

# Identification and Stylistic Analysis of the Artistic Expression on *Opa*, Yoruba Sculptural Verges

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## Abstract

*Opa* is an emblematic Yoruba sculptural verge and preserved transcendence expressional art amongst the social group in order to describe hierarchical structure in ranking chiefs, religious cults' priests/priestesses and aged right. Significantly, time-scale conscious and in-depth exploration of the hierarchical motifs on diverse verges and artistic formats of integrated motifs have not been considered using deco-hierarchical structures analysis. Visual artistic expression of verges sculptural forms demands contextual exploration to give meaningful time-scale oriented written report that could clear up vague impression towards different structures. For this conspicuous fact, a study of Yoruba sculpturesque verges will crystallize metonymical written explanations of motifs that suggest the power structure of life of the Yoruba. The paper, therefore, examines class-conscious format of images, motifs, and symbols unified on diverse emblematic verges for exploration of distinctive features of chieftains' status, stylistic expression and interpretation of cults' art in the Yoruba culture. Analytical review and critical appraisal methodologies were utilized for diverse verges; pictures were collated for critical examination of stratified motifs and symbols with the objectives of contextual and conceptual analyses. Findings unveiled artists' expression towards this symbol of superiority which exists within the hierarchical structure of chieftaincy and religious cults' orientations of Yoruba gods. However, it is apparent from

studied verges that fastidiously effort given to the balance of patterns, motifs and forms through professionalism and prowess suggest Yoruba ways of life.

**Keywords:** Artistic Expression, Deco-Stylistic, Hierarchical format, Religious Cults' Art, *Opa* (Yoruba sculptural staff)

## Introduction

Yoruba urbanism is legendary and the socio-history of this group over the years was characterized by the existence of several kingdoms and religious cults governed through monarchical system of government in hierarchical structure of male monarchs (*Oba*); councils of royal and noble chiefs (*oloye*) that serve as the founts of honor of the entire system; aged or lineage representative (*Mogaji*); and divinities' priests/priestesses (*atokun/abore orisa*). The Yoruba chieftaincy systems are in chain of structures of royal chiefs sitting at the apex of hierarchy with the king; noble chiefs opted as men of means and technocrats in the kingdom; religious chiefs to administer various religious rites and common chiefs who function as representatives of various families. These power structures are believed to be hereditary right through divine consultation of the god (*Orunmila*) with the oracle tray (*opon Ifa*) as an eye of God and personality in advancing the kingdom. And from whatever viewpoint, the formations of Yoruba kingdoms were connected with epic, adventurous, impetuous and warlike personalities believed to be fulfilled by the filiation of Oduduwa, Yoruba's primogenitor. Oduduwa is generally regarded as the historic basis of most ruling dynasties in Yoruba mega and mini cities (Adediran, 1998; and Afolayan, 1998), and the Yoruba monarchs are sacred with autonomous power, revered as the second in command to the gods (*orisa*). The Yoruba theology affirms monotheism with diverse divinities (*orisa*), believed to possess some of the attributes of the Supreme Deity (*Olodumare*). Meanwhile, in the various cults of these divinities are priests and priestesses in diverse hierarchies to serve as intermediaries between men and the gods. This is in line with Falola's (2001) view who posits that:

The Yoruba have constructed a hierarchy of spiritual force, similar to their political hierarchy which gives immense power to kings, then chiefs, then lineage heads, with ordinary people at the very bottom. In this hierarchy, God is the supreme deity with the ultimate power, the creator of the universe, the final judge.

With this structure, the Yoruba is a patrilineal society, definite and highly organized into hierarchical format that is usually based on temporal and supernatural powers derived from religious cults, royalty, lineage rights, professional

pro prowess and aged right (Ajadi, 2021). This social group provides a very good context for the study of art and power over time and space (Kalilu, 1994). The Yoruba artistic process and order of power are deep rooted in their history and cosmology and one of the major symbols to determine power structures in councils of monarchs, hierarchical structure of royal and noble chiefs under respective monarchs, religious cults' chiefs and aged or family representatives in administrative capacities is verge; *opa*. It is a symbolic representation of mutual understanding or trust and agreement among the Yoruba.

