance of the head. Throughout Africa, the head generally

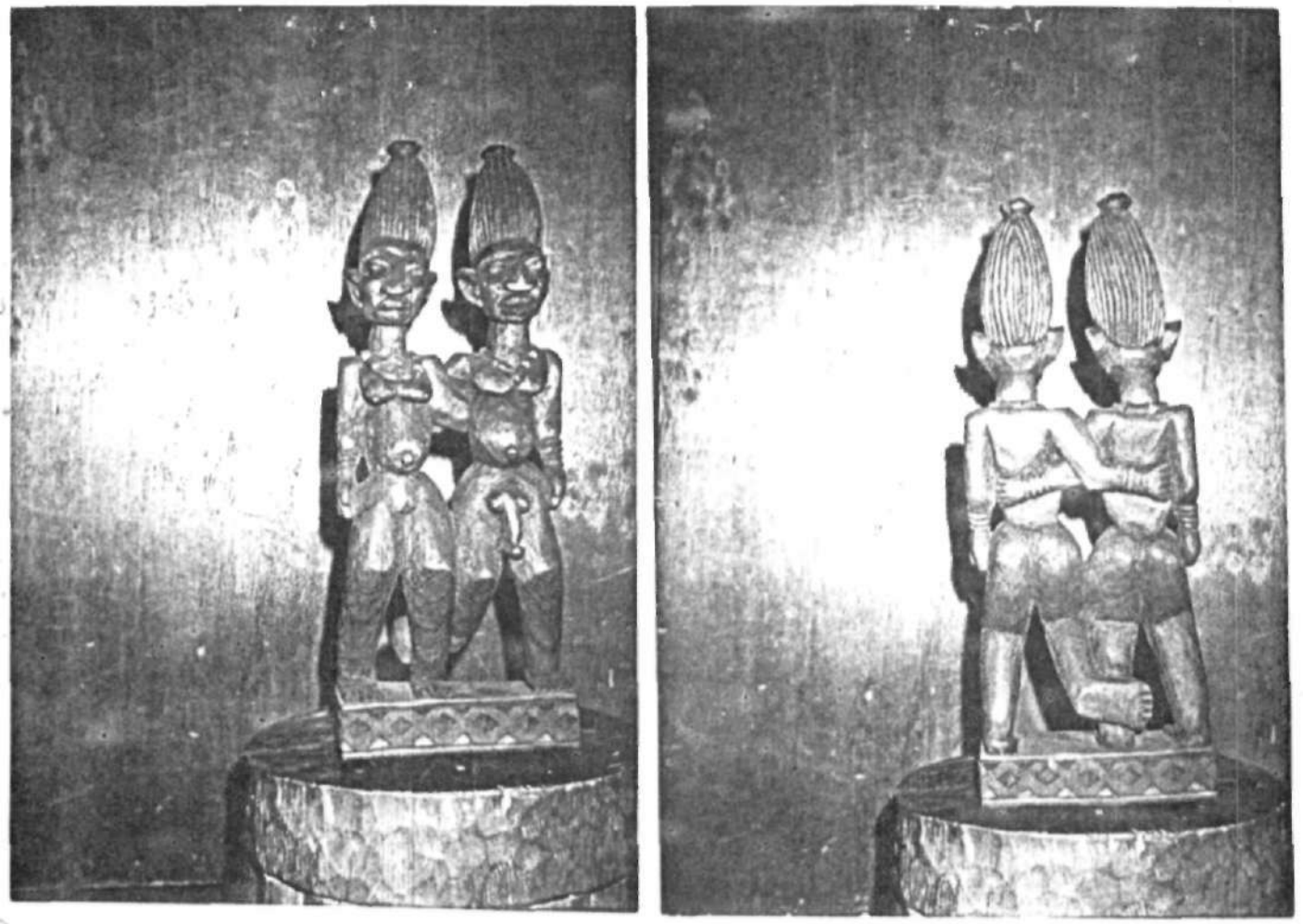
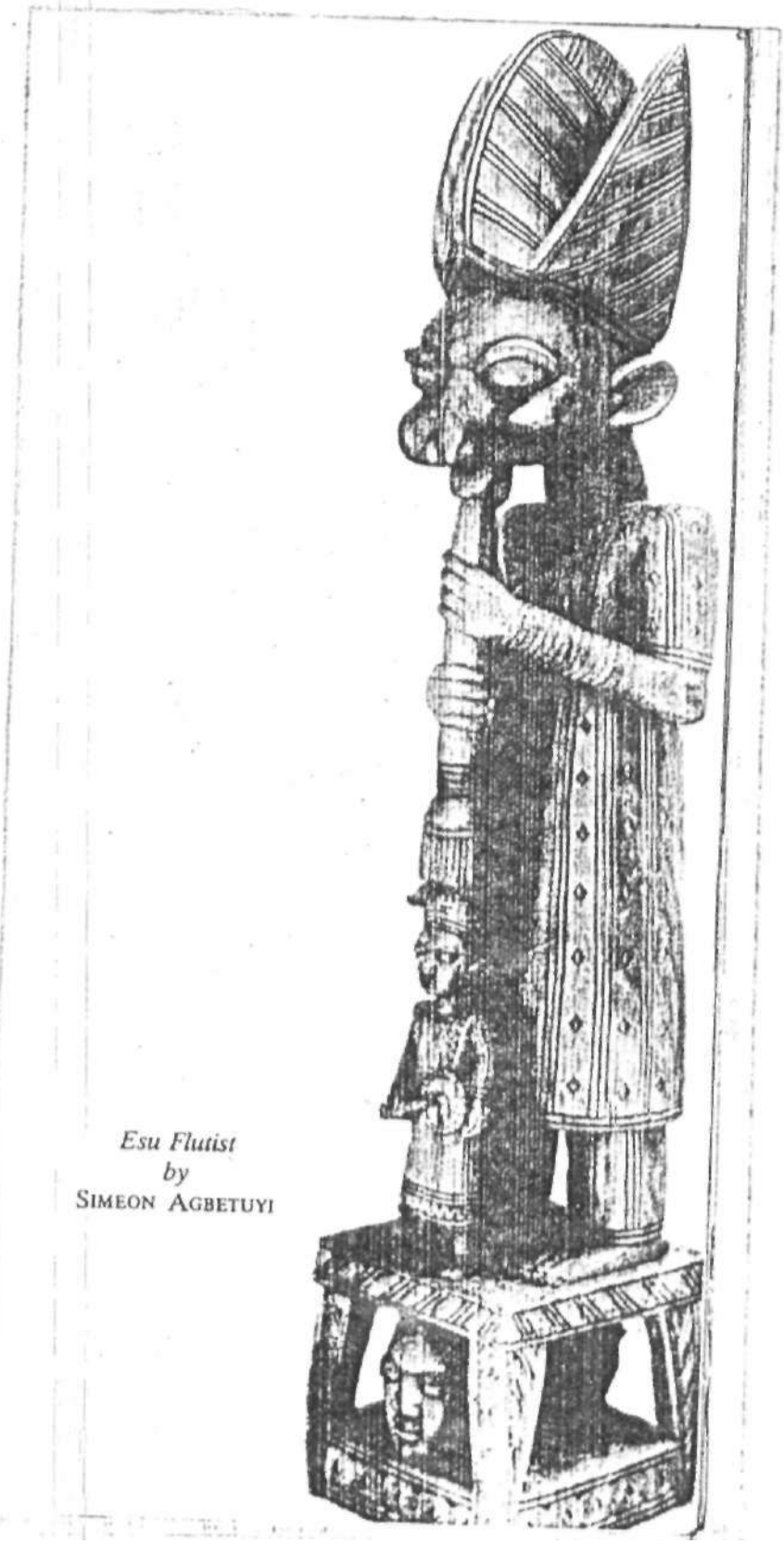


