

## PATRONAGE OF OUTDOOR SCULPTURES IN IJEBU AND REMO DIVISIONS OF OGUN STATE, SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*One of the major challenges of contemporary artist(s) in Nigeria is patronage. Unlike the traditional artists who have steady buyers (patrons) for their products, contemporary Nigerian artists are often or sometimes faced with the problem of who will buy their works. Among the products of contemporary Nigerian artists particularly sculptors are outdoor sculptures. Outdoor sculptures of various types, forms, themes, sizes, materials or media and functions are found in almost all the big and urban cities in the world today in which Ijebu and Remo divisions of Ogun State, Southwestern Nigeria is no exception. As many as they are, information about most of them as regard their function, patrons and the artists who produced them as well as their year of production are obscured. This paper is the findings of a recent research work carried out on outdoor sculptures in Ijebu and Remo. It investigates some selected outdoor sculptures in Ijebu and Remo with a view to documenting the various patrons of these outdoor sculptures. The study employed both the primary and secondary sources for collecting necessary information and data. Primary sources include observation, structured and unstructured interviews, archival and private document. Secondary sources include relevant published materials such as books, journals, magazines, newsletter and or newspaper publication as well as unpublished undergraduate and postgraduate projects, dissertations and theses. The study discovered that the quality of some of these sculptures is sub-standard owing to the artistically uninformed society of ours where most of the patrons cannot distinguish between good statues and bad ones. It then concluded that artists should try as much as possible to document (sign) their works after finishing to avoid the problem of anonymity and also suggested that Government at all levels should make laws that will prevent people from defacing the works and their pedestals with various event bills or posters.*

**Keywords:** Outdoor-Sculptures, Patronage, Ijebu and Remo, Ogun State, Southwestern Nigeria

### Introduction

*Eniyan ko sunwon laaye, igba ti a ba ku la n d'ere*

The above is an age-long popular adage among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, which means that people are not cherished or appreciated when they are alive but when they die they become idols and celebrities. Corroborating the foregoing, Allen (1958) affirms that people still commemorate great events or honour outstanding men and women through sculpture. According to her:

We know, as the men of old knew, that memorials carved from stone or cast in metal are as permanent, and indestructible, anything made by men can be.

She observes that works of sculpture can either be some of the finest and noblest works of art that human beings are capable of producing or they can be some of the simplest and crudest. She

claims that sculptures are seen, in various types, everywhere in the streets of our modern cities, on the walls, both inside and outside of our ancient buildings; on tombs; on fountains, and of course, in our museums. While some of it are hundreds or even thousands of years old, some belong to our own time and the more we learn about them the more thrillingly interesting they become. Ikpakronyi (2005) also supports the view expressed by Allen (1958) when he asserts that outdoor sculptures in addition to beautifying cities and other places of public resort are intended to celebrate and perpetuate memories of persons and events. For a better comprehension of the paper, it is considered of great importance to explain three keywords; sculptures, outdoor and patronage.

### **Sculpture**

Sculpture according to Allen (1958) cited in Adekoya (2002) is defined as the act of making representation or creating images in stone, wood, clay, metal such as bronze, brass, gold etc and some other assorted, expensive and sophisticated materials such as fibre glass, Plaster of Paris (POP), plastercine etc through the process of carving, moulding, welding, casting, ornamenting and smithing.. Rogers (1988) while discussing the concept, definition and scope of sculpture, maintains that sculpture is the branch of fine arts that is primarily concerned with the creation of expressive form in three-dimensions. He enumerates the wide range of sculptures to include different kinds of artworks, which extend from free-standing, independent objects, through various forms of high, medium and low relief, to extreme forms of low relief that are little more than raised drawings.

Rogers observes that sculpture is not a fixed term that applies to a permanently circumscribed category of objects or set of activities, but rather, it is the name of an art that grows and changes, and is continually extending the range of its activities and evolving new kind's objects. He notes that sculpture in the round and in relief was first produced by the paleolithic man and since then, there have been few societies in which sculpture has not played an important role.