*Opa* is the oldest artistic symbol for Yoruba hierarchical authorities and it is commonly produced with eucalyptus wood, iron, ivory, and on certain occasions decorated with beads and cowry shells. It is a symbol of power; *ase*, and an emblematic or ceremonial art for power structures in the Yoruba system of government. Acquisition of power; *ase*, among Yoruba is expressed through symbols in order to moderate power usage, check power limit, and ascertain seniority, strength, and specialization. In version, verges are complex sculptural arts to be interpreted with the embellishment of forms, patterns, designs, and artistic decorations which illustrate Yoruba philosophical signification. This art is about transcendence and conveys a social orderliness in which people with authority are elevated with the objective of checking the limit and extent of their administrative units. In addition, this sculptural art connotes peace in a time of internecine or feud among proxy holders.

The conceptual connection of transcendence and sculptural verges among Yoruba, however, seems interrelated with set of facts that surround their sedate modesty and this is a widespread compositional mode of the characteristic aspect of their social and superior life. Significantly, time-scale conscious and in-depth exploration of the hierarchical motifs on diverse verges and stylistic structures of integrated patterns have not been considered using deco-hierarchical structure analysis. Study of this visual artistic expression will illuminate metonymical commentaries of motifs that suggest the power structure of life of the Yoruba both in temporal and supernatural world.

In spite of the fact that various scholars have researched into Yoruba arts and art history, Yoruba religious cults, socio-political developments of Yoruba kingdoms, and powers of expression and expressions of power in Yoruba arts, they have not examined artistic expression on Yoruba structural verges; *opa*. For example, Adediran (1998) and Afolayan (1998) illuminate the Yoruba pal-ingensis, demographic movement of kingdoms' formations and sequence of highly sophisticated political system among the kingdoms, particularly, kingdom of Oyo, which rose to become the largest, and most powerful state of Yorubaland in 19<sup>th</sup> century. The role of Ile-Ife as the spiritual center and point of origin of Yoruba culture provides interesting insight into the transformative aesthetic process for the Yoruba artists (Harris, 1994). Aside from information

on emergence of the state in Yorubaland, Kalilu (1995) crystallizes some of the neglected issues and metaphorical commentaries that suggest the powers of expression and expressions of power in the visual arts of the Yoruba to reflect under-emphasis in the nature of Yoruba culture.

The Yoruba have myriad of divinities in their religious pantheon and there are numerous religious cults among the social group. Ajibade (2017) studies the cults, secret societies and fraternities in culture and customs of the Yoruba with affirmation that each religious cult has its specific shrines, priests or priestesses and distinctive dress and insignia. Emblematic appurtenances of diverse Yoruba divinities; *orisa*, with their iconic sacred motifs, symbols and usages were conceptually defined and thematic apperception analysis of simulacrum of Yoruba mythical trickster divinity were considered in a projective technique using black-and-white pictures (Dennis, 1974; Ajadi, 2014; Ajadi, 2017; Ajadi, 2021; Ajadi and Tihamiyu 2021; Ajadi, 2021). Idowu (1962) and Falola (2001) affirm that all Yoruba divinities served the will of God; *Olodumare*, in the creation and theocratic government of the world. Opeloye (1998) and Ogungbemi (2017) study the Yoruba indigenous religious beliefs and powers in religious cults of different divinities. Several publications have unfolded collection of facts on iconographical as well as stylistic peculiarities of the art in *Egungun* cults with specific references to cudgel, rattle wand, sculptural masks and mystic staff (Houlberg, 1978; Babayemi, 1980; Aremu, 1983; Kalilu, 1987; and Abokede, 2009). Euba (1994) dwells on the poetry of *Egungun* drumming and explicates how the theatrical basis of Yoruba music manifests in the art of drumming which displays the unity that exists between their music and poetry.

