

**The Neo -Traditional Woodcarvings of Ayanladun Ayandepo within the
Context of Archietypal Traditional Yoruba Woodcarvings.**

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Abstract

The Yoruba ethnic group is known for their age-long woodcarving prowess. The woodcarving tradition which mostly serves as the paraphernalia of their religion, has indeed become part of their cultural identity. The remarkable skill and ingenuity of woodcarving subject matters displayed by notable Yoruba master woodcarvers reflect distinctive regional styles and identifiable individual techniques. The artists carve traditional Yoruba religious and utilitarian objects such as *ose Sango*, *opon Ifa*, *ilu Ogboni*, *agere Ifa*, *ere egungun*, *gelede*, *epa*, *ilekun*, and others. However, recent post-colonialism and globalization developments have seen the traditional Yoruba woodcarvings evolve from their archetypal paradigm to include elements, forms, and philosophies of post-colonial modernism. This innovative development calls for the attention of scholars, as it has birthed a new genre of woodcarving. And because there are so many styles and themes in the new woodcarving genre dubbed Neo-traditional woodcarving, it is important to define what generally characterizes this art genre. The present paper addresses the creative innovations of Ayanladun Ayandepo, a Yoruba woodcarver, whose woodcarvings forms, themes, and philosophies are informed by postcolonial modernism. The paper employs a descriptive research design and makes use of formal and iconography theories in its interrogation of data. The paper puts forward

a comprehensive definition of Neo-traditional woodcarving. The research concludes that although Ayanladun Ayandepo is categorically a Neo-traditional woodcarver, his innovative extemporization is beyond the conventional Neo-traditional woodcarvers. He has expanded the frontiers of Yoruba art and has included extemporized forms that reflect the postmodern geography and time within which the artists live. Noteworthy in Ayandepo's woodcarvings is the use of symbols, linear patterns, and pure abstract forms adapted from numerous idiomatic formulations of Yoruba and Hausa ethnic groups' embroidery designs. These inclusions in Yoruba woodcarving artistic repertoire are a deliberate reflection of postcolonial enlightenment and establish the artist as an authentic Neo-traditional woodcarver.

Keywords: Traditional woodcarving, Neo-Traditional, Ayanladun Ayandepo, Yoruba Art, Innovative Extemporization.

Introduction

The Yoruba people who mostly inhabit Nigeria in West Africa are responsible for distinctive artistic traditions in Africa. Among their notable artistic practices are the metal cast of human and animal figures in brass, and bronze. They are also noted to be dexterous woodcarvers, terracotta makers, and stone carvers. Their artistic prowess extends to the production of world-standard pottery, leatherwork, cloth weaving, cloth dyeing, embroidery, blacksmithing, and woodcarving, to mention some. Of all the aforementioned, woodcarving is arguably the most practiced and popular among the people. The narratives of the Yoruba researchers such as Atanda, J. (1984), Johnson, S. (1921), Ajayi, J. and Akintoye, S. (1984), and Law, R. (1973) portray the Yoruba people as not of a single group but rather a collection of diverse people bound together by a common language, history, and culture within and outside Africa. However, history reveals the Yoruba as the most storied group in Africa. They are said to share a common language and culture for centuries but were probably never a single political unit. Given scholars' submissions, it has been established that the Yoruba ethnic group is a conglomerate of groups, with some variations both in custom and language yet linked by an overall belief in a common origin (Akiwowo, 2008, pp. 69-70). Yoruba oral history reveals Oduduwa as the progenitor of the Yoruba, while Ile-Ife is considered the earliest possible place of origin of the Yoruba. The Yoruba ancestral

homeland cuts across present-day southwest Nigeria including states such as Ekiti, Lagos, Osun, Ondo, Ogun, and Oyo (Akande, 2015 p. 2). They can also be found in a sizeable portion of Kwara and Kogi states and other West African countries.

The Yoruba woodcarving has been identified as a male-dominated, specialized profession, which its practitioners are referred to as *agbegilere* (woodcarver). However, the profession is known to be the major producer of the liturgical objects used in the traditional Yoruba religions. According to Adepegba and Abati (2017, pp. 343), the Yoruba woodcarving tradition has been dynamic and has embraced changes brought about by colonialism and globalization. Toward the end of the 21st century, Yoruba woodcarving was tagged with diverse nomenclatures, such as Neo-traditional Yoruba woodcarving and contemporary Yoruba woodcarving, due to the influence of modernization on the forms and functions of the art. The contemporary influences affected the hitherto established paradigm of traditional Yoruba woodcarvings.