### **Outdoor**

'Outdoor' according to Hornby (2000) means something that exists, happening, used or situated outside of a building. In essence, when outdoor and sculpture are put together, it can therefore be said to mean those sculptures that are erected or displayed outside of a building or in an open space.

There are diverse views about the origin of outdoor sculpture. Hamlyn (1969) asserts that the art of sculpture generally started in Egypt. His suggestion would have been unacceptable but for Adepegba (1995) who affirms that "the term African Art is more racial than geographical" because Egyptians, probably due to their complexion were not usually treated as Africans. Thus Adepegba's work has helped to clarify the issue of the Africanisation of Egyptians. Nevadomsky (1997) cited in Ikpakronyi (2005), maintains that, public monumental sculptures produced in the 1950s by Ben Enwonwu were among the first modern public sculptures in Nigeria. He also reveals that Danford, a British artist then attached to the British Council office in Lagos, produced a bronze statue of *Emotan* in 1954, erected in Benin, which was equal to those of Ben Enwonwu, for example the Sango statue (Fig. 1) in terms of technical fitness and concept.



Fig. 1: Statue of Sango (the god of thunder and lightning) in Marina, Lagos, Artist- Ben Enwonwu. © Emu Ogumor (2007).

Contrary to the above opinion by Nevadomsky (1997) as regards the origin of outdoor sculpture in Nigeria, cited by Ikpakronyi (2005), Odiboh (1987) claims that the provenance of outdoor sculpture in Nigeria could be traced to the 1940s when the two cenotaph figures of the unknown Soldiers, popularly referred to as *Soja Idumota* or *Soldier Idumota* (Fig.2 ), which were later removed to the Arcade at Tafawa Balewa Square, in Lagos but now moved to Abuja, was erected to commemorate the soldiers who died in the Second World War. Odiboh notes further that, besides these figures other early outdoor sculptures in Nigeria, particularly those in Lagos metropolis were church and cemetery sculptures.

Ikpakronyi (2005) maintains that most of the sculptures of this period, 1940-1950, were imported into the country because there were no Nigerian contemporary sculptors trained to work in the Western or European conventional style of naturalism needed for the cemetery, churches and public place monumental figures before 1950s. Odiboh (1987) affirms that the tradition of outdoor sculpture became prominent in Nigerian cities in the early 1980s. He claims that there was resurgence in urban transformation with sculptures of different types, sizes and themes adorning public spaces, which was as a result of the availability of many Nigerian sculptors that have been trained in the same tradition as Ben Enwonwu and other foremost Nigerian sculptors. These artists have continued to

produce monuments that are either part of architectural designs or free standing statues in public squares and recreation centres of which Ijebu and Remo Divisions of Ogun State are no exceptions.



Fig. 2: Statue of the “Soja Idumota” (Soldier Idumota). © Babatunde, H.O. (1993)

### Patronage

Patronage can be defined as the support especially financial that is given to any person or organization by another person otherwise referred to as patron. A Patron, according to Guralnik (1983) is a person, usually a wealthy and influential one, who sponsors and supports some person’s activity, institutions and the likes. Thus, in this context, any person who sponsors or buys artworks is referred to as an art patron. Hornby (2000) affirms that patronage of the arts comes mostly from business and private individuals. Patronage is a vital factor in the development of art in Nigeria. Supporting the foregoing, Emi (2011) affirms that the survival of art, and indeed, its development is determined by art patronage to which it depends without pretensions. In his own opinion about art patronage, Uzoagba (1982) posits that no workman can produce unless he is paid to do so and no employer will pay a workman unless he is producing something that the employer needs

Similarly, Adepegba (1995) while commenting on patronage for contemporary Nigerian art observes that patronage has not remained static; he notes that in the days of the pioneers from Aina Onabolu to Enwonwu, patronage depended on the types of art. He maintains that while the artists who were trained in the Western art schools with their emphasis on naturalism enjoyed the patronage of the native elites especially in Lagos, art works with traditional forms like carvings were bought by expatriates. Also from the early sixties, especially with the advent of the Osogbo experimental workshops, to the mid-seventies, most Nigerian artists depended on foreign buyers, the only exception being the works of sign writers, which more or less is a folk art in many parts of the continent.

