

**A PORTRAIT OF AN OLUWO OF THE OGBONI SOCIETY**

**By**

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**A PROJECT WRITTEN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FINE AND APPLIED ARTS,  
FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN  
CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF FINE AND APPLIED ART**

**(B.A) FINE AND APPLIED ARTS**

## **DECLARATION**

I, Happiness Oluwabukunmi Oyebadejo with the Matriculation Number, ENV2103427 hereby declare that this project was carried out by me in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Faculty of Environmental science, University of Benin, in partial fulfillment of the requirement of B. A in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, I Further declare that this work was not submitted for the award of any other degree in the above named institution or any other institution.

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**Signature**

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated the to Almighty God and my family members.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Profound gratitude** goes to The Almighty God for his immeasurable support and provision for the success of this project. **Sincere thanks** also **go to my Supervisor**, Mrs. Esther Esosa Esizimotor and Prof. **Manasseh**, E. Imonikebe, for their continuous guidance and expertise during the course of this project. Their valuable insights and feedback have been instrumental in shaping the direction of this research. I am also grateful to the **Ag.** Head of Department of Fine and Applied Arts Dr. Daniel .N. Osariyekemwen and the course adviser, Dr. Paul Aikhionbare(**Associate Professor**). Also to my lecturers who have also in past helped build and train me academically and otherwise.

Not forgetting my course mates Ehizele Paul ighodaho and Daniel John Seun, I would like to deeply express my gratitude to each of them for their support and contribution to the success of my project.

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## ABSTRACT

This project explores “The portraiture of an Oluwo of the Ogboni Society”, focusing on the visual and symbolic representation of Yoruba traditional authority and spirituality through painting. The study examines how portraiture serves as a medium for preserving cultural identity, transmitting moral values, and expressing the sacred power associated with leadership within Yoruba society. This study was aimed to examine the historical and contemporary significance of the Ogboni society in Yoruba culture and to translate its spiritual and political identity into visual representations through painting.

The research combines practical studio production with theoretical analysis, referencing notable Nigerian portrait painters such as Aina Onabolu, Ben Enwonwu, Yusuf Grillo, and Kolade Oshinowo. Their approaches to composition, symbolism, and realism influenced the conceptual and stylistic direction of the artwork. The painting depicts the Oluwo seated in regal attire, surrounded by ancestral symbols and spiritual emblems that communicate wisdom, justice, and divine authority. Through the use of colour, form, and cultural motifs, the artwork celebrates the continuity between the living and the ancestral world, portraying the Oluwo as a custodian of tradition and moral order.

This study reveals that portraiture can effectively represent spiritual and cultural values by merging realism with symbolic abstraction, allowing the artist to convey both the physical likeness and the inner essence of the subject. The work also shows that the careful selection of colours, traditional symbols, and compositional balance enhances the spiritual depth and cultural relevance of the painting. The project concludes that portraiture remains a powerful visual language for cultural documentation and the reaffirmation of African identity. It recommends that artists continue to explore traditional themes in contemporary art practice to strengthen cultural preservation and education.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Portraiture in visual art refers to the artistic representation of a person, with a focus on capturing their likeness, personality, and often their social status or emotional state. It has been a central genre in art history across many cultures and time periods.

**Likeness:** The image should resemble the subject, particularly in traditional portraiture.

**Expression and Emotion:** Portraits often convey the sitter's mood or inner life.

**Pose and Gaze:** The posture and where the subject looks (at the viewer, away, etc.) can suggest confidence, introspection, authority, etc.

**Setting and Objects:** Backgrounds or included items (like books, animals, or tools) can symbolize aspects of the subject's identity, profession, or interests.

**Medium:** Portraits can be created in painting, sculpture, photography, drawing, and more recently, digital media.

This project deliberates more on a subject as a case study which is a personnel of historical value. According to oral questioning and interviews from the relatives of late "Olori Oluwo Ogunfowora Atewologun Oyebadejo". He was born in 1901 in Ijebu, Oke-agbo, Ogun state, Nigeria and died 1974. He was a onetime Apena of the Ogboni. The Ogboni were regarded as the third arm of authority within the Oyo empire. This personnel is used as the model in this project because of his contribution to his society positively and a relic to preserve African Yoruba culture and history.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Over the years, many Nigerian and African artists have explored portraiture as a means of expressing cultural identity and leadership. However, there remains a noticeable lack of visual representation of traditional figures such as the Oluwo of the Ogboni Society, particularly in contemporary painting. Most existing artworks on Yoruba culture tend to emphasize ritual, symbolism, or historical documentation, rather than artistic experimentation in medium, style, and technique.