The contemporary influences on woodcarving are brought about by post-colonialization, globalization, and the desire by artists to expand the frontiers of art all over the world; an influence of modernism. It, therefore, becomes necessary to examine and study the works of Neo-traditional Yoruba woodcarvers whose practice straddles the core-traditional and contemporary woodcarving, to identify the overlaps and disparities between the new and old woodcarving genre. The woodcarvings of Ayanladun Ayandepo, a dexterous and prolific Yoruba woodcarver, at Eruwa, Oyo State, Nigeria, are therefore apt as a case study for the present investigation.

Ayan, as Ayanladun Ayandepo is fondly called by his academic colleagues, started his elementary school at Otu around 1967, later, he obtained his National Diploma at the Polytechnic Ibadan (Adeseun Ogundoyin Campus), Eruwa, Nigeria between 1986-1988. Thereafter, he obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Fine Arts (Sculpture), from the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Nigeria, between 1993 and 1998. Between the years 2003 and 2010, he studied for and obtained his Master of Art degree in Visual Arts, from the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

The woodcarving skills of Ayanladun Ayandepo were developed during his days as a student of The Polytechnic, Ibadan. Even more germane to his development was his experience as a student under the tutelage of Professor Lamidi Fakeye, the renowned traditional Yoruba woodcarver chieftain, at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Under Professor Fakeye, Ayanladun learned several traditional woodcarving principles and practices. At the same time in the same institution, Ayanladun was exposed to the contemporary woodcarving and metal works of Prof. Agbo Folarin, another lecturer in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, who taught him. From the history of Ayanladun's training as an artist, it is plausible to surmise that Ayanladun's neo-traditional approach to woodcarving was a result of the different teachings he took from his traditional and contemporary art culture teachers at the University of Ife

Problem of the Study

Traditional Yoruba woodcarvers, in times past, acquired their carving skills through the apprenticeship method of training; a training method that requires the student to follow the master, by copying the carvings of the master from simple objects to complex ones, until such a student gains mastery. The development and evolution of Neo-traditional woodcarving are recent, their training and emergence are not paradigmatic. What we today term as Neo-traditional woodcarving emerged in different parts of Nigeria and at different times, with each section of the country having some sort of regional style. The style in each region appears to be an evolution of extant traditional woodcarving styles in such regions. Therefore, their existence is very much generally undefined and their practice is as numerous as the number of Neo-traditional artists. It is in essence an art in the processes of its total emergence. Therefore, there is a need to define what characterizes this art genre and to document its evolution and that of the artist practicing it, among whom Ayanladun Ayandepo is notable.

Added to the problem of this study is that scholars who have studied Yoruba woodcarvings have concentrated mostly on traditional woodcarvings and masters, leaving out the Neo-traditional practitioners of the art. They are copious writings about traditional woodcarvers such as Areogun, Bandele, Bamgboye, Baba Oloja of Isare, Fasiku of Alaaye of Ikerin, Olowe of Ise, Lamidi Fakeye, among others, whereas the Neo-traditional woodcarvers are given little attention.

Aims and Objective of the Study

The present research is aimed at studying the woodcarvings of Ayanladun Ayandepo, with particular attention to his styles, forms, and archetypal conformity and variance with and from traditional Yoruba woodcarvings. Besides, these, the specific objective of this article includes putting forward a pragmatic definition of Neo-traditional woodcarvings as it obtains within the context of the Yoruba postcolonial communities. The research will also document a brief biography of Ayanladun Ayandepo, to position him as a postcolonial Yoruba woodcarver. In addition, select woodcarvings of Ayanladun Ayandepo will be interrogated to identify their composite stylistic, archetypal, and philosophical contents that denote them as Neo-traditional woodcarvings.

Research Methodology

The general approach to the present research is the descriptive research design. The design is employed for the gathering of data, and the content analysis of the data gathered. The aim of this design is for the location and establishment of narratives that account for the postcoloniality of the artist's woodcarvings within a postcolonial space.