Lawal (1977) critically appraises living dead-art and immortality while Ojo (1978) analytically reviews the symbolism and significance of *Epa*-type masquerade head-pieces. Although Yoruba arts are enormous in quantity and varied in materials and forms, several write-ups have provided remarkable information on many of these arts (Thompson, 1976; Willet, 1976; Drewal, 1977; Heyder, 1977; Stevens, 1978; Azeez 2017). Kalilu (1994), studies gourd carving among the Yoruba of Nigeria, with emphasis on motifs and symbols as a logically necessary consequence for the perfection of history in African art. Studies on Yoruba's verge carving have been directed at the description of a few numbers of its usages pretermitted motifs, and these neglected motifs have diverse explicative contexts and styles. Hence, the historical background of these motifs demands contextual explanation and interpretation in order to give meaningful time-scale oriented study that can crystallize metonymical and vague impressions towards their concepts.

The study, therefore, attempts to explore various artistic expressions on Yoruba emblematic verges as preserved transcendence expressional art

amongst the Yoruba social group in order to contextually explicate the definition of integrated motifs. It equally addresses some observable misrepresentation and misapplication of motifs with a view to correcting them. On these bases, however, the paper examines class-conscious format of images, motifs, and symbols unified on different emblematic verges for exploration of distinctive features of chieftain, artistic expressions and interpretation of cults' arts among the Yoruba culture. Requisite and crucial questions about the stylistic expression and symbolic motifs on concepts of Yoruba verges were raised for pictorial examination of their themes. The questions are: (1) Do these verges possess stylistic expressions that illustrate the hierarchical structures of Yoruba transcendence? (2) Do the personal idiosyncrasies of the artists influence symbolic representations and iconic motifs of power structure in Yoruba culture? (3) Do the integrated motifs display distinctive features and significance of verges in chieftainship and chiefdom of Yoruba realm? To answer the above questions, three specific objectives are designed to pinpoint symbols, images and motifs that comprehensibly explicate the structures of superiority in Yoruba ruling class.

The objectives are: (1) To examine class-conscious format of images, motifs and symbols unified on diverse emblematic verges for exploration of distinctive features of chieftain and interpretation of cults' art among the Yoruba culture. (2) To crystallize metaphorical or metonymical commentaries about the Yoruba sculptural verges and contributes a new perspective in the art historical scholarship of the Yoruba customs. (3) To affirm what distinguish hierarchies in the structure of Yoruba governance and clarification of specific doyens' symbols among the regnant class.

Analytical review and critical appraisal methodologies were combined for this study. Analytical review was used for auditing deco-hierarchical structures of diverse verges based on unified motifs and identification of significant changes in the status. Critical appraisal was used for careful analytical evaluation of the structural forms as presumptuous symbols of administrative unit. For oral information about selected verges, Key Informant Interview was equally employed and photographs of the verges were taken for pictorial and contextual interpretation of the unified patterns. Write-ups which are of relevance to this study were also analyzed for proper study and records. However, general descriptions of diverse verges in various hierarchies and structured formality, together with requirement of the custom motifs and determining factors were focused.

### ***Opa*: The Yoruba Sculptural Verges**

*Opa*; Plate 1, apart from being a ceremonial and symbolic representation of regnant order in Yoruba context, it is an emblematic staff of parliamentary

procedure in Yoruba system of government. However, questions as regarding the verges' identification might be useful for general description of their mode of recognition. How is the naming of verges and features regarded in Yoruba culture? What forms does each hierarchy of verge take for the identification of status? Therefore, it is absolutely imperative for this study to unveil the contextual definition of each motif on diverse Yoruba verges for clarification of the unknown facts surrounding their usages. The usages have been colligated to Yoruba culture which is broadly conceived as approaches or practices that characterize mode of recognition for both temporal and supernatural ruling system.



Plate 1: A Cross Section of verges by Odekunle Agbegilowo Family. Wood.

Area: Oyo. 2020/2021

Photograph by Odekunle, Adebola. Adigun

Aside from hierarchical classification by lengthy sizes and usage, lineages' panegyrics; *oriki-ile*, play crucial functions for the descriptions of roles and position of the users in order to trace family background and determine their contributions to that kingdom. *Oriki-idile* in Yoruba cosmology is any poetic discourse that is chanted and recited for the purpose of praising its subject, particularly, to trace or indicate the lineage of a family (Mabayoje, 2017; Awofeko, Oyebanjo and Shogunde, 2020). To sculpt a verge, the artists must exhibit commitment to primacy of the position in order to showcase the context of usage and reveal sense of appropriateness in the used motifs for the identification of authority of one who will hold the art. There are motifs and rhythms that are sculpt for the Yoruba monarch only as a civil power in a kingdom, especially as a sign of transcendence and one who is accountable to nobody with the central power. Some of these motifs are in zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, anthropo-zoomorphic, geometric, floral, and man-made objects. These motifs are equally integrated hierarchically to describe power boundary amidst the chiefs and power expression in religious cults.