Corroborating Adepegba (1995) Emi (2006) observes that urban sculpture patronage in Nigeria has grown commendably since the last three decades. Emi, citing Beier (1960) and Ononeme (2001), maintains that one of the patrons of sculptors, and by far their most crucial one, is government. He affirms that since the Urban Work Department in Benin under the British colonial government created the need for John Danford of the British Council to execute the statue of *Emotan*, the 15<sup>th</sup> century heroine in Benin City to replace the sacred tree dedicated to *Emotan* that was mistakenly felled by a French man on February 17<sup>th</sup> 1951, Nigerian governments have had sculpture pieces mounted in the Federal capital territory, state capitals and major towns in which local government administrative headquarters are located.

### **Patronage of Outdoor Sculptures in Ijebu and Remo**

In Ijebu and Remo, over one hundred outdoor sculptures are mounted at various locations-private residences as well as public buildings and spaces (market square, churches, schools, road-T-junctions and roundabouts) performing different functions ranging from aesthetics to educative and political as well as historical functions. As stated earlier in this article, as important as these outdoor sculptures are, information about them is obscured. It is for this reason and many more that shall be revealed later in the paper that it is considered necessary to know the sources of these outdoor sculptures that adorn different locations in Ijebu and Remo.

It is interesting to note that producers of outdoor sculptures in Ijebu and Remo enjoy patronage from the following six categories of patrons:

- i. individual patronage
- ii. governments patronage
- iii. corporate patronage
- iv. churches and schools
- v. self and family patronage
- vi. age grade patronage

### **Individual Patronage**

Sculptures executed as a result of individual patronage cover works, statues or outdoor sculptures commissioned by some powerful elites within and outside Ijebu and Remo. These are the people who for various reasons-political, sociological, deem it necessary to commission some of these works. Some of them are notable politicians, business tycoons and wealthy citizens. Evidently, only one outdoor sculpture was commissioned by an individual among the sculptures selected for this study and this is the statue of *His Royal Majesty, Oba Sikiru Kayode Adetona, the Awujale and Paramount Ruler of Ijebuland* (Fig.3) which was commissioned by Otunba Olasubomi Balogun.



Fig. 3: His Royal Majesty Oba Sikiru Kayode Adetona (The Awujale and Paramount Ruler of Ijebuland) in Awujale Palace, Ita'le Street, Ijebu-Ode. © Sam. K. Adekoya, (2006)

### Government Patronage

Sculptors, particularly those in Ijebu and Remo Divisions of Ogun State, southwest of Nigeria, enjoy governments' patronage. Some of the outdoor sculptures in the areas were commissioned by various tiers of governments. They include *the Cenotaph Marking the Centenary anniversary of the Anglo-Ijebu War of 1892* (Fig.4). The monument was erected by the Ijebu Municipal Council in 1992 at Imagbon, near Yemoji River where the battle was fought.



Fig. 4: Cenotaph Commemorating the Centenary of the ANGLO-IJEBU WAR of 1892 popularly known as Imagbon War or Ogun Danosungbo. © Sam K. Adekoya (2012)

*Orisagamu pot* (Fig. 5) was sponsored by the state government, others are the statue of *Sir Hassan Odukale* at Ilisan Remo roundabout, *Chief Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo* located at Ikenne junction, opposite Delabo Hotel along Lagos-Sagamu-Ore-Benin express way, *Chief Victor Olabisi Onabanjo* erected at Ita-Osu (new market), Ijebu-Ode. From the number of government commissioned outdoor sculptures, it is evident that government is sensitive to the historical, educative and the political values of these outdoor sculptures to their communities.