PLATE 20: Title: "Ibeji" by Emmanuel Odekunle, Medium Wood (Oroo) Size: 29 Centimetre.



Esu Flutist
by
SIMEON AGBETUYI

PLATE 21: Title: "Esu Flutist" by Simeon Agbetuyi, Medium Wood.

occupies an important position[8]. Due to its importance, in some areas, the head is not burdened by load, Gbaji (Gwari) people of Northern Nigeria do not carry load upon the head. When something happens, the Yoruba rubs his head with both hands thanking the creator, if he should survive disaster, he offers a sacrifice to his head; Olaosebikan (1982). The treatment of the body, face and limbs in such manner are ideals, which have been adhered to by the artists working in the Neo-traditional manner.

Simeon Agbetuyi's "Esu Flutist" as shown on Plate 21 emphasises the point about the head. The flutist stands upon a decorated box within which a head is enclosed. In front of the flute player, just below the decorated flute, enclosed within the hand of the flutists, stands a smaller figure that beats a drum. Both figure are portrayed in decorative head caps upon head that are proportionately larger than the body.

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8. According to Janheinz,(1961): "The head is the seat of knowledge... It is the seat of intelligence of will, the sign of the self"; Ojo,(1966) states that; "the head is the life force of the body"; in Beier's opinion, "The head, as the home of the spirit, is more important than the rest of the body; Fakeye, (1990) states that; communion with ones creator is done through the mind thus, the larger than-real-heads.

Legs, arms and torso are simplified. The fiture stands rigidly, the eyes, nose and mouths are stylized. The eyes appear large and bulbous. Both figures are dressed in contemporary Yoruba attire which consist of long shirts and ankle/trousers.

The sculptural forms of the Yoruba artists is characterized by three-dimensional treatment due to the fact that carvers treat the entire sculpture - front, back and sides with equal attention to detail.

5.2 FUNCTION

In traditional society, art had a definite role within society. It was functional as well as decorative and was produced for the purpose of religion. In contemporary society, art may not be produced for religious purposes as was the case in the past. Although, subject matter, media and the processes of wood carving are repeated, the art forms being produced do not fulfil religious purposes. Contemporary sculptures are mainly aesthetic. They tend to have a more decorative function.