The rendition of these verges on many occasions, however, proves the artistic and professional prowess with the forms of canons' images tending towards naturalism of Yoruba idealized realism images while views were tending towards semi-naturalism and abstraction (Ajadi, 2021). On religious cults' verges, anthropomorphic images are often contextualized in genuflection and erectness pantheon ideas. Also, from Yoruba religious thought system, verge is believed to have the ability to summon to the surface the spirit of god's cult (Abiodun, 1994). The anthropomorphic verges are invariably used to illustrate the deities or devotees in religious cults while zoomorphic motifs of lion, viper, leopard, elephant, and peacock are considered by Yoruba to have royal attributes (Kalilu, 1994).

The geometric motifs are carved in different format of interlace, interposed linear motifs; *eleyo fo*, crooked linear motif, carven motif, intermesh linear motif; *elelu*, and inter-locked pattern (Ajadi, 2021). Man-made objects such as crown, horse-tail royal whisk, coral beads and floral leaf of *akoko* are usually used to illustrate the structure of monarchial verges. The texts are used to highlight positions, ranks and roles among the councils of chiefs. To this end, stylistic analysis and disparities in artistic expression of these Yoruba sculptural verges will be focused using deco-hierarchical structures analysis.

### **Stylistic Analysis and the Identification of Symbolic Motifs on Yoruba Sculptural Verges**

A fact noteworthy about Yoruba history apart from written and oral traditions is visual art, depicted on diverse objects as signification of ideas that



surround activities at a point in time. The traditions of Yoruba culture depend on the symbolism and some of these visual arts are rendered in symbolical concepts that connote appurtenance or narration of the events. The meanings of the motifs used and the corresponding message of the arts are deliberately preserved by the users. Likewise, certain symbolic representations are invariably used in religious cults to express their sacrificial rites and for information about each cult. To a certain extent, however, Yoruba verbal and visual arts predictably overlap and the inherent symbolic visual arts ensconced in the portrayals of the art. Also, there is always a subtle balance between individual agency and given structure through the historical and social circumstances that surround the verges.

Religious cults' verges, religious chiefs' verges, monarchs' verges, royal/noble chiefs' verges and aged or family representative verges were considered for this study to provide clarification for the unifying motifs and connotation of the symbolic patterns on each section of the verges. The principal cults in Yoruba are *Orisa-nla*, *Orunmila*, *Ogun*, *Esu*, *Yemonja*, *Orisa-oko*. Yoruba religion is derived from these deities and the prevalence of operations of the diverse religious cults indicates that there is polytheism in Yoruba religion but more specifically diffused monotheism with central Supreme Deity, *Oloдумare*. The religion is described as traditional or indigenous because it is not imported from any other culture. According to Yoruba cosmology, these divinities led human to the earth in human bodies which greatly resolved into difficulties to distinguish the primeval deities from mortal beings. This concomitance explains Yoruba's inclination in the past to exalt cultural heroes on the basis that they were divinities temporarily manifesting in human bodies (Abiodun, 1994).

For example, the simulacrum in the three emblematic verges of Sango (Plate 2) are visual expressions of Sango's devotees surmounted with quasi-bulbous human face on top of double-headed axe with oval eyes, high eyebrows and long aquiline nose. The devotees are highly stylized figures in genuflecting posture, decorated with intermesh linear motifs and Yoruba patterns. The torso section of their bodies shows the basic form of *Sango's* cloth strip; *Laba*. The protruded handles are interpenetrating with diverse *Sango's* adored attributes, and the effigies are in realistic form depicted in Yoruba idealized style. The expressive style exhibits appearance of the artistic mutuality, particularly, the rhythmical visual aspect of these figures. Wearing on these genuflected devotee's head is superlative coiffure. This verge is often found in the priest's hands as symbolic representation of *Sango's* cult. Since the *Ose-Sango* is a ritual object to honour, praise and salute Sango, it is to be expected that it is basic form; double-edged axe, transversal or thwart-wise



verge, would reflect visually the most basic and important attributes in the praise poetry of Sango.