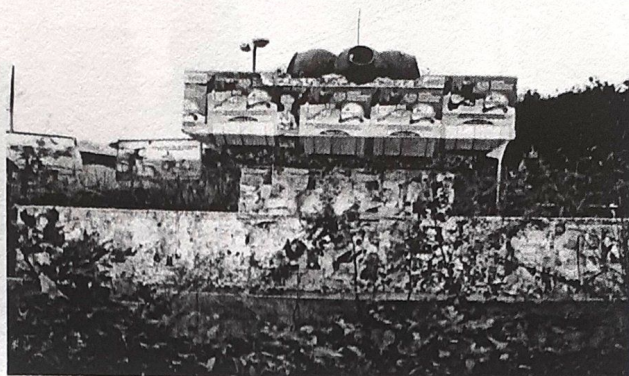


Fig. 5: The New Orisagamu Pot (water fountain) commissioned in 2009 by the Ogun State government. Terra-Cotta Pots mounted on a massive 8 x 8 x 7ft high pedestal.

© Sam K. Adekoya, 2012

This type of patronage is usually the result of several deliberations of usually several committees entrusted with this patronage intention. Though these may involve bureaucratic bottleneck and, at times, because of the various political interests involved, the decision could be prolonged as to determine whether or not this statue should be produced.

### Corporate Patronage

It is very encouraging that in Nigeria, generally, various corporate bodies like the banks, sporting agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGO), have contributed immensely to environmental beautification (aesthetics) through commissioning of outdoor or urban sculptures. Corporate patronage of outdoor sculptures in Ijebu and Remo is encouraging. No fewer than five outdoor sculptures or more in this study were commissioned by corporate organizations. Emi, (2006) notes that NGOs as well as some social groups, like Rotary Club and Lion Club in Nigeria, have adorned roundabouts with sculpture pieces which beautify the environment while at the same time promote their organizations' corporate image. For instance, the logos of the Rotary Club and Lion Club have been conspicuously incorporated into the form of urban sculpture works that are mounted in roundabouts of some major Nigerian towns and cities.

As stated earlier, five sculptures were commissioned by social clubs under corporate patronage. These include the statue of *Oguola* (Fig. 6), which was commissioned by Leo Club of Ipara-Remo and the statue of *Akesan* (Fig. 7), commissioned by the Akesan Club of Iperu-Remo.

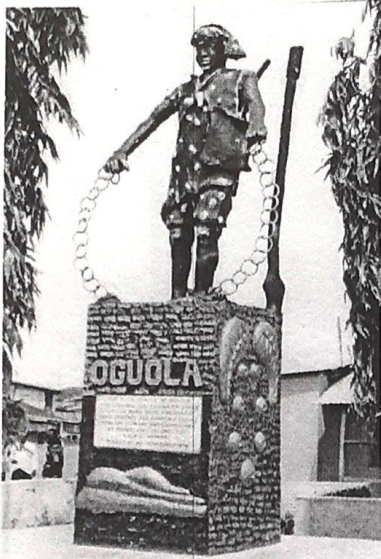


Fig. 6: Oguola Statue (the founder of Ipara-Remo). © Sam K. Adekoya, 2012.



Fig. 7: Statue of Akesan Founder of Iperu-Remo. © Sam K. Adekoya, 2012.

Others are the statue of *Bejeroku* at Oke-Agbo in Ijebu-Igbo commissioned by Beje Social Club of Oke-Agbo, Ijebu-Igbo and the statue of *Lafose Ode* erected at Ode-Remo roundabout. The statue was sponsored by O'Fancy Club of Ode-Remo. Another one is the *Agemo Onire (Tami)* statue at Odogbolu roundabout. The statue, according to R.A. Emiabata, was sponsored by the Rotary Club International of Odogbolu as their Chartered Project for the period between 1992 and 1993.

### Church and School Patronage

Churches and schools are not left out of the patronage of outdoor sculptures in Ijebu and Remo Divisions of Ogun State. In this study, a total of five outdoor sculptures were commissioned by churches and schools. Three of the sculptures were sponsored by churches, while two were commissioned by schools. For example, the *Statue of Saint Sebastian* (Fig. 8), the statue of *Jesus Christ carrying his cross* and that of the *Praying Hands with Holy Bible* (Fig. 20) were commissioned by churches. The two commissioned by schools include the statue of *Dr. Tai Solarin* in front of the Tai Solarin University of Education main gate which was commissioned in 2005 by the University's Governing Council to commemorate the transformation of the erstwhile Tai Solarin College of Education into a full-fledged university. Another sculpture in this category is the statue of a *female student* (Fig. 9) in a sitting position at Ode-Remo High School, which was produced by the fine art teacher of the school in June 1987.