This gap limits the understanding of how modern portraiture can convey spiritual authority, cultural pride, and identity within a Yoruba traditional context. There is also insufficient exploration of how color harmony, composition, and symbolic motifs can be used to express the sacred role of the Oluwo in a visually compelling way.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this artistic gap by creating a painting that reinterprets the portraiture of the Oluwo through contemporary visual techniques combining realism, symbolism, and expressive use of color to reflect both the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of Yoruba leadership.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The following **Research Questions** have been raised to guide this study:

1. How can portraiture be used to represent the cultural and spiritual identity of the Oluwo within the Ogboni Society?
2. What will be the process of producing an African portraiture ?

3. In what ways does portraiture contribute to the preservation of the ogboni symbols and motifs.?

4. How does the use of colour, composition, and traditional motifs contribute to the spiritual and aesthetic expression in the portrait of the Oluwo?

#### **1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

To create a portraiture that examine the historical and contemporary significance of the Ogboni society in Yoruba culture and to translate its spiritual and political identity into visual representations through painting

#### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine how portraiture can be used to represent the cultural and spiritual identity of the Oluwo within the Ogboni Society.
2. To outline and explain the process involved in producing an African portraiture.
3. To explore the ways in which portraiture contributes to the preservation of Ogboni symbols and motifs.
4. To analyze how the use of colour, composition, and traditional motifs contributes to the spiritual and aesthetic expression in the portrait of the Oluwo.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research is valuable for multiple reasons. This study explores the visual and cultural representation of the oluwo. The spiritual head of the Ogboni society through the

medium of portraiture. By examining and creating the portrait of the *oluwo*, the study seeks to preserve and interpret the symbolic values, regalia and authority embedded in traditional Yoruba leadership structures.

Furthermore, the Yoruba community stands to benefit, as the project supports the preservation of cultural heritage and promotes a more accurate and pride-inspiring visual record for future generations. The research also contributes to the documentation and understanding of indigenous institutions that have played important roles in governance, spirituality and social order within the Yoruba society. The portrait serves not only as artistic expression but also as a means of cultural preservation bridging the gap between ancient tradition and contemporary artistic practices.

## **1.6 Scope and Delimitations of the Study**

This study focuses on the artistic representation of the *oluwo* of the Ogboni society through portraiture. It examines cultural and aesthetic elements that define the status and identity of the *oluwo* within the Yoruba traditional institutions. The research is limited to the exploration of the visual characteristics attire, regalia, and iconographic symbols associated with the *oluwo* as they relate to the values and beliefs of the Ogboni society

### **Delimitation**

This study is geographically delimited to Southwestern Nigeria, particularly the Yoruba-speaking regions where the Ogboni society is historically and culturally rooted, such as Oyo, Ile-Ife, Ijebu, and Abeokuta, where the *Oluwo* plays a significant role in cultural and spiritual leadership.

## 1.7 Definition of Terms

- **Oluwo:** oluwo means “lord of mysteries” or “Chief priest”. “Olu” meaning lord, master or chief, “iwo” or “wo” meaning to see, to perceive or to understand deeply often referring to spiritual insights.
- **Edan:** exam is a type of Yoruba staff or symbol of authority
- **Ogboni:** ogboni roughly translates to "those who are privileged with wisdom."

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2.1**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter is a review of related studies. The review was carried out under the following sub-headings;

- Related studies about “African Portraiture”
- Related Artists, concepts and works
- Techniques in painting
- Principles of Art and Design
- Elements of Art and Design

### **2.2 Related studies about “African Portraiture”**

Portraiture has always played an important role in African art. It is not only a way of showing a person’s face but also a way of expressing their identity, power, and cultural values. In traditional African societies, portraits often represent kings, chiefs, priests, and other respected figures who hold authority in the community. This study focuses on how portraiture can be used to represent the Oluwo of the Ogboni Society, showing his importance and spiritual position through visual art.