Plate 2: Emblematic verges of *Sango's* cult *Ose* by Ademola, Ajibade. Wood and Polish.  
Area: Oyo. 2020

Photograph by Ajadi Michael Olaniyi

The ceremonial verge in Plate 3 is for *Esu's* priest in *Esu Alaje's* cult, carved with effigy in erectness pantheon ideas that reflect elongated *Esu* club designs. In this verge, emphasis is placed on elongated *Esu's* club, and the club is firmly attached to the effigy's neck with neck-like frame that hooks the cowry shells around the neck. The club of figure in the verge is adorned

with various motifs that illustrate anthropomorphic and zoomorphic ideas. The effigy is carved in Yoruba traditional proportion orientation to illustrate the deity in action with unique reflection that showcases assemblage of diverse *Esu* characters as a whole. The verge is as sacred as this deity and can only be found in the hand of *Esu* priest.



Plate 3, Ceremonial Verge in *Esu Alaje*'s cult by Odekunle, Adebola Adigun,  
Wood Gloss and Cowries Shell. Area: Oyo. 2021  
Photograph by Ajadi Michael Olaniyi

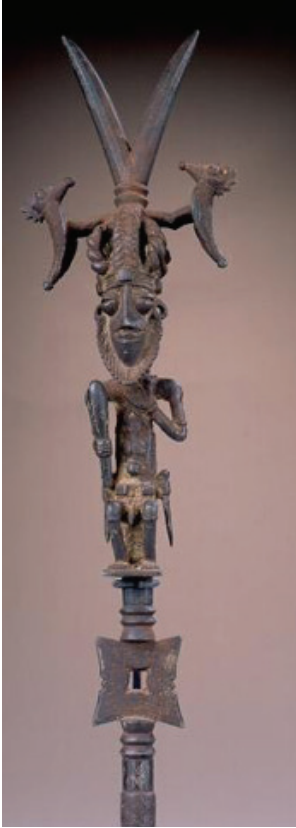


Plate 4: Blacksmith's Staff  
*Opa Ogun*. Bronze. Undated.  
Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/highmuseumofart/> From  
the art collection of the High  
Museum of Art, Atlanta.

The collection of motifs and images that inter-weave and dovetail in Plate 4 are virtually for *Ogun* in visual explanation. *Ogun* is known as the god of war and blacksmithing. This category of verge in most cases is erected at the cult's shrine as a symbolic representation of the deity. The verge surmounts two horns-like on top of crowned anthropomorphic seated figure with oval eyes, high eyebrows, long elliptical bears, and an aquiline nose. Besides the crown are two protruded hands-like which is imbued with horse heads surmounted by another horn-like shape. The effigy is highly stylized with the torso erected and legs bent with the body supported on the buttock holding *Iroke ifa* with one hand and his elliptic bears with another hand, decorated with interposed linear motifs and Yoruba patterns. The effigy represents this god in basic form with as many *Ogun's* adored attributes as possible, and the image is in naturalistic form rendered in Yoruba idealized realism style. The image, no doubt, demonstrates a very captivating rendition of the legendary *Ogun* action and the verge depicts diverse symbolic paraphernalia and other related motifs of the god of iron (page 173). The verge is sacred.

Plate 5 is a verge at the central heart of *Obatala's* shrine. The anthropomorphic figure in upright position on the top of this ceremonial staff signifies the erectness form of *Obaluaye* rendered in Yoruba idealized realism style in three-dimension form, holding his wrought staff. In a culture where *ori*, the principle of individuality, perceived as a deity that informs and shapes the world-views and behaviors of persons, it is simply "natural" that the privileged idiom of artistic expression, indeed, the mode of existence of art, should be constant departure (Yai 1994). The head of the posted figure is enlarged against the carved torso and limbs of the body and the posture implies the swift disposition of this deity mounting process. The bulbous head shape

depicts long hooked nose, oval eye-brow and triangle mouth. At the middle of this verge are intermesh motif; *eletu*, carven pattern, intermeshed and in different harmonious patterns and shapes of Yoruba rendered in incisions and reliefs. Combination of these motifs on this verge explicates their interaction and contextual interpretations.