5.3 NEW PATTERNS OF THINKING

The art forms produced by Neo-traditional carvers in Ibadan and Oyo towns usually are a product of the

artist,and represents a new pattern of thinking. Rather than being solely concerned with how his art could fulfil its religious role, the Neo-traditional artist is more concerned with how his art forms will satisfy modern man. As there is no code insisting on his conformity to group values. He is free to alter forms. Neo-traditional wood carvers in Ibadan and Oyo towns produce art objects which are admired for their physical and aesthetic qualities which offer room for experimentation and innovation of forms. Examples of this may be observed in Odekunle's decorated relief panels which are pierced, see Plate 11. Traditional relief panels are solid (they were often used as doors). More flexibility is introduced in Akin Fakeye's art forms, see Plate 14. The sculpture depicts a mother with children at her back, sides and front. Even though the figures are rigid in their poses, flexible movement is introduced by the crossing of one leg over the other by the mother. Traditional figure carvings are usually made with both feet firmly on the ground. Fakeye, like many contemporary carvers, utilises traditional forms to suit new purposes. Plate 15 depicts a box made for the storage of personal effect. It has been designed with Neo-traditional art forms. Ayodele Bankole

sometimes approximates more to real life in an attempt to save wood and to make his art forms more life-like[9].

5.4 TOOLS

The types of tools used by the carvers mentioned in this project ranges from locally made adzes and knives to imported gouges, knives, chisels and mallet. These tools are highly efficient and help to reduce difficulty, time and labour. They can be utilized more exactly and easily and allow for more intricate surface finish - thus, creating a higher standard.

5.5 WOOD

All of the carvers use seasoned hard wood which are obtained from the saw-mills unlike the traditional artist who acquired his wood locally from the bush.

5.6 PATRONS

In traditional society, the patrons of the sculptural forms of the carvers were traditional rulers and chiefs, the devotees of the traditional religion as well as individuals who used the sculptures for religious purposes. Today, the patrons of Neo-traditional Yoruba

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9. This I learnt in an informal interview with Bankole (1990): Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

wood carving are foreigners and elite Nigerians. Foreigners however, form the majority of the buyers. The art forms produced are acquired for their aesthetic and physical quality.

As Neo-traditional Yoruba wood carving encourages visual artists and records and documents, culture and tradition, it can be argued that the art form contributes immensely towards creating public awareness, National consciousness and pride in art as invaluable knowledge about our culture is being passed on by the carvers. It could be further argued that the art form helps to affirm the notion that culture is active and not watered down as some believe as well as document costumes worn in the past. As the art form is characterized by innovation and change, it offers the opportunity to see aesthetic trends and development in Nigerian art. Finally, creation of such art works provides a ready avenue for making Nigerian art available to the general public.

CHAPTER - SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSION

Neo-traditional wood carving in Ibadan and Oyo towns are usually characterised by a wealth of symbols and motifs which are important and functional. Everything carved is decorated with a more or less intricate design. The carvings are broadly cylindrical in form and are made from one piece of wood. Size and other characteristics of the figures are deliberately altered for aesthetic and symbolic purposes.

Frontality very often characterises Neo-traditional art works. However, attempts have been made by some carvers to abandon the fully frontal approach of the traditional carver. For instance, though Ayodele Bankole's figures are mainly frontal, it is not uncommon to find heads that turn to the side.

Indigenous scenes which depict the life of the Yoruba people in detail are illustrated. Some of such include people presenting in their "traditional"

attire, mothers caring for their children, farmers at work and hunters. Tools and anecdotes of village life are represented as well as animals.

Rigidity of pose also characterises Neo-traditional art. Some carvers however, struggle to diemphasize complete rigidity in their work. Akin Fakeye's "Mother Surrounded by Children" as shown in Plate 14 illustrates this point.

Portrayal of figures with exaggerated features which lack muscle and structure of the bone is also a common feature of Neo-traditional art. Features such as the eye, nose, mouth, hand and feet are represented in stylized conventional forms.

Age is not represented by the carvers neither is facial expression, males and females are differentiated by costumes, body structure and fatherly and motherly roles. The head size of figures is usually portrayed larger in proportion to the rest of the body. The treatment of the body, face and limbs in such manner are ideals which have been followed by Neo-traditional carvers in Ibadan and Oyo towns.

Neo-traditional art is not created for ritualistic purposes as was the case with traditional art forms rather, it is produced mainly for aesthetic and decorative purposes. Rather than being solely pre-occupied, with how his art could fulfil a religious function, the artist is more concerned with how his art works will satisfy contemporary man. As there is no code insisting on the artists conformity to group values, they are freer to alter forms. They produce works that are appreciated for their physical qualities which creates room for experimentation and in innovations of forms. Neo-traditional carvers are open to suggestions made by their patrons.

The introduction of modern tools which help to reduce difficulty, time and labour and enable the artists to express themselves further in the medium, allow for more delicate, intricate and precise designs and finishing which not only enhances the beauty of the art form but also contributes towards achieving a high standard.

The woods used by the carvers in Ibadan and Oyo towns are obtained from saw-mills rather than from the bush as was the case in traditional society, furthermore,

the patrons of Neo-traditional art forms consist mainly of foreigners and elite Nigerians.

As Neo-traditional art records and documents tradition and culture, it can thus, be argued that the art form contributes towards creating public awareness, National consciousness and pride in the art as invaluable knowledge about the Yoruba culture in being passed on. The art form also helps to assert the notion that culture is active. As Neo-traditional art is characterised by innovation and change, it offers the opportunity to see aesthetic trends and development in Nigerian art.

Finally, the art form provides a ready avenue for making Nigerian art available to the general public.

6.2 RECOMMENDATION

In view of the socio-cultural importance of Neo-traditional art, it is recommended that:

(a) The practice be continued amidst technological advancement that Nigerian contemporary art is undergoing.

(b) That further literary works be encouraged to promote the art form in contemporary Nigeria.