Theoretical Frameworks

Two major theories have been identified to be appropriate to analyze the data from this study. The theories are, dividuality and iconography theories. The dividuality theory, a theory of identity, was propounded by Michaela Ott. The theory points to the dependence of persons on the composite existences available within their socio(techno)logical, bio(techno)logical spaces as being responsible for the formation of the self. And because our personality is a product of many, the word "individual (non-dependent personality)", should be replaced with the word "dividual (one who is dependent on many)". The theory is used here to express the dependence of the Neo-traditional art style as one that is dependent on extant others for its identity. Again it points at Ayandepo's identity as a wood carver; as one that is derived from his "dividuality" in creating an identity within traditional and contemporary philosophies to arrive at his "dividual" art style. Indeed, Yoruba Neo-traditional woodcarving has individual variants as it is practiced by the different woodcarvers, the commonality of the art style is in its

composite dependent on traditional art forms alongside contemporary, and extemporized forms and styles.

On the other hand, this research also uses iconography theory in the understanding of the traditional Yoruba woodcarvings from which the Neo-traditional art forms of Ayanladun are derived. Akande (2015, p. 83) submits that traditional Yoruba woodcarving items, especially those used as liturgical objects, such as opon Ifa, ose Sango, agere Ifa, ere ibeji, olumeye, Esu figure, and others, are cultural icons in their own right. Akande observes that because these objects have maintained archetypal forms, over time and space, they qualify to become indisputable Yoruba icons.

Neo-traditional Woodcarving: A Definition

In this article, the authors have decided to subtitle this section as “Neo-traditional Woodcarving: A Definition, without the word “Yoruba”, because the phenomena of change that caused the evolution of traditional Yoruba woodcarving are equally observable in the woodcarving cultures of other Nigeria cultural groups. The application of the phrase “Neo-traditional woodcarving” can be used to qualify woodcarvings of other cultures that share common developments and similar evolutionary trends with traditional Yoruba woodcarving. Akiwowo (2008, p. 186) affirms that traditional woodcarving has been identified as the main traditional art that the Yoruba ethnic group employs as a liturgical object for the worship of their indigenous religions. However, one of the first historical events that affected the Yoruba traditional woodcarving style and themes was its contact with the West, especially with the advent of Christian missionaries. Indeed, the Catholic missionaries deliberately adapted traditional woodcarving for the illustration of Biblical stories and doctrines, as a tool for the conversion of traditional worshipers to Christianity. The Catholic Christian missionaries got involved in Yoruba art, to the extent that they organized art experimental workshops at Oye-Ekiti and Ijebu-Ode, between 1947 and 1953 (Willett, 1993, pp. 229-236 & Adepegba, 1999, pp. 9-10).

Other notable developments that affected Yoruba traditional woodcarving are colonialism, Western education, and ultimately globalization. One thing that all these developments and experiences have in common is that they opened up the

Yoruba world to foreign influences; as such the concept, functions, and forms borrowed from imported contemporary living and culture are introduced into traditional Yoruba woodcarving. The word 'neo' can mean new', 'recent', 'revived', 'modified', or more.

Therefore, Neo-traditional Yoruba woodcarving implies an innovation, ideology, and philosophy of traditional Yoruba woodcarving that evolved through the agents of influence, such as religion, colonization, westernization, and globalization. Notable Researchers on Neo-traditional Yoruba woodcarvings such as Sylva (1991), Nelson (2004), and Adepegba and Abati (2017) conclude that Neo-traditional woodcarvings reflect changes brought by external factors such as Christianity, Islam, education, Westernization, colonization, globalization coupled with artists distinctive styles and ideologies. They also point out that Neo-traditional woodcarvings possess new characteristics foreign to Yoruba woodcarving traditional principles. The rigid human figure proportion observed by traditional Yoruba wood carvers is not adhered to, forms by Neo-traditional carvers are usually fluid and organic in appearance.