Fig. 8: Statue of St. Sebastian in St. Sebastian Catholic Cathedral, Odo-Egbo, Ijebu-Ode, © Sam. K. Adekoya (2012).

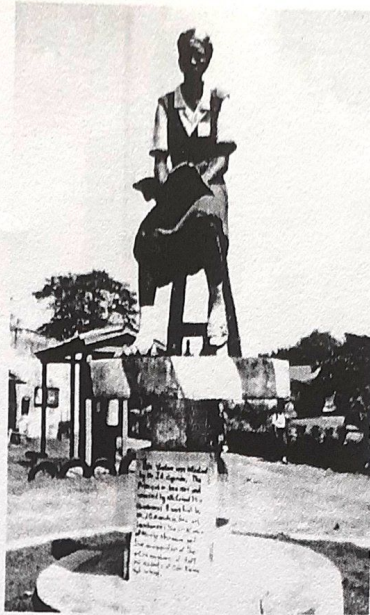


Fig. 9: Statue of a female student in Ode-Remo High School, Ode-Remo © Sam. K. Adekoya (2012).

### Self and Family Patronage

A good number of the outdoor sculptures in Ijebu and Remo were sponsored either by self, the entire family or friends of those depicted in the works. These may be produced as gift. Sculptures in this category may be grouped into two; that is, the self sponsored and those commissioned by the family or friends.

### Self Patronage

Investigation shows that few numbers of the outdoor sculptures in Ijebu and Remo were self-sponsored. This has to do with the belief of the people and their age-long tradition which supports creating sculptures to commemorate the dead especially of noble people who have lived exemplary lives. In spite of the argument, some people produced their sculpture images during their life time. An example of these is the *Statue of Late Madam Christiana Olabisi Ayanbadejo* (Fig. 10). According to Pa Abolanle Ayanbadejo (a.k.a. Dandoka) her son, the *Statue of Madam Christiana Olabisi Ayanbadejo* was sponsored by “mama”, herself, during her life-time to commemorate her 85th birthday anniversary. Similarly, the statue of a *Horse Rider* (Fig. 11), according to Alhaji Adebola Keshinro was sponsored by him, Keshinro, who claimed that it was his replica.



Fig. 10: Statue of Madam Christiana Ayanbadejo in Christiana Hotel, Lagos Garage, Ijebu-Ode, © Sam. K. Adekoya, (2012)



Fig. 11: Horse Rider (Adebola Keshinro) in Alhaji Adebola Keshinro House, Ondo Road, Ijebu-Ode. © Sam. K. Adekoya, (2012)

Though the statue does not resemble him, he maintained that he decided to sponsor it just because he is from the Olorogun's family, the family which Sote, (2003) in her book, *Ojude Oba Festival Ijebu-Ode*, claims is the only family in the Balogun Kuku lineage in Ijebu-Ode that is traditionally qualified, entitled and allowed to ride on horse during the annual *Ojude Oba* Festival in Ijebu-Ode. Still in this category of art work, is the bust of *His Royal Highness, Oba Yinusa Oladele Adekoya* (Fig. 19) erected at his Agbonmagbe Palace in Idowa-Ijebu which was sponsored by the Oba himself in 2011 and the bust of *Otunba Subomi Balogun* at Erinlu Roundabout which was commissioned by the mogul and industrialist himself also belong to this category.