(c) That public exhibitions of the art form be well documented. Most exhibition catalogues contain a list of photographs, works and biographies of the artists with little written about the works on display. Catalogues for instance, should discuss form and content of the art work displayed as well. This will help the viewer have a better understanding and appreciation of the works.

(d) The practice will help in the promotion of tourism in Nigeria as many foreigners would like to see more of our indigineous art.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Ibeji — (Twins) These are groups of small wooden standing figures carved on the death of one or both of the pair of twins, failure to do this will incure the displeasure of the twin gods who may punish the parents by causing the remaining child to die. These carved figures are washed and fed caremoniously by the mothers of the dead twins or kept by the surviving twin if any for his life and then treasured in the family shrine - Olukoyo,(1965).

2. Sango — god of lightening and thunder. He is also known as 'Jakuta' - the stone thrower or the fighter with stone. Olukoyo,(1965).

3. Oya — This was the name of Sango's faithful and beloved wife. The river Niger is sacred to her and hence that river is called all over Yoruba land Oya after her name. As thunder and lightening are attributed to Sango so thunder and violent thunder storms, rendering trees and levelling high towers and houses are attributed to Oya to signify her displeasure (Johnson, 1969).

4. Obatala — The Yoruba creator god. (Beier, 1975).

5.	Esu	god of mischief is said to be demonical but diabolic. He is a tricky being who can, bring evil upon a house and sometimes invoked by the rangeful to bring harm upon their enemies. Esu is also used as protection chasing back approaching devils and for this reason, and the fact that he is a dangerous character, Esu is always placed outside, at the door, facing outward (Olukoya, 1965)
6.	Eleghara	Another name for Esu. African art UCLA, (1975).
7.	Olumeye	One who knows honour. Carroll, (1967).
8.	Oshun	Yoruba Orisa associated with the river of the same name; sometimes described as the wife of Sango. Her most important shrines are in Oshogbo (Beier, 1975).
9.	Ogun	god of iron. He is called Oshin Imole (The Chief of deities). Carvers and other professional workers believe Ogun as their god, since they work with iron tools (Bamidele, 1979).
10.	Iroko	(Chrolphora excelsa) when seasoned, this wood darkens to brown. It is durable, hard and resistant to ants. It is used for mortars, pestles and stools (Dalziel, 1955);

(Akin Fakeye,1990) suggests that it is also used for posts and big doors as well.

11. Orgo (also known as Olee): - (Danta Temperate wood) Hard wood with fine grains, easily warped. For posts, small panels and other decorative figures (Bamidele,1980).

12. Apa (Afzelia africana) This type of wood has been classified as an African Mahogany. It is often used for the purpose of building, for doors motars and bowls and smaller works like kneeling and standing figures, when this wood is seasoned, it turns dark brown. It is extremely strong, hard and tough (Dalziel,1955).

13. Omoo (cordia millew) - (Aremu,1988) According to Ayodele Bankole,(1990) Omoo, due to it's width is also used for doors and wall panels.

14. Ire Funtumia Elastia - like box wood with fine texture, used for Ibeji figures and bowls (Bamidele,1978).

15. Season To mature, to temper, to bring into suitable condition to incure. (Kirkpatrick, 1983).

16. Epa Masquerade for ancestor, (Ludwin,1977). (Pot helmet masks used in cults to honour heroes and ancestors) - (Babalola, 1990).

APPENDIX - I

QUESTIONS DURING INTERVIEW

1. What is your family background?
2. Is anyone in your family an artist?
3. What inspired you to become an artist?
4. How did you learn your trade?
5. Who was your master?
6. What length of time did you spend as an apprentice?
7. Was there any particular artist or artists that inspired your profession directly or indirectly?
8. Is there any relationship between their work and yours?
9. Are you engaged in any other sort of profession apart from your art work?
10. Is your market large or small?
11. Is the finance enough to sustain you and your family?
12. What themes do you use in the creation of your forms?
13. What is the reason for the selection of these themes?
14. How do you derive your themes?
15. What types of wood do you use for your sculptural forms?
16. What is the reason for your selection of wood?
17. How do you acquire the wood required for your work?

18. Is anything done to the wood before work is commenced?
19. Is there a particular trend that you can identify in your work (how does your work look)?
20. Who are the patrons of your art work?
21. What do the patrons tell you they want to use your work for?
22. Are your art works modern creations or do you copy traditional works?
23. What are the functions of your wood carvings?
24. Do you feel your work is useful in society today and if so how?
25. What makes your art style different from traditional work?
26. Do you feel that you have involved a new art?

APPENDIX - II

THE DIALOGUE

The researcher interviewed four artists producing in the Neo-traditional Yoruba visual expression. These artists all work within the scope of this project.

Interview with Akin Fakeye Conducted at his residence at Baruka Road, Ibadan Town (3rd January, 1990)

1. Ajayi: What is your family background?

   Fakeye: I am one out of several children of Fakeye and I come from Ile-Orangun, Oyo State. I am a wood carver by profession. I attended primary school after which I was taught the art of wood carving.

2. Ajayi: Is any one in your family an artist?

   Fakeye: Yes! My Grand-father and my Father and several of my uncles and brothers are wood carvers.

3. Ajayi: What inspired you to become an artist?

   Fakeye: I have admired good carvings since I was a boy, carving was not something that was forced upon me. I have genuinely been interested in the work.