Many Neo-traditional carvers deliberately adopt the academic Western art principles of art alongside the traditional ones. Obviously, from scholars' submissions, Neo-traditional Yoruba woodcarvings ushered in through Western contact and modernization, gave room for freedom of the artist to extemporize and juxtapose different carving techniques and principles of art. Many Neo-traditional woodcarvers had their art training in Western education-oriented schools, they therefore used imported carving tools, such as V and U gouges of different sizes, chisel, and adzes. Indeed, some as they were taught in school. One such artist is Ayandepo. Ayandepo employs the use of electric wood machines, such as circular saw (plate 1), band saw (plate 2), sandpaper machine (plate 3), drilling machine (plates 4 & 8), chain saw machine (plate 5), miter saw machine (plate 6), and planing machine (plate 7), in the process of his carvings.

A section of Ayandele Ayandepo’s studio, showing the machines he employs in carving



Plate 1: Circular Saw Machine **Plate 2:** Band Saw Machine **Plate 3:** Sand Paper Machine **Plate 4** Drilling Machine
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Plate 5: Chain Saw Machine **Plate 6:** Mitre Saw Machine **Plate 7:** Planing Machine **Plate 8:** Drilling Machine
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The aforementioned carving tools are equally used for intrinsic shapes and sophisticated finishing which are not easily achievable with hand-held tools used by Yoruba woodcarvers. Important to note that despite the changes brought to Yoruba traditional woodcarving by the Yoruba Neo-traditional carvers, Neo-traditional woodcarvings still bear many features of typical traditional Yoruba woodcarvings.

A Sketch of Ayanladun Ayandepo’s Biography

This section discusses the biography of Ayanladun Ayandepo, it discusses his family history, artistic background, and influences, to establish the artist as a notable Neo-traditional woodcarver of the Yoruba postcolonial times. Ayanladun is the penultimate child of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Ojo Ayandepo. He was born in 1962 in Otu, a Yoruba town located in the Oke-Ogun area of Oyo State, Nigeria. His father who was an embroiderer, would have been of immense benefit to his career

as an artist, unfortunately, however, the father died while he was still young Ayanladun later learned the art from his father's friend and colleague, Mr. Ajolegbo, whose embroidery center was at Itesiwaju Local Government Area of Otu. At some point in his education career, his mother could no longer sponsor him. Ayanladun had to sponsor himself to school, through earnings from embroidery making. Ayanladun had his primary school education at Otu, after which he attended the Baptist Grammar School, Otu, for his secondary schooling. Thereafter, he proceeded to the Teacher Training College at Saki, another town in Oyo State. Since art was not part of the Teacher Training College's curriculum, Ayanladun sought assistance from Mr. Darko, an art teacher, who lived in the neighboring town. Mr. Darko taught him the rudiments of art. After leaving secondary school, he worked as a clerk with a government parastatal; the Ogun Osun River Basin Development Authority, before his admission to The Polytechnic, Ibadan (Adeseun Ogundoyin Campus) where he obtained a National Diploma (ND) in Fine and Applied Arts between 1986 and 1988.

The biography of Ayanladun Ayandepo will be incomplete without the mention of his acquaintance with two of Yoruba's renowned artists, namely, Prof. Lamidi Fakeye and Prof. Agbo Folarin. It is also important to discuss his love for Yoruba traditional embroiderers. All of these people and art influenced the trajectory of Ayanladun Ayandepo's art and its inherent postcoloniality. After Ayandepo's schooling at the Polytechnic Ibadan, he was admitted to the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, in 1993, from where he obtained a Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts degree in sculpture in 1998. At the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ayandepo had the opportunity to be taught by two reputable Nigerian artists, in persons of Professors Lamidi Fakeye and Agbo Folarin. The two professors were sculptors; indeed, Lamidi Fakeye was a renowned traditional Yoruba woodcarver. Ayandepo did not waste time seizing the opportunity of being under such great sculptors; he learned as much as he could under them. The interesting thing is that while Lamidi works in traditional sculpture, Agbo Folarin was a cubist and practitioner of contemporary art styles. Perhaps, the styles of the two teachers, coupled with his background training in embroidery account for his Neo-traditional woodcarving. In his thirst for woodcarvings knowledge, he chose to have his mandatory industrial training experience, as required for the award of his Bachelor of Arts degree by Obafemi Awolowo University, at the private studio

of Prof. Lamidi Fakeye, in Ile-Ife. One could infer that Ayandepo indirectly experienced the traditional mode of training for Yoruba woodcarving; the apprenticeship method, at the art studio of Lamidi Fakeye. However, according to Ayandepo himself, the supervision of Ayandepo's first-degree final year project in woodcarving by Professors Fakeye and Folarin tremendously shaped his creative will toward Neo-traditional woodcarvings.