The concept of work in Plate 6 expresses archetypal and classical form of emblematic iron verge usually held by diviner-priest during initiation, propitiation and ceremonial activities of *Orunmila* cult. What distinguishes this verge from other verges is the bird image depicted at the topmost part of the sculptural art. In this cult, the verge is also known as *Opa orere*, often held by Yoruba diviners, *Babalawos*, as emblem of office. The verge is erected into the ground in front of diviner's house as an altar to the divination god, *Orunmila*, the grand priest of *Ifa* oracle when it is not in use to prevent death and overcome other destructive forces of evil people, sorcerers, witches and gnomes. This verge is usually forged in metal and the priest ensures it is erected uprightly; '*oro gangan la ba osun*, in order to receive full blessing from the god. At the top of the verge is a bird perched on a flat disk that rests on a cluster of funnel-shaped conical bells, *agogo*, to make sounds when erected on the earth while leading procession by diviners at *Ifa* initiation, *Itefa*, and during different *Orunmila*



Plate 5: Verge in *Obatala's Shrine* by Ademola, Ajibade. wood. Area: Oyo. 2021  
Photograph by Ajadi Michael Olaniyi



Plate 6: Walking Verge of *Orunmila* cult's member by Odekunle, Adebola. Adigun, Wood and Gloss. Area: Oyo. 2019  
Photograph by Ajadi Michael Olaniyi

ceremonies. Plate 6 is archetypal and a carved replication of the verge with wood as a walking stick by the diviners for symbolic representation of their identification with this god.

Staff of office; *opa-ase* Plate 7 is a symbol of authority for Yoruba monarchs and an important part of the Yoruba culture and tradition. The verge becomes sacred as the king on ascension of the throne after coronation and made him to be regarded as second to the gods. The verges are made in wood and bronze, and heavily beaded with embellishment that showcases ethnic interpretations that can be comprehensible and abstruse. The kind of materials, symbolic patterns and size in terms of length illustrate these verges' hierarchy and the art style depicts the status and class of each monarch. The staffs of office of Yoruba monarchs do not look alike though they are connected to the eponym of *Oduduwa* as the lineage's fountain. This verge is used as a ceremonial wand during installation of different officials under the monarch and as a symbol of royalty, status and authority. The verge is the most significant of the royal insignias as it signifies the royal power and the king's declaration remains a mere statement without it. It is a sacred tool of power that no individual can handle without the king's permission. According to the tradition, the verge is given in hierarchical structure of kings' ranking, particularly based on formation of kingdoms but now given by government to the chosen king in accordance with the Morgan Commission of 1977 which was made by the Western



Region Government after Nigeria's Independence.

Plates 8 and 9 are royal, noble and common chiefs' verges embedded with diverse effigies and symbols that illustrate their families' deities, lineages' professions, and rights of each office. Despite the advent of the acclaimed world religions; namely Christianity and Islam, Opeloye (1998) affirms that the Yoruba still practice their traditional religious beliefs within the context of indigenous cultural background, connecting the worship and supplication through diverse divinities to Supreme Deity. In Yoruba cosmology, these divinities are connected to each family history either by deity clans or beliefs as phenomenal spiritual beings. Distinction is made between families through these deities or professions and this is often reflected in their praise poetry, *oriki*, usually rendered in ancestors' recognitions of earthly impact before their death.