4. Ajayi: How did you learn your trade?

Fakeye: I learnt my trade from my Father who was taught by his father. I later served in an apprenticeship system.

5. Ajayi: Who was your master?

Fakeye: Lamidi Fakeye.

6. Ajayi: What length of time did you spend as an apprentice?

Fakeye: Nine Years.

7. Ajayi: Was there any particular artist or artists that inspired your profession directly or indirectly?

Fakeye: Yes, I was greatly inspired by Gani and Lamidi Fakeye. It was through them that I developed my carving style.

8. Ajayi: Is there any relationship between their works and yours?

Fakeye: Lamidi Fakeye was my teacher, I was influenced by both him and Gani Fakeye. If our works are compared, some may not be able to distinguish between them, but an experienced eye would recognise the difference. I have developed my own style although the influenced of Lamidi

and Gani Fakeye is there guiding me. I appreciate their work and someday, hope to attain their standard.

9. Ajayi: Are you engaged in any other profession besides your art work?

Fakeye: No; I work full-time as a carver.

10. Ajayi: Is your market large or small?

Fakeye: It is average.

11. Ajayi: Is the finance enough to sustain you and your family?

Fakeye: Yes, I have been able to build a house at my home town from my savings.

12. Ajayi: What themes do you use in the creation of your work?

Fakeye: I carve traditional themes some of which include door panels with relief scenes, free standing three dimensional pieces, like; Sango, Osun, Obatala, Egu and Traditional Doctors to mention a few. Others scenes reflect religion whether Christian, Moslem or African Tradition, while others depict everyday contemporary life.

17. Ajayi: How do you acquire the wood needed for your work?

Fakeye: The wood is acquired from the saw-mill.

18. Ajayi: Is anything done to the wood before work is commenced?

Fakeye: When the wood is collected from the saw-mill, it is taken to the carpenters workshop for smoothening (that is if it's a door) otherwise the wood is carried to the workshop where it is cut with our tools. After completion of a carving, the wood is further smoothened with sand-paper, then polished with lin-seed oil and petrol.

19. Ajayi: Is there a particular trend that you can identify in your work (how do your works look)?

Fakeye: My carvings are make with great care and with much detailed pattern work. They are well balanced and made to last. All of my works are signed for the purpose of identification. My figures are carved with emphases on the eye which are represented bulbous and hair styles of females are usually elaborate. The head size is larger

when compared to the entire body, the nose is long and narrow and flares out towards the botoom. Scarification marks can be found on the faces of some of my figures. The ears are simple and triangular in shape. Although, action is represented in my figures they appears stiff in their poses. The faces of both men and women are similar, such faces do not show any emotions, in fact the only way male and female can be differenciated is through their bodies and the clothing that they wear. All of my sculptural forms are carved from a single piece of wood, and all side of the wood are treated in the same manner with equal attention to detail.

20. Ajayi: Who are the patrons of your art work?

Fakeye: The patrons of my art work are mainly foreigners and a few Nigerians.

21. Ajayi: What do they tell you they want to use them for?

Fakeye: They like them and use them for decoration, This is what they tell me.

22. Ajayi: Are your art works modern creations or do you copy traditional works?

Fakeye: My sculptural forms are modern creations. I do not copy traditional works at all.

23. Ajayi: What are the functions of your carvings?

Fakeye: Practicing and producing as a wood carver, helps in the maintanance of my families occupation. My studio also provides job opportunities and learning experience for apprentices.

24. Ajayi: Do you feel your work is useful in society today and if so, how?

Fakeye: Yes, I do. My art forms reflect the traditional as well as contemporary life of my people therefore, they help to record many aspects of typical Yoruba culture. My work is educative in the scene that those who have no knowledge about the deities and ancestors now have the opportunity to see what such looked like when viewing some of the sculptures. Also, many of our works are being taken overseas which means more foreigners are being exposed to our art

style; they see more of the good works of Nigerian artists. Furthermore, our works can not easily be imitated by foreigners, they are unique and a source of pride to Nigeria. Even, the art style of Ghana and Togo for example are different from the art of Nigeria, even within Nigeria, the art produced by the various ethnic groups differs. One can safely say that contemporary Yoruba wood carving contribute towards creating more variety in art styles in Nigeria. Finally, the creation of this type of art is important because it provides training and job opportunities for many wood carvers. It also provides an income and a sense of fulfilment for I am happy practicing my trade.

25. Ajayi: What makes your art style different from traditional works?

Fakeye: The influence from the past is there, it really cannot be avoided. Although, I still carve traditional themes, these is a noteable difference in my work when compared to works of old. Due to more efficient tools which reduces time and labour, there is an

improvement on the works. Works are more accurate and more refined than those of old; they are more identifiable and complete. I am very concerned with that which appeals to contemporary man and since my carvings are purchased mainly for the purpose of beautification, I give plenty of time and thought to my work, I take time to plan properly, I even welcome ideas and suggestions offered to me by my patrons I carve to satisfy my clients.

26. Ajayi: Do you feel that you have evolved a new art?

Fakeye: Yes, by infusing the old and the new, a new art is created which is different from the art forms produced in the past.

Interview with Bankole Ayodele - Conducted at his Studio at Central Market Road at Ibadan Town (3rd January, 1990)

1. Ajayi What is your family background?
   Ayodele I am the third born of seven children, I come from Oyo State, and I am a wood carver by profession.