From the foregoing, it is evident that Ayanladun Ayandepo is a product of traditional and contemporary woodcarving training and therefore, his Neo-traditional art style is informed by his artistic training and experiences, which plausibly account for his adoption of the Neo-traditional Yoruba woodcarving style.

Analysis of Ayandepo's woodcarvings

This section analyzes and interprets the themes, forms, motifs, and iconography of Ayandepo's woodcarvings. One very obvious characteristic feature in Ayandepo's woodcarvings is his sumptuous application of surface decorative motifs on his carvings. Although such embellishing decorative motifs are common to traditional Yoruba woodcarvings, however, while the traditional Yoruba woodcarving motifs are chosen within an established iconical corpus of images, Ayandepo's motifs are mostly borrowed from embroidery motifs and patterns commonly found on Yoruba agbada attire. These distinctive decorative motifs are called *Iboism* (plate 9), by the artist himself, and this makes his carvings unique.



Plate 9

A typical Embroidery Design incorporated on Woodcarving called *Iboism*
Ayanladun Ayandepo
© Abiodun Idowu

There are varieties of wood carvings on display at Ayandepo's studio located in the Saw-Mill area of New-Eruwa, Oyo State, Nigeria. The theme and principles of the woodcarvings share similarities with traditional Yoruba woodcarvings such as nudity, frontality, and protruding breasts. Due to peculiarities observed in the woodcarvings of the artist, and for the reason of compactness, this paper will classify the artist's woodcarvings into three main classes, namely, abstracted humanistic forms, ethnographic style, and functioning household items.

Abstracted Human Forms

This category of woodcarvings depicts different human forms and activities. They are carved with many of their forms akin to the ones found in traditional Yoruba woodcarvings. In the woodcarvings in this class, Ayandepo incorporates traditional woodcarving features for the depiction of his postcolonial themes. The features of the carvings in this category have been observed by Adepegba and Abati (2017, p. 345), to be characteristic of traditional Yoruba carving style, the woodcarvings have pieced eye pupils, nasals, and facial makings. Some of the woodcarvings in this category include Oro Agba (plate 10), Aseyori (plate 11), and Dundun Sekere (plate 12), out of others. Other themes in the category are social activities, economic activities, and some, themes within the thematic terrain of traditional Yoruba woodcarvings such as the equestrian figure. Particular carvings in the section also palm wine tappers, and traders. Many of these themes are outside the traditional Yoruba woodcarving themes, they depict happenings in the society and mostly have nothing to do with religion.

In the artist's attempts to explain some of the carvings in this category, he explains that Oro Agba (plate 10) can be interpreted as the Yoruba "wise sayings". He also explains that Oro Agba as an oral form of literature is evidence of the ingenuity of the Yoruba cultural group in attempting to preserve age-tested knowledge and experience in their oral aphorism. The work depicts 3 faces, supposedly of Yoruba elders, the faces are frowned upon. The artist states that the frowned faces are indications of the deep knowledge and experience of the Yoruba elders, and their ability to give sound advice. The head which is placed at the very top of the woodcarving represents the ancestors. The placement of the head at this part of the woodcarving is indicative of the superior position of the ancestors to the elders. The elders themselves derive their wisdom from their ancestors.

Another notable woodcarving in the category includes Aseyori (plate 11), literarily interpreted as “success”. This is a semi-abstract figure of a man carrying a token, which the artist said is a trophy. The man is depicted as an achiever, half-seated, feeling relaxed, like the achiever that he is. The work is a semi-abstract figure with in-proportionate body parts. The neck is elongated. According to Ayandepo, the woodcarving is meant to call attention to the fact that reward is the fruit of hard work. Also, Dudun Sekere (Plate 12) falls into this category. The woodcarving depicts Yoruba cultural template. The work assumes a semi-abstracted figure of a drummer in action with his instruments, such as a sekere and talking drum. From direct traditional sources, the artist explores the concept of a local musical instrument and a drummer in the Yoruba genre. The work reflects intense teaching on the value of culture and tradition that is fast disappearing.