#### **African Portraiture**

According to Thompson (1974), African portraiture is not mainly about physical likeness, but about showing the inner qualities of a person their character, strength, and spiritual power. Artists often include symbols, clothing, and colours that tell more about who the person is. In

many cultures, portraits are created to honor ancestors, preserve memory, or celebrate leadership (Willis, 1992).

Drewal and Schildkrout (1990) explain that in Yoruba culture, art is closely tied to religion and leadership. Portraits and sculptures are used to show respect to gods, ancestors, and traditional rulers. For instance, a portrait of an Oluwo can display his golden crown, staff, or animal skin, which are signs of wisdom and authority. These visual symbols help viewers understand his position without using words.

Blier (1998) also notes that African portraits often focus on balance, proportion, and calm expressions to reflect inner strength and good character. In Yoruba art, this idea is known as *iwa l'ewa*, meaning “character is beauty.” So, a portrait is not only about how a person looks but about showing their moral values and spiritual power.

### Contemporary African Portraiture

Modern African artists have continued the tradition of portraiture by combining old and new ideas. Oguibe (2002) mentions that many African artists use portraiture to connect the past with the present showing how culture can adapt while keeping its meaning. Artists like Lamidi Fakeye and Bruce Onobrakpeya, for example, have created portraits that mix traditional African symbols with modern art styles (Okeke-Agulu, 2015).

For the Oluwo portrait, this approach allows the artist to use traditional Yoruba elements while still presenting the image in a way that appeals to today’s audience. The portrait can therefore serve as both cultural preservation and artistic expression.

## 2.3 Related Artworks **And** Artistic Projects

### 1. Ben Enwonwu – Portrait of Tutu (1974)

Ben Enwonwu is one of Nigeria's most celebrated painters and sculptors. His famous painting Tutu is often called the "African Mona Lisa." The portrait represents Princess Adetutu Ademiluyi of Ile-Ife and is admired for its dignity and calm expression (Okeke-Agulu, 2015).

Enwonwu's work shows how portraiture can express identity, culture, and pride. The use of calm tones and symbolic posture in Tutu provides inspiration for how an Oluwo can be portrayed with respect and authority.

### 2. Aina Onabolu – Self-Portrait (1913)

Aina Onabolu was one of the first Nigerian artists to practice Western-style painting. His Self-Portrait reflects confidence, education, and leadership (Oloidi, 1986). He used portraiture to challenge colonial stereotypes and show that Africans were capable of intellectual and artistic achievement.

Like the Oluwo portrait, Onabolu's work represents dignity and personal strength qualities that are essential when portraying Yoruba leaders or priests.

### 3. Yusuf Grillo – Mosque Scene (1964) and Other Portraits

Yusuf Grillo is known for his use of blue tones and his blend of traditional Yoruba themes with modern painting styles. His portrait works often show people in traditional clothing, with expressions that reveal thoughtfulness and peace (Okeke-Agulu, 2015).

His careful use of light and colour to express mood can inspire how the spiritual calmness of an Oluwo might be represented in painting form.

#### 4. Kolade Oshinowo – Portraits of Nigerian Elders

Kolade Oshinowo is another modern Nigerian painter whose works often focus on elders and respected community figures. His portraits celebrate wisdom and experience through detailed facial expressions and rich use of colour (Nwagbara, 2010).

In relation to the Oluwo, Oshinowo's works show how painters can capture both the humanity and authority of traditional figures.

#### 5. Abiodun Olaku – Silent Reflection Series

Abiodun Olaku's realistic painting style is known for its soft lighting and emotional depth. His portraits often reflect dignity and introspection (Drewal, 1992).

This approach can guide how a portrait of the Oluwo may balance realism and spirituality showing inner wisdom through thoughtful composition and atmosphere.

### 2.4 Techniques in painting

Below are several key painting techniques, along with scholarly references for further reading:

- **Glazing:**

Glazing refers to the process of layering thin, translucent paint typically oil or acrylic over a dried, opaque surface. This technique enhances depth, light reflection, and subtle variations in color. Renaissance masters like Jan van Eyck and Leonardo da Vinci used glazing to achieve luminous effects. Mayer (1991), in *The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques*, discusses how glazing builds light and richness in oil painting.