2. Ajayi Is any member of your family an artist?
   Ayodele No!

3. Ajayi What inspired you to become an artist?
   Ayodele Carving has always been of interest to me. I have great pride in my culture, and many aspects of my culture can be seen in wood carving. Continuation of this form of art means a continuation of my culture.

4. Ajayi How did you learn your trade?
   Ayodele I served in an apprenticeship system.

5. Ajayi Who was your master?
   Ayodele Akin Fakeye.

6. Ajayi What length of time did you spend as an apprentice?

Ayodele I spent four years. After my "freedom" (graduation) I remained with Akin Fakeye for another five years.

7. Ajayi Was there any particular artist of artists that inspired your profession directly or indirectly?

Ayodele Yes! There were several. Akin Fakeye was one, so also were Gani and Lamidi Fakeye and Ola Taiwo.

8. Ajayi Is there any relationship between their works and yours?

Ayodele There may be a relationship between their works and mine as far as subject matter and technique is concerned. Although, it is true that I learnt the art of wood carving from them, I do not copy, my style is my own.

9. Ajayi Are you engaged in any other profession apart from wood carving?

Ayodele No! A am not.

10. Ajayi Is your market large or small?

Ayodele It is small.

11. Ajayi Is the finance enough to sustain you?

Ayodele Yes!

12. Ajayi What themes do you use in the creation of your art forms?

Ayodele My range of subject matter include mythological Yoruba gods which include Sango, Oya, Ogun, Esu and herbalists. Ibeji's are also depicted as well as everyday scene, such carvings include horse-riders, figures presenting gitts, mothers caring for children, hunters, cultural dancers, flutists, drum beaters and water carriers. I also carve whatever my patrons ask me to.

13. Ajayi What is the reason for the selection of these themes?

Ayodele I have choosen some of these themes because they are well known in the Yoruba culture, others because they are everyday scenes which appeal to me, while some are suggested to me by patrons.

14. Ajayi How do you derive your themes?

Ayodele I derive my themes, from the folklore and tales of my people, from my surroundings and from patrons who make their own suggestions.

15. Ajayi What types of wood do you use for your sculptural forms?

Ayodele I use Iroko, Omoo, Apa and Oroo.

16. Ajayi What is the reason for your selection of wood?

Ayodele These woods are choosen because they are hard and durable and cannot easily be destroyed by insects. These woods polish very well. Apa is used for figures while Omoo due to it's width is used for doors and wall panels.

17. Ajayi How do you acquire the wood required for your work?

Ayodele The wood is acquired from the saw mills.

18. Ajayi Is anything done to the wood before work is commenced?

Ayodele Yes! I ensure that the wood is well seasoned before I start work on it. When a carving is complete, I polish it with

linseed oil for two reasons; firstly the oil helps to bring out the lovely colour of the wood, secondly, it helps to prevent cracking.

19. Ajayi Is there a particular trend that you can identify in your works? How do they look?

Ayodele My carvings consists of figures that stand, sit and kneel. They are made with great care and are well decorated. Designs can be seen on garments, objects held in hands and very often on the bases upon which figures are posed. Many of my carvings have heads that are larger in proportion to the body. Figure of females are portrayed with detailed hair-dos, eyes are large while ears appear as simple triangles. Faces of male and female are treated the same and age is not shown. Clothing and body parts differenciate male from female. Figures, mainly face frontwards, heads turned to the sides can also be observed. Figures are depicted in action but such action appears still making the carving rigid in pose. All sides of the

carving are treated the same, such carving are make from one piece of wood.

20. Ajayi — Who are the patrons of your art work?

Ayodele — Nigerians buy occassionally, but the main purchases are made by Europeans.

21. Ajayi — What do the patrons tell you they want to use the art works for?

Ayodele — I do not ask what they wish to use my works for, but I suspect that they use them for decoration.

22. Ajayi — Are your art works modern creations or do you copy traditional works?

Ayodele — My works are modern creations, I do not copy, I understand the traditional manner of representation and use my knowledge of it to create new art forms.

23. Ajayi — What are the functions of your carvings?

Ayodele — My carvings are a source of income for me, they also help to preserve the culture as many of my themes reflect tradition.

24. Ajayi — Do you feel your work is useful in society today, and if so, how?

Ayodele — Yes! I feel my work is important. It helps people to remember their culture. If this work is continued, than the culture will not be forgotten. Sango, Oya, Obatala and Ogun are long dead, but their names linger on. If wooden representations are made of them, they are remembered. Furthermore, interested people have the opportunity to see what such gods looked like through the various sculptural forms made. One also has an idea of the types of clothing that were worn in the past. My sculptures are important also because they serve as teaching aids for apprentices. My work also provide good source of income.

25. Ajayi — What makes your art style different from traditional works?

Ayodele — I do not perform any traditional rites before I begin a work, I drink no local concoctions and make no sacrifices as was the case in the past. Although I follow the traditional manner of representation of my fore fathers, I have

more freedom to create my works in the manner that I choose. I have the freedom to bring in new ideas. I have also improved on what was done in the past detail wise, I use more precision in the treatment of my works, I am more accurate and I approximate more to real life, finally, I am inspired by traditional as well as contemporary ideas and I am open to modern suggestions from my patrons.