Plate 10

Title: *Oro Agba*

Size: H. 233cm W. 45cm

© Abiodun Idowu



Plate 11

Title: *Aseyori*

Size: H. 104cm W. 28cm

© Abiodun Idowu



Plate 12

Title: *Dundun Sekere*

Size: H. 97cm x W. 12cm

© Abiodun Idowu

Relief Carving

This category of Ayandepo's woodcarvings are all done in relief forms (*basso, mezzo, alto, rilievo* or *rilievo stacciato*). Examples of carvings in this category are *My First Encounter* (plate 13), *Afi Suuru*, *Omi Lo Danu*, *Adarihunrun*, *Aare Ilu*, *Kekerenke*, *Wisdom*, and *Dandogo*. *Afi Suuru*, linguistically, as a phrase means "only with patience". In the theme of the carving, the artist navigates the thematic philosophy behind the Yoruba value of patience. The artist in a conversation explains the importance of traditional Yoruba culture of teaching about patience. He points out that such beautiful values are fast disappearing among the youths of this generation. In its technicalities, the work presents a bold, dexterous understanding, and skillful display of the artist's ability to represent abstract ideas, yet meaningful to the audience.

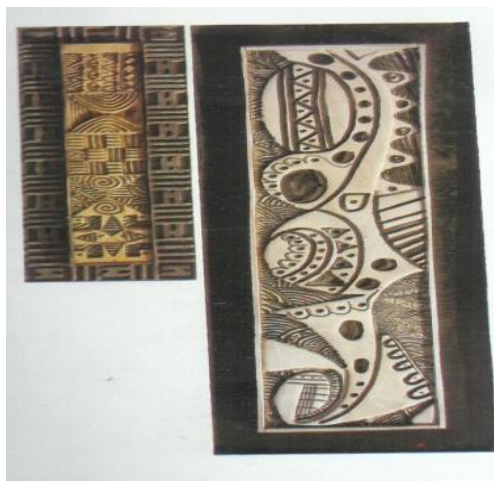


Plate 13

Title: *My First Encounter*

Size: H. 67 W. 74cm

© Abiodun Idowu

Dandogo (plate 14), is a luxurious ceremonial garment worn by the Yoruba people. It is usually elaborately embroidered and worn for a special ceremony. *Dandogo* has its root from the Hausa language, it refers to a particular type of ceremonial garment, worn, covering from shoulders to ankles; spanning the wearer's entire torso and legs, leaving out only the head and feet. In

Ayaladun's relief carving, the depiction of dandogo is conceptual. The artist simply carved a relief of the embroidery patterns usually associated with dandogo garment and he stops at that, yet the dandogo to which the depicted pattern alludes becomes quite clear. The patterns represented are strong enough to evoke the complete picture of the dandogo, because the embroidery patterns are strong enough to provoke the thought and picture of a dandogo.



Plate 14

Title: Dandogo

Size: H. 105cm W. 28cm

© Abiodun Idowu

Utilitarian Items

In this class of Ayandepo's woodcarvings, there are not just depictions, but actual functional objects that are used within the home environment or at workplaces. Ayandepo resorted to carving these wooden items as a result of the new functions and patronage of contemporary society and the demand for utilitarian objects that suit contemporary "cultural" living. The carvings under this section include office pen holders (plates 15), painting easels (plates 16), chairs, purely decorative items, emblems and insignia of the office, shelves, games tray (opon ayo), and wall picture hangings. These objects are carved in semi-abstract, completely abstract, or forms adapted from nature.



Plate 15

Title: Office Pen Holder

Size: H. 18cm W. 15cm

© Abiodun Idowu

Woodcarvings such as the Office Pen Holder reflect modern usage and serve the same functions as those imported into Nigeria from Europe, China, and America. The work still serves as a table decoration for office or house tables. The items are carved in the medium of wood and bamboo. The objects are creatively carved with functioning holes with embroidery designs and they can also be used as paper stoppers. The holes are deliberately created to serve as pens, pencils, rulers, and pin holders.