Offspring's of all families in the kingdom are chosen as members for conducting the affairs in accordance with customary law of the kingdoms, and for transparent administration and justice. In the area of justice administration, the Yoruba have three classes of law courts, namely a court of the compound family head, *ile ejo ti baale*; a court of the councils of chiefs, *ile ejo ti awon ijoye*; and the royal court of the king, *ile ejo oba* (Falola and Oguntomisin, 1984). Members that constitute these courts are representatives from families in the kingdom. They are referred to as *Mogaji* in order to serve



Plate 7: Staff of Office for the Monarchs  
*Opa Ase*. Beads, Threads and Wood.  
Source: <https://everyevery.ng> (2020). Art  
and Culture  
(Nigerian Traditions: *Opa Ase* of Yoruba  
Monarchs)

as intermediaries between the government and the families. In most cases, the aged are chosen from all the families for diverse positions in the administrative council and their verges are used as a “walking sticks” with embedded illustrations in anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, anthro-zoomorphic, geometric, skeuomorphic, floral and text. The skeuomorphism (angels) in most of the verges (Plate 8; 2 and Plate 9; 4 & 5) represent acclaimed influence of the world religion (Christianity) which indicate the diversity in religious beliefs and wider religious experience of Yoruba theological system.



1 2 3 4 5  
 Plate 8: Chiefs or Aged Representative Verges by Odekunle, Odesola  
 Olajide. Wood and Gloss.

Area: Oyo. 2019

Photograph by Ajadi Michael Olaniyi



However, for a detailed morphological examination and stylistic analysis of aged representative verges, unified images and motifs play crucial role in apprehending the activities and actions assigned to the users. For example, Plates 8; 3 and Plate 9; 1 are verges made with *Orunmila's* effigies who was one of the principal deities of Yoruba with Yoruba stylized cap, *fila*, and coral beads. The verges are found in the hands of diviners' lineages and the praise poetry, *oriki*, summons them for preparation, recognition, and energizes their innate spirit for action. The simulacrum in the verges is seen holding wrought staff with right hand and *Olugbohun* with the other hand in erectness pantheon idea, carved in Yoruba idealized realism style. In the wrought staff of image, the tangs of the clappers of individual bells are realistically shown hooked through the bells themselves. The decorative texture and surface appearances of the two verges exhibit Yoruba's ancestral patterns and the artistic rendition of these works, especially the rhythmical depiction of the two effigies, show-cases great master-pieces of art objects.



1 2 3 4 5

Plate 9: Chiefs or Aged Representative Verges by Odekunle, Adeoye Tobilola. Wood and Gloss. Area: Oyo. 2017

Photograph by Ajadi Michael Olaniyi



Plate 10: Nobleman Verge by Ademola, Ajibade. Wood. Area: Oyo. 2015  
 Photograph by Odekunle, Adebola. Adigun

A critical look at the Plate 8; 4 and Plate 9; 3 revealed some fact about the mythological god of iron, *Ogun*. In the hands of effigies of the two verges are hunter implements believed to be the attributes of this god. In artistic description, everything about the simulacrum in the two verges explicates Yoruba idealized size of head to other parts of the body with mimetic Yoruba cultural imitation of hyper-visibility, tribal marks, aquiline nose and oval supercilium. The head of the figure is over blown at the expense of its torsos and limbs. The verge in plate 10 is usually carved for men of means to showcase abundant supply of money or possessions of value: *Borokini*... The zoomorphic motifs (horse) proclaim affluence or the so-called emerging affluence.

Be that as it may, there are synergies in the use of motifs among the discussed verges and in most cases, prescriptions were often made by the users as regards the construction and personal idiosyncrasies of the carvers usually influenced the rendition of the art together with contextual relevance, recommendations and antecedents (Odekunle, 2021).

## Conclusion

It is evident that motifs on sculptural verges testify to hierarchical structure of Yoruba imperialism be it in political, historical, economic and social experiences. These motifs illustrate some orchestrated statement about Yoruba indigenous religious beliefs, eponymous gods of families, true positions and development of government in Yoruba kingdoms both spatially and temporarily. This is apparent in the fastidious effort given to the balance of patterns

and forms by artists through professionalism and prowess to depict hierarchy. This has been the reason for arrangement of motifs by the artists in distinctive contexts and applications of the patterns are rightly finished with perfect touches. Though foreign motifs are obvious on some of the mentioned verges but at the same time, the artists have not pretermitted the historical footing to highlight the impact of these emblematic arts on Yoruba way of life. The influences particularly on motifs, forms, and designs have been sieved carefully and adapted for expression within the goal-directed usage of the sculptural art. However, the users' prescriptions, antecedents and the artist's stylistic traits as well as eclecticism which are the hallmarks of the productions are not without local customs and historic basis.

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