26. Ajayi — Do you feel that you have evolved a new art?

Ayodele — Yes! By joining the traditional and contemporary, a new art is created, new designs are made which are different from what was done in the past.

Interview with Ola E. Odekunle at Ibadan Road, Owode, Oyo Town (4th January, 1990)

1. Ajayi: What is your family background?

Odekunle: I am the son of a traditional wood carver and due to my father's constant encouragement I began to carve wood at an early age. After I completed my schooling, I joined Father Kevin Carrol's workshop and worked under Bamidele Areogun for three years. I later opened my own carving studio at Oyo, and here I have remained till today.

2. Ajayi: Is any one in your family an artist?

Odekunle: Yes! my Grandfather and father were wood carvers.

3. Ajayi: What inspired you to become an artist?

Odekunle: My father's encouragement and my appreciation of good carving.

4. Ajayi: How did you learn your trade?

Odekunle: I was sent to Ekiti and served as an apprentice under G. Bamidele Areogun.

5. Ajayi: Who was your master?

Odekunle: G. Bamidele Areogun.

6. Ajayi: What length of time did you spend as an apprentice?

Odekunle: Three Years.

7. Ajayi: Was there any particular artist or artists that inspired your profession directly or indirectly?

Odekunle: Yes, my grandfather and my father inspired my profession. Wood carving is the work of my family, my fathers carved very well and I appreciated what they did.

8. Ajayi: Is there any relationship between their work and yours?

Odekunle: I studied my father's works and learnt from him, I tried to imitate him, but over the years I developed my own style.

9. Ajayi: Are you engaged in any other sort of profession apart from your art work?

Odekunle: No! I am a full-time wood Carver.

10. Ajayi: Is your market large or small?

Odekunle: It is fairly large.

11. Ajayi: Is the finance enough to sustain you and your family?

Odekunle: Yes! we manage.

12. Ajayi: What themes do you use in the creation of your forms?

Odekunle: Many of the subjects of my sculptures are traditionally inspired. Some include free standing three dimensional pieces of Sango, Oya, Esu, Obatala and native doctors, others include subjects inspired by everyday life like farmers at work, coaco planters, game players and wine tappers to mention a few. I also carve decorated relief panels and doors consisting of a single scene, or standing relief panels which enables both sides to be seen by the viewer and door panels carved with several scenes on one side only. Many of the panels are pierced through so that the wall forms the lowest back ground.

13. Ajayi: What is the reason for the selection of these themes?

Odekunle: Some of these scenes are well known in Yoruba land and age old, while some of

the themes are common sights seen everyday.

14. Ajayi: How do you derive your themes?

Odekunle: I produce a series of themes and motifs which are inspired from tradition, some illustrations are inspired from the Bible, history books and folktales. Some pieces are inspired from everyday life while others are inspired by specifications from clients.

15. Ajayi: What types of wood do you use for your sculptural forms?

Odekunle: I make use of Gmm, Iroko, Apa and Oroo.

16. Ajayi: What is the reason for your selection of wood?

Odekunle: These woods are resistant to insects and do not split easily, Onoo and Apa are easy woods to work with; they are relatively inexpensive and available. Orno is most frequently used because it is the hardest of them all.

17. Ajayi: How do you acquire the wood required for your work?

Odekunle: The woods are acquired from the saw mills.

18. Ajayi: Is anything done to the wood before work is commenced?

Odekunle: After buying the wood it is allowed to season for about six months to a year. This is done to ensure that the finished work does not crack. While working the wood some quantity of engine oil is applied. This also helps to present cracking.

19. Ajayi: Is there a particular trend that you can identify in your work? (How does your work look?)

Odekunle: Our range of subject matter depicts aspects of everyday life or events which are of particular interest. The style and technique used on the wood works are largely traditional. The sculptural forms are usually enriched with geometic designs. The free standing figures are often carved fully or partially clothed, with heads that are usually larger when compared to the rest of the body. The figures are portrayed with large eyes, flat lips and

simplified ears. The female images are depicted with elaborate hair styles and very often the male figures wear head caps although this is not always the case. All our carvings are made from a one piece of wood, we treat all sides of the wood with equal attention. In a composition of several figures what we call social class or social perspective can be observed. Those figures of importance are depicted larger and bigger than those who are less important.

20. Ajayi: Who are the patrons of your art work?
Odekunle: Foreigners and Nigerian traders. The foreigners make the largest purchases.

21. Ajayi: What do the patrons tell you they want to use them for?
Odekunle: Some say they want to present them as gifts to friends and relatives, while others say they use them for decoration.

22. Ajayi: Are your art works modern creations or do you copy traditional works?

Odekunle: My carvings are not copies of traditional pieces. I have formed my own style, I use my knowledge of the past to create designs different form those of old.

23. Ajayi: What are the functions of your sculptural forms?

Odekunle: My sculptures serve as models from which apprentices can learn, when grouped together, they form a large collection from which buyers can select, they also serve as a means of trade, people buy them and I earn money.

24. Ajayi: Do you feel that your work is useful in society today and if so, how?

Odekunle: Yes! my work is significant in society today. It is important because others stand to benefit from my skill, I have a special knowledge that can be passed on. Not only does my work enhance training and job opportunities, it also helps keep the Yoruba culture alive as many scenes that are common and popular in the Yoruba culture are continually depicted. Also,

the work for which my family is known is being perpetuated. Sales from my work provides me with good income.