Another functioning woodcarving work of Ayanladun Ayandepo is a painting easel (Plate 16), The Painting easel is regarded as the essential tool needed by the painters. With the use of machines and his creative will, he creatively produced an easel in the medium of wood purposely for the use of art students. The easel was made with flat wood and had a base to hold the board or canvas. Ayadepo being a lecturer at a Polytechnic may likely have made the easel out of the need to support his students with standard equipment.

Wall picture holders and wall flower vases (Plate 17 & 18) are modern styles of hanging pictures on the wall. He uses the medium of wood to depict the European standard of wall picture holders. The work reflects line design with embroidery patterns.

**Plate 16**

Title: Painting Easel

Size: H. 78cm W. 23cm

© Abiodun Idowu

Plate 17

Title: Wall picture holder

Size: H. 94cm W. 18cm

© Abiodun Idowu

Plate 18

Title: Wallflower vase

Size: H. 15cm W. 10cm

© Abiodun Idowu

The walking stick (Plate 19) is a walking support for the aged and it also signifies a symbol of royalty. *Odo* (Plate 20) meaning 'mortar' is a Yoruba word for making base and strengthening Yoruba local drums. The work is well-carved with glossy pattern.

Opon ayo (Plate 21) means 'Game tray'. *Opon ayo* is the tray for the commonest game played among the Yoruba people. The carving has two faces, one in the front and another at the back. The two heads are separated by a thick round lump of wood. Which resembles the human hand. At the top of this carving is *opon ayo* with fourteen holes carved together closely. The carving can still be interpreted as a kneeling human figure carrying a bowl filled with fourteen holes.

Other functioning wooden items found in his studio are bamboo carvings (Plate 22) and a Graduation maze design for Adeseun Ogundoyin Polytechnic, Eruwa (Plate 23). The bamboo carvings reflect varieties of embroidery textures and patterns which can stand individually or be combined in some cases to create groups of artworks also known as installation. The bamboo carving was designed with a variety of colors. Plate (23) was purposely carved for Adeseun Ogundoyin

Polytechnic, Eruwa for her maiden convocation ceremony. The work features the institution’s logo colors; green, black, and white.

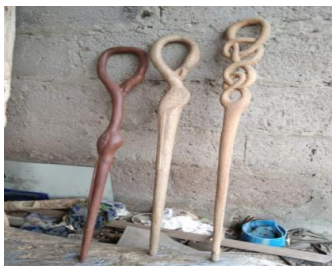


Plate 19
 Title: Walking Stick
 Size: H. 54cm W. 10cm
 © Abiodun Idowu



Plate 20
 Title: Odo/Opon Ilu
 Size: H. 18cm W. 15cm
 © Abiodun Idowu



Plate 21
 Title: Opon Ayo
 Size: H. 8cm W. 22cm
 © Abiodun Idowu



Plate 22
 Title: Bamboo Carvings
 Size: H. 54cm W. 5cm
 © Abiodun Idowu



Plate 23
 Title: Graduation Maze
 Size: H. 25cm W. 12cm
 © Abiodun Idowu

From the foregoing analysis, it is important to note that all the aforementioned renditions of Ayanladun Ayandepo reflect the true identity of Yoruba woodcarving.

Conclusion

The present paper posits that Neo-traditional Yoruba woodcarving are the various woodcarving genre that evolved as a result of colonization, Westernization, globalization, and the ever-changing trends of events, of the different woodcarving cultures of indigenous African communities. In line with this submission, it is plausible to categorize Ayanladun Ayandepo as a prolific Neo-

traditional Yoruba woodcarver. The combination of his completely Western-oriented formal training from Agbo Folarin, and traditional woodcarving techniques from Lamidi Fakeye, decidedly equipped him for his present disposition for Neo-traditional woodcarving style. Ayanladun's style is a culmination of the styles of his two teachers and mentors. However, he carved a unique stylistic identity, different from those of his teachers, for himself by introducing the garment embroidery motifs and patterns, learned from his father's trade into his carvings. Although, the Neo-traditional artists, have charted a new philosophical trajectory into woodcarvings and they have also expanded the restrictive thematic frontiers of traditional art to incorporate contemporary themes, on history, social events, and more.

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