**The Artist-Philosophers in Yoruba land**

**Ancient Artist-Philosophy:** To a Yoruba artist-philosopher, Nature is a powerful influence. To a Yoruba artist-philosopher, Nature is his Muse, his Protégé and he cannot do without Nature. He cannot do without Nature because he believes that the totality of the life of man and his artistic expressions depend on Nature.

**Pre-Dynastic Period:** In pre-dynastic, the principal artist-philosopher in Yoruba land is Ogun. Ogun in Yoruba, from mythologies to de-mythologies, is the commander-in-chief of steel and iron. He is informed and transformed by the knowledge of Yoruba culture. As there is weakness and strength in every creator in life, so is artist-philosopher Ogun with his own share of strength and weakness. But his weakness is his overmuch patience. However, he was a brave, argumentative and belligerent fellow, who believed that there are good things in fighting as there are opportunities in tragedies. His philosophy is never to lose a war, small or big. During the civil war, he was consulted and implored to fight on the side of the Federal Government. The Yoruba theorists (some of whom believe that some ancient Egyptians migrated to Yoruba land) as well as other theorists in other parts of Africa and in Diaspora believed that artist-philosopher Ogun never fights a war without casus belli—justification. (His overmuch patience angered and caused the keepers of traditions to lose so many of their invaluable and aesthetic artworks to foreign museums in the 19th century. Also, the keepers of traditions were ireful for his refusal to fight and rescue the sons and daughters of the land who were caught and sold into foreign lands as slaves.)

Practically, artist-philosopher Ogun derives the ingenuity of his creativity from Nature, influencing human and animal kingdoms. Because he is answerable to Nature, he is being defined by Nature. In consequence, he would reflect upon Nature and its fullness. He often dismissed the general notion that he learned the act of sculpturing from the terracotta artists. And he would not stop proving to the scions of the land that the terracotta artists could not have come to limelight or prominence without him. (We have no evidence to ascertain either statement.) But one thing is certain. It is certain that he is antecedent to, and pre-eminently superior to all the terracotta artist-philosophers, put together, inasmuch as he owns and oversees all the sculpturing instruments. He is also the sole artist-philosopher whose birth month is known to be August, the eighth month in the Gregorian calendar.

Now then, there is a question. How did the Yoruba land become a museum of so many artworks, unarguably the largest in Africa? The answer lies in the fact that Yoruba people are very reflective people. At any time of the day, they are circumspectly reflecting, reminiscing, panegyrizing, poetizing, singing, aphorizing and pouring out their thoughts upon the visible and invisible worlds, accentuated by their desires/passions to unlock the issues surrounding cosmogony and cosmology.

**The Dynastic Period:** Oduduwa, the father of the land, had now been venerated as a sage by artist-philosopher Ogun and his consanguinities vis-à-vis contemporaries. King Oduduwa was always playing a starring role in all things pertaining to corporeal and spiritual enlightenment. The analyses, the curiosities, the desires and passions to understand the prehistoric world he lived in with his consanguinities, made the pragmatic primogenitor of the land to blend art-philosophy with folk philosophy, which was followed by the autochthonous religion and literature. His starring role made him the bringer of light to the Yoruba people and the pioneer of Yoruba philosophy. He elevated his people by encouraging them never to succumb to boredom which was a common phenomenon in the ancient times. He encouraged them to stick together like the fronds of the broom. In no time at all, Arts Guilds started to flourish in many areas of the land. At that time, the Yoruba land was becoming more enlightened as it continued to propagate the knowledge of its worldviews—cosmogony, cosmology, morality, love of knowledge—philosophy in sculpturing and carving. Each one of the artist-philosophers believed in ***ASEPO-DARA—UNITY IS GOOD.*** Each understood that human existence is committed to many registers and it is not given to anyone to play all of them. Thus artist-philosophy in sculpturing became a welcome solution to any form of boredom or ennui. Like the present day Yoruba land, it was a commonplace to find a sculptor, a potter, a carver or a weaver in every family in Yoruba land.

The bronze and terracotta arts created during and after the pre-dynastic Yoruba land, evidencing Yoruba naturalistic civilization, are significant examples of realism in global arts, for it is known that the terracotta of those ancient times were the products of the students of the Arts Guilds—the Cultural Schools of Philosophy (from circa 4 BC to 900 AD) which today could be likened to many of the Europe’s old institutions of learning which were originally established as religious bodies. These guilds may well be some of the oldest non-Abrahamic African centers of learning to remain as viable entities in the contemporary world.

**Modern Artist-Philosophy:** The modern artist-philosophy (philosophy of art without extraneous ornamentations) started in the middle of 19th century—during industrial revolution, and it denotes the styles and philosophy of the art produced in which the traditions of the past seem to have been thrown away or brushed aside in the spirit of experimentation.

In order to distance ourselves from speculative philosophy: in order not to avoid an impotent and lame conclusion, we will include here a few number of Yoruba modern artist-philosophers; just a few number of them. They include Yinka Adeyemi, Kola Adeyemi, Chief Jimoh Buraimoh, Prince Twins Seven Seven (1944-2011) who was UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2005, in recognition of his contribution to the promotion of dialogue and understanding amongst people, particularly people in Africa and in Diaspora. Others are Asiru Olatunde (1918-1993), Rufus Ogundele, Prof. Rowland Abiodun and Susanne Wenger (1915-2009). Susanne Wenger successfully built the Artist Cooperative or the Oshogbo Arts School. She developed the Sacred Grove of Oshun which was marked as UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005.

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