#### **Family and Friends Patronage**

About nine of the selected works for this study fall into this category. They include the statues of *Madam Adesewa Ogunde* and *Madam Eunice Owotusan Ogunde* both of which were sponsored by their children in the 1980s and mounted inside Alare Lodge, Ososa-Ijebu as well as that of *Hubert Adedeji Ogunde* the doyen of theatre in Nigeria (Fig. 12), while the *Statue of Oba*



Fig. 12: Statue of Hubert Adedeji Ogunde  
The Doyen of Nigerian Theatre  
© Sam. K. Adekoya, (2012)

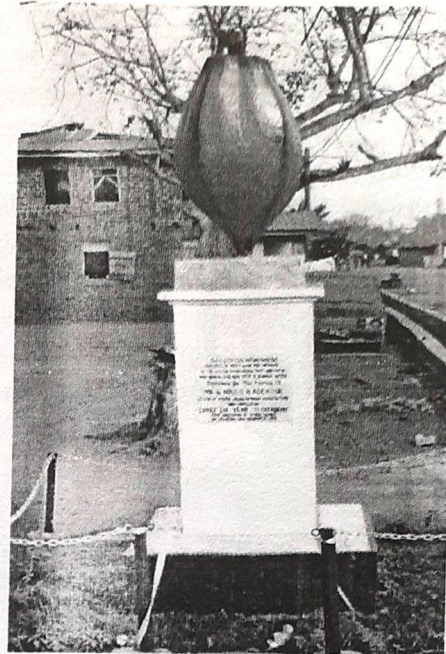


Fig. 13: Ripe Cocoa Pod in Abekoko Bus Stop,  
Ipara-Remo, © Sam. K. Adekoya, (2012)

*Ojigi* in front of Alakija palace who, oral tradition claims was the first king to reign in Ikija-Ijebu, was commissioned by the family. Others in this category also include *the Cocoa pod* (Fig. 13) which was sponsored by Pa. G.A. Adekoya family in 2002; the *Statue of Chief Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo* at Dideolu Specialist Hospital, Ikenne-Remo (Fig. 14); *the Horse Rider*, supposedly that of Balogun Adesoye at Balogun Soye compound, Oke-Ijasi, Ijebu-Ode as well as that of *Chief Timothy Adeola Odutola* at Folagbade roundabout, Ijebu-Ode all of which were sponsored by their children.

The last in this group is the *Statue of a Medical Doctor Examining a Pregnant Woman* (Fig. 14), sponsored, in 2010, by the renowned art patron and collector, Omo'ba Engineer 'Yemisi Shylon. He donated the statue to his friend, the doctor and proprietor of Ore-Ofe clinic in Ijebu-Ode in support of the realization of his (doctor's) dream or aspiration.



Fig. 14: Statue of Chief Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo in Dideolu Specialist Hospital, Ikenne-Remo. © Sam. K. Adekoya, 2012



Fig. 15: Statue of a Medical Doctor examining a pregnant woman in Ore-Ofe Clinic, Lagos Garage, Ijebu-Ode. © Sam. K. Adekoya, 2012

One interesting thing about the naturalistically rendered works in this category is that they were all produced in Lagos and brought to their present locations, except *the Cocoa Pod* that was produced at the Cultural Centre, Ibadan and brought to its present location. This confirms the statement that the tradition of erecting outdoor sculpture in both Ijebu and Remo started when the tradition had already reached its peak in Lagos and some other big cities and urban centres.

### Age Grade Patronage

Age grade are not left out in the patronage of outdoor sculptures in Ijebu and Remo. Age grade societies are a common feature among the Yoruba of the southwestern Nigeria. Age grade according to Hornby (2000) is simply referred to as age group or age bracket, which is defined as people of a similar age or within a particular range of ages. This is known as *egbe* in Yorubaland. A dictionary of the Yoruba language (2004) defines *egbe* as company, party, rank, companion, equal, comrade, society, association, guild, class or fraternity.

By and large, while the other Yoruba sub-groups refer to them as *egbe*, the Ijebu called them *regberegbe*. Though age grade activities take place among the Yorubas, it is more organized, elaborate and well-coordinated among the Ijebu than any other Yoruba sub-groups. Traditionally, the age bracket is mainly two or three year's interval, that is, it consists of people born within two to three years age bracket. Sote (2003) maintains that among the aims of the age grade societies in Ijebuland is the provision of communal service and fostering of close relationship among their members. Thus, the foregoing might be one of the reasons for which age grade societies in the area sponsored four of the outdoor sculptures, particularly in Ijebu Division.