- **Impasto:**

Impasto involves the thick application of paint, often with a brush or palette knife, to create raised, textured surfaces where strokes remain visible. This adds a tactile, expressive quality to a painting. Artists such as Rembrandt and Van Gogh are known for their dynamic use of impasto. Gair (1999), in *The Artist's Handbook: A Step-by-Step Guide to Drawing, Watercolor & Oil Painting*, explains how this method conveys emotion and energy through texture.

- **Wet-on-Wet (Alla Prima):**

Known by its Italian name *alla prima*, meaning “at first attempt,” this technique involves applying fresh paint directly onto wet layers without waiting for them to dry. Used by Impressionist painters such as Monet, it allows for spontaneity and fluid blending. Galton (2001), in *Encyclopedia of Oil Painting Techniques*, illustrates how this technique captures immediacy and vibrancy in a painting.

- **Dry Brush:**

Dry brush painting uses a minimal amount of pigment on a dry brush to create scratchy, broken lines that allow the underlying surface to show through. It's often used in watercolour or acrylic to render details like hair, foliage, or fabric textures. Foster (1988), in *How to Paint with a Dry Brush*, outlines how this technique can be controlled for dramatic surface effects and subtle textures.

- **Grisaille:**

Grisaille is a monochrome painting technique, usually executed in shades of gray, often used either as an underpainting or as a finished work. It helps establish values and form before introducing color. Although more associated with drawing, Reed (1999), in *Basic Drawing Techniques*, mentions grisaille as a foundational process in classical painting, emphasizing tone and structure.

- **Sfumato:**

Sfumato is the technique of softly blending colours and edges so that transitions between tones are smooth and without visible lines. Leonardo da Vinci famously employed this method in works like the *Mona Lisa*. Clark (1988), in *Leonardo da Vinci*, discusses how sfumato was used to create a dreamy, lifelike quality in portraiture.

- **Under painting:**

Under painting is the initial layer of paint applied to a canvas, usually in neutral or monochromatic tones, to define the composition and value structure. It serves as a guide for colour application in later stages. Parramon (1991), in *Colour Theory*, explains how underpainting helps artists plan tonal harmony and depth in their final work.

- **Chiaroscuro:**

Chiaroscuro refers to the strong contrast between light and dark to model three-dimensional forms. Extensively used by Caravaggio and Rembrandt to dramatize figures. Gombrich, E.H. *The Story of Art*. Phaidon Press, 1995. Gombrich explains chiaroscuro's evolution and importance in Western painting

- **Pointillism:**

A technique in which small, distinct dots of colour are applied in patterns to form an image. Developed by Georges Seurat and Paul Signac during the Neo-Impressionist movement. Rewald, John. Post-Impressionism; from Van Gogh to Gauguin. Museum of Modern Art, 1956. Explains how scientific theories of colour and optics influenced pointillism.

## **2.5 Principles of Art and Design**

The principles of art and design are the guidelines artists use to organize and arrange the elements of art (such as line, shape, color, and texture) within a composition. These principles help create balance, emphasis, rhythm, and unity in a visual work, allowing the artist to convey meaning, emotion, and intention effectively.

### **1. Balance**

Balance refers to the distribution of visual weight within a composition. It ensures that no one part of the artwork overwhelms another. There are three main types:

Symmetrical balance: elements are evenly distributed on both sides of a central axis.

Asymmetrical balance: visual weight is balanced through contrast rather than mirrored sides.

Radial balance: elements radiate outward from a central point.

### **2. Contrast**

Contrast is the use of opposing elements (such as light vs. dark, rough vs. smooth, or large vs. small) to create visual interest and highlight differences. It helps direct the viewer's attention and emphasizes important areas in an artwork.

### **3. Emphasis**

Emphasis is used to draw attention to a particular area or subject within the composition. Artists create emphasis by using colour, placement, scale, or contrast to make a part of the artwork stand out as a focal point.

#### **4. Rhythm**

Rhythm in art is the repetition of visual elements such as lines, shapes, or colours to create a sense of movement or flow. It's similar to rhythm in music and can be regular, alternating, or progressive, guiding the viewer's eye through the artwork.

#### **5. Movement**

Movement refers to how the viewer's eye is directed across the artwork. It can be created through lines, shapes, or the arrangement of objects. Movement can also refer to the sense of actual motion within dynamic compositions.