25. Ajayi: What makes your art style different from traditional works?

Odekunle: Well, there is an improvement on the work done today. Part of this is due to modern tools which reduces time and labour. More care is put into the work and there works are not crudly made but very refined; one only needs to visit the old palace at Oyo to see works made long ago to be able to appreciate the high standard at which many wood carvers work today, we are more concerned with aesthetics. And how to attract patronage.

26. Ajayi: Do you feel that you have evolved a new art?

Odekunle: Yes! I believed that a new art has been formed, the new art is a mixture of the old and the new.

Interview with Oke Ogundepo at Oyo Town, Oyo (January, 1990)

1. Ajayi: What is your family background?
   Ogundepo: I am a native of Oyo State and I am a wood carver.

2. Ajayi: is anyone in your family in artist?
   Ogundepo: Yes: my father and my Grandfather were wood carvers and several of my brothers are or were carvers as well.

3. Ajayi: What inspired you to become an artist?
   Ogundepo: My father encouraged me to carve, at an early age. Carving is a family occupation and every male that was capable was urged to carve.

4. Ajayi: How did you learn your trade?
   Ogundepo: I learnt from my father and my brothers.

5. Ajayi: Who was your master?
   Ogundepo: My father.

6. Ajayi: What length of time did you spend as an apprentice?
   Ogundepo: Eight years.

7. Ajayi: Was there any particular artist or artists that inspired your profession directly or indirectly?

Ogundepo: Yes! my Grandfather, my father and several of my brothers.

8. Ajayi: Is there any relationship between their work and yours?

Ogundepo: There are similarities between my work and theirs, there is bound to be, but still each of us has his own style; our works can be differentiated.

9. Ajayi: Are you engaged in any other sort of profession apart from your art work?

Ogundepo: Yes! I am also engaged in farming and the building of walls and latrines.

10. Ajayi: Is your market large or small?

Ogundepo: It is small.

11. Ajayi: Is the finance enough to sustain you?

Ogundepo: Not that is why I am engaged in other kinds of work.

12. Ajayi: What themes do you use in the creation of your forms?

Ogundepo: Some of my themes are inspired from tradition. Some of them include - the god of lightening and thunder - Sango, Oya, the devil - Esu - and Ogun to name a few - others come from my mind and from what my surroundings.

13. Ajayi: What is the reason for the selection of these themes?

Ogundepo: Some everyday scenes appeal to me while others are well known subjects from the Yoruba tradition.

14. Ajayi: How do you derive your themes?

Ogundepo: I derive my themes from a variety of sources - from tradition, from everyday life, dreams and newspapers.

15. Ajayi: What type of wood do you use for your sculptural forms?

Ogundepo: I use Ire, Iroko, Omoo and Apa.

16. Ajayi: What is the reason for your selection of wood?

Ogundepo: These woods are strong, resistant to insects and do not crack easily.

17. Ajayi: How do you acquire the wood needed for your work?

Ogundepo: The wood is collected from the sawmills.

18. Ajayi: Is anything done to the wood before work is commenced?

Ogundepo: We ensure that the wood is well seasoned before any carving is done. During the carving process, engine oil is applied to the wood which helps prevent cracking.

19. Ajayi: Is there a particular trend that you can identify in your works (How do they look?)

Ogundepo: My carving are pleasant to look at, they are strongly built, balanced, and well finished. My art forms consists of figures of men, woman and children that stand, sit, kneel, dance or play. These sculptural forms are depicted with heads that are proportionately larger in relation to the body than is naturalistic, bulbous eye, high crested beautiful hair styles, and simplified ears which are triangular in shape. The faces of male and female are similar, differenciation between the two

can be seen in body structure and cloths worn also, age is not usually represented. Even though movement is implied, the figures appear upright and rigid in the poses. All carvings are made from a single piece of wood.

20. Ajayi: Who are the patrons of your art work?

Ogundepo: Foreigners and Hausa traders.

21. Ajayi: What do the patrons tell you they want to use your art work for?

Ogundepo: I don't ask my customers why they buy my works, but I suspect that they are used for trading purposes and decoration.

22. Ajayi: Are your art works modern creations or do you copy traditional works?

Ogundepo: Although I draw on traditional Yoruba subjects and style in creating my carvings, my art forms are modern. I do not emulate traditional works.

23. Ajayi: What are the functions of your carving?

Ogundepo: My carving provide a source of income for me. They also help preserve the Yoruba culture.

24. Ajayi: Do you feel your work is useful in society today, and if so, how?

Ogundepo: Yes! I feel that my work is of use in todays' society, many of my carvings reflect various aspects of the Yoruba tradition, my carvings therefore, help to document the culture. My carvings also serve as a source of inspiration for people who wish to learn how to carve wood, some people are encouraged to learn the art of wood carving after viewing some of my sculptural forms.

25. Ajayi: What makes your art style different from traditional works?

Ogundepo: My art forms are more intricate and more refined. This is due to the use of modern tools, which enables me to work more efficiently. Furthermore, there is a lot of emphasis on aesthetics. I am concerned with how my work will appeal to modern man and I endeavour to satisfy my clients. In a bid to satisfy the patron, I very often welcome new

ideas which have been suggested to me by clients.

26. Ajayi: Do you feel that you have evolved a new art?

Ogundepo: Yes! Even though the technique and style have remained the same, my sculptural forms are new and different from traditional works.

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