First in this type of sculpture is the *Statue of Orunse Olori-Ogun*, which was sponsored by Egbe Obagbayo 1, Omu-Ijebu in 1994. Another one is the *Statue of a Dancing Agemo* mounted at Itooro roundabout. *Agemo* is the national deity for the entire Ijebu people in Ogun State, southwestern Nigeria. *Agemo* among the Ijebu is regarded as the symbol of their unity. This is why the Ijebu are being praised as '*Omo alagemo merindinlogun*', meaning the offspring of sixteen *Agemo*. The *Agemo* statue erected at Itooro roundabout, documents this praise name as it has round the circular lower part of its pedestal, sixteen relief sculptures representing the different *Agemo* forms with their names written under them. The sixteen *Agemo* includes; *Agemo Onire* – Tami from Odogbolu which is regarded as the over-all head of all the *Agemo*. Others are; *Olumoro* (Imoro), *Serefusi* (Igbile), *Posa* (Imosan), *Moko* (Okun), *Alofe* (Ijesa-Ijebu), *Onugbo* (Okenugbo), *Iju* (Imosan), *Lapen* (Oru), *Magodo* (Aiyepe), *Bajelu* (Imuku), *Lubamisan* (Ago-Iwoye), *Petu* (Isiwo), *Ogegbo* (Ibonwon), *Idobi* (Ago-Iwoye) and *Nopa* (Imushin).

The *Dancing Agemo* was commissioned in 2000 by the Mafowoku age grade society to commemorate the 42nd anniversary of the Awujale on the throne. While the *Statue of Princess Adesuyi* was sponsored by Egbe Bobajolu Akile-Ijebu, Ibefun in 2001, the *Statue of HRM Oba Sikiru Kayode Adetona, the Awujale of Ijebuland* was sponsored by the Council of Otunba and Chiefs in 2010.

### Conclusion

This study has examined the outdoor sculptures (numbering about forty) in various public places and private residences in towns and cities of Ijebu and Remo in Ogun State and discussed their patronages. It revealed that apart from the "*Cocoa Pod*" (Fig.13) at Abekoko bus-stop at Ipara-Remo and the "*Orisagamu Water Fountain*" (Fig. 5) at Sagamu Roundabout as well as the "*Anglo-Ijebu War Cenotaph*" (Fig. 4) at Magbon, which are not human representations, all other sculptures in this study are human figures and masquerades which are either life-size or more than life size free-standing sculptures or busts. Subsequently, it has categorized the patrons of the outdoor sculpture into six different groups vis-à-vis; individual patronage, government's patronage, corporate patronage, churches and schools, self and family patronage as well as age grade patronage.

The study, however, observed that the quality of some of these sculptures is sub-standard. This problem might be attributed to the artistically un-informed Nigerian society where most of the patrons cannot differentiate between good statues and bad ones. To the majority of these patrons, the sculptures are good as long as they have head, eyes, leg, and hands irrespective of their anatomical deficiencies. The study also observes that most of the sculptures produced in academic institutions were naturalistic, thereby suggesting that patrons had commissioned academically trained artists to execute their works. Producers of art works should endeavour to document their works after finishing them by signing or writing their names and other necessary information like year of production and media among others. This is very necessary to avoid the problem of anonymity.

Governments at all levels should make laws that will prohibit people from defacing the pedestals of outdoor sculptures by posting bill or pasting their event posters on the pedestals as in the cases of the *Orisagamu pots* pedestal (Fig. 5) and others.

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## Informants

1. R.A. Emiabata, 60 years, retired NITEL official and member, Rotary Club of Odogbolu, Igbodile Quarters, Odogbolu; interview conducted on July 31, 2012.
2. Pa Abolanle Ayanbadejo (a.k.a. Dandoka) 70 years, Hotelier, Christiana Hotel, Ijebu-Ode; interview conducted on February 27, 2012.
3. Alhaji Adebola Keshinro, 67, Farmer, 24, Ondo/Benin Road, Ijebu-Ode; interview conducted on July 7, 2012.