#### **6. Pattern**

Pattern is the repeated use of an element or group of elements in a predictable manner. Patterns can add decoration, structure, or rhythm to an artwork and are commonly found in textiles, architecture, and graphic design.

#### **7. Unity**

Unity is the sense of harmony and cohesion in a design. When all elements and principles work together effectively, the artwork feels complete and visually satisfying. Unity does not mean everything is the same; rather, it means everything works together as a whole.

#### **8. Variety**

Variety adds interest and energy to an artwork by introducing different elements—such as diverse shapes, colours, or textures. While unity brings everything together, variety prevents monotony and keeps the composition engaging.

## **9. Proportion**

Proportion refers to the size relationships between parts of a whole. Artists use correct or exaggerated proportions to show realism, create emphasis, or achieve stylized effects.

## **10. Harmony**

Harmony is closely related to unity and involves the arrangement of elements so that they complement one another. It creates a pleasing effect by combining similar or related visual components.

### **2.6 Elements of Art and Design**

The elements of art and design are the fundamental components artists use to build visual compositions. Just as writers use words and sentences, visual artists use these elements to communicate ideas, emotions, and narratives through their work. Understanding these elements is essential for analyzing and creating any form of visual art.

#### **1. Line**

A line is a continuous mark made on a surface by a moving point. It can vary in width, direction, and length. Lines can be straight, curved, wavy, or broken, and are often used to define shapes, suggest movement, or create texture. They can also convey emotion—for example, sharp lines may feel tense, while flowing lines may feel calm or graceful.

#### **2. Shape**

Shape refers to a two-dimensional area enclosed by lines or contrasts in colour or texture. Shapes can be geometric (like circles, squares, and triangles) or organic (free-form or natural shapes like those found in nature). Artists use shape to build structure and form within their work.

### **3. Form**

While shape is two-dimensional, form is three-dimensional—it has height, width, and depth. Forms can be actual (as in sculpture) or implied (as in drawings and paintings that create the illusion of depth). Examples include cubes, spheres, and cylinders.

### **4. Colour**

Colour is produced when light reflects off an object and reaches the eyes. It has three key properties:

Hue: the name of the colour (e.g., red, blue, yellow)

Value: how light or dark a colour is.

Saturation: the intensity or purity of the colour

Colour can create mood, draw attention, or show contrast and harmony in artwork.

### **5. Value**

Value refers to the lightness or darkness of a colour or tone. It helps create contrast and depth, making two-dimensional works appear more realistic. Shading techniques use value to give form and volume to objects.

### **6. Texture**

Texture is the surface quality of an object—how it feels or looks like it would feel. Texture can be real (tactile, like the rough surface of a sculpture) or visual (an illusion created through drawing or painting). Artists use texture to add interest and detail to their work.

## **7. Space**

Space is the area around, within, or between objects in a work of art. It can be positive (the area occupied by objects) or negative (the empty space around them). Artists also use techniques like perspective, overlapping, and size variation to create the illusion of depth and distance in two-dimensional artworks.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter deals with the design population of study, sampling technique, data collection instruments, materials, production process, and methods of visual analysis

### **3.1 Design of the Study**

This study employed the exploratory research design, which is suitable for creative and practice-based investigations in the visual arts. The exploratory approach allows for flexibility in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting information, making it appropriate for studies that seek to discover new insights and express abstract cultural ideas through visual means.

### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The population of this study is the Yoruba speaking states in Nigeria .The study also considers the broader Nigerian society whose perception and experiences shape the collective understanding of the ogboni society. This population provides the main source of which the case study is originated from.

### **3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique**

The purposive sampling technique was used in this study. This method allows for the deliberate selection of subjects or themes most relevant to the research artist (researcher) intentionally chose the oluwo of the ogboni society as a symbolic case study to visually examine and preserve the cultural aesthetic importance . The sample, therefore, centers on a single portrait that carries deep symbolism.

### **3.4 Instrument for Data Collection**

Data for this study were obtained through both primary and secondary sources.

Primary data included photographic references sketches and observational studies carried out by the researcher in the studio.

Secondary data included , oral questioning of the relatives of the case study journal articles and, online publications,. These materials provided theoretical support and contextual understanding for the studio production.

### **3.5. Description of Materials**

**I. Stretcher Frame:** A wooden framework, typically rectangular and vertically positioned in this study. It serves as the base for stretching the baft (fabric), either for priming or direct use if pre-primed.

**II. Canvas:** A durable, plain-woven fabric made of cotton or linen, used as the surface for painting. It is stretched over a wooden frame and can be used either permanently or temporarily, depending on the artist's needs.

**III. Staple Gun and Staples:** A handheld mechanical device, similar to an office stapler but more robust, used to fasten the canvas securely to the stretcher frame.

**IV. Primer:** A homemade mixture of paint and adhesive (commonly white glue), applied to the stretched canvas to seal pores and prepare the surface for painting.

**V. Paintbrush:** A tool with bristles (natural or synthetic) used to apply paint. Brushes vary in size, shape, and texture depending on the type of work and medium used.

**VI. Oil Paint/Colour:** Oil colour is a type of paint made by mixing finely ground pigments with a drying oil, commonly linseed oil. This combination creates a thick, smooth medium that dries slowly, allowing artists to blend colours and build layers with rich texture and depth.

**VII. Palette Knife and Painting Knife:** Flat, blunt-edged tools resembling narrow spatulas.

Used for mixing paint on the palette and can also be employed in the actual application of paint on the canvas.

**VIII. Palette:** A flat, non-porous surface typically made of wood, plastic, ceramic, or glass—used to arrange and mix paints. It comes in various shapes and sizes.

**IX. Rag:** A piece of cloth used to clean paintbrushes, knives, and palettes during the painting process.

**X. Container:** A cylindrical vessel, usually metal or plastic, used to hold solvents like water, kerosene, or linseed oil required during painting.

**XI. Linseed Oil:** Linseed oil, derived from the seeds of the flax plant, is a natural drying oil widely used in oil painting as a binding agent. When combined with pigments, it forms oil paint by giving the mixture a smooth and manageable texture. Additionally, linseed oil enhances the paint's flexibility, sheen, and drying rate, enabling artists to build up layers and create rich, textured surfaces in their work.

**XII. Top Bond and Calcium:** This is a specific mixture that will be thick when it is well mixed. It can hold itself together on the canvas. It can be used to create a texturized background in this case it was used to create the wall like effect on the project.

### **3.6 Procedure (Studio Production Process)**

This project is carried out under the following stages:

Stage1: Making of Sketches

Stage 2: Construction of a 4ft by 3ft wooden stretcher and stretched the canvas

Stage 3: Prepared a painting ground which includes sizing and priming with specific ratio of top bond and emulsion paint

Stage 4: Transfer of Sketch to the Canvas

Stage 5: Making of the under painting

Stage 6: Painting the main subject and further detailing

Stage 7: Final touches.

### **3.7 Method of Visual Analysis**

A critique (discussion) was carried out to evaluate the project which includes:

1. Project Title
2. Medium
3. Size
4. Concept
5. Draughtsmanship
6. Colour
7. Style
8. Technique
9. Relevant details

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

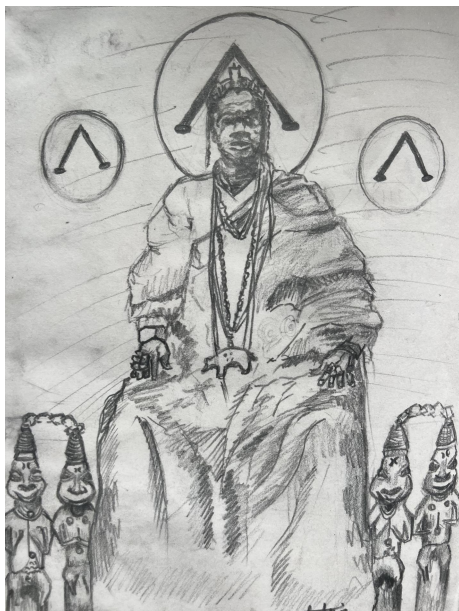
### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

This chapter deals with the detailed description of the studio production process, visual analysis and discussion of results. Here art productions are analyzed; photograph of sketch, works and illustrations are created to express the works. Works could be analyzed individually or collectively based on the objective, stages of the study, procedures and features such as size, style, technique, medium , materials, colour, among others that used for the success of the work

### **Stage 1: Making of Sketches**

Here the pictorial sketch is made to serve as the guideline to the painting.

Figure 1:



Sketch of Composition by Researcher,

*photocredit: Happiness Oyebadejo*

Following composition of sketch model, a composition was created for an efficient and neat arrangement of the figure before it was transferred to the canvas. The sketch serves as a tool to fix any potential anatomical mistakes and familiarize the artist with the motion of curves. Additionally, it facilitates the study of forms for the intended painting's execution, making it simpler than simply copying from a photograph.

### **Stage 2: Constructed a 4ft By 3ft Woodmen Stretchers and Stretched The Canvas**

**Figure 2:**



Construction of stretcher by the researcher *photocredit: by Ehizele .I. Paul*

Construction of 4 by 3ft stretcher is been constructed to have the canvas on as surface for the painting.

**.Stage 3: Prepared a Painting Ground Which Includes Sizing and Priming with Specific Ratio of Top bond and Emulsion Paint**

**Figure 3:**



Priming of Canvas by Researcher. *photocredit: by Ehizele .I. Paul*

A surface that prepares the ground is known as a "painting ground." There were two mechanisms at play: priming and sizing. Sizing is a mixture of top bond glue and water in a 2:1 ratio, or more glue and less water. Its main purpose is to seal the fabric's air pores,

making it less absorbent for painting or other work. The priming procedure comes after the sizing procedure. It is an application of emulsion paint and adhesive that has been diluted 2:3 in water. The purpose of priming is to prepare the surface so that it can accept the application of color or any other substance.

#### **Stage 4: Transferring The Pictorial Composition Sketch on The Canvas**

This is the part where the researcher transferred the sketch to the canvas

#### **Stage 5: Made The Under Painting**

Applying colour to fill the spaces for execution the painting.

Figure 4:



Painting by the Research. *photocredit: Happiness Oyebadejo*

#### **Stage 6: Applying The Mixed Media on The Painting**

In this stage the researcher used the mixture of top-bond and calcium to create a texturized background in this case it was used to create the wall like effect on the project.

Figure 5:



Painting by the Research. *photocredit: Daniel John Seun*

### Stage 7: Proceeded to Painting the Main Subject and Further Detailing

Figure 6:



Painting by the Research. *photocredit: Ehizele Paul*

### Stage 8: Finishing Touches.

This is the final stage of the project as some detail and highlight are laid on painting to give a good vibrant finishing.

Figure 7:



Painting by the Research. *Photocredit: Ehizele Paul*

**Finished work:**

**Figure 8:**



Painting by the Research. *photocredit: Ehizele Paul*

### **Discussion Of The Special Project**

A critique was carried out to evaluate the project:

**Project Title:** “The portrait of an Oluwo of the Ogboni society”

**Medium:** oil on canvas

**Size:** 4ft by 3ft

**Concept:** The concept of the painting centers on the representation of the Oluwo, a high-ranking traditional figure within the Yoruba Ogboni society, is shown as both a custodian of culture and a bridge between the spiritual and physical worlds.

#### Cultural Identity and Power

The Oluwo’s posture seated and facing forward reflects his position as a leader and judge within the community. His calm yet authoritative expression symbolizes wisdom and command, aligning with the Yoruba belief that elders embody the voice of ancestral truth (òrò àgbà ni òrò òrún).

#### Spiritual Symbolism

The red circular backgrounds with geometric black markings behind his head and shoulders resemble halos, suggesting a sacred aura or divine presence. Red, in Yoruba symbolism, often represents vitality, power, and spiritual energy. These circles may also echo the Ogboni emblem, the interlocking triangles signifying justice, unity, and balance between male and female principles.

#### Ancestral Figures and Continuity:

The carved wooden figures flanking the Oluwo on both sides symbolize ancestors and spiritual guardians. They represent continuity, lineage, and the unseen spiritual community that supports the living leader. Their symmetrical arrangement reinforces order and cosmic harmony, which are key themes in Yoruba aesthetics.

#### Material and Regalia:

The Oluwo's attire: deep red robe, beaded necklace, and animal-skin ornament communicates wealth, spiritual potency, and traditional authority.

#### Philosophical Undertone:

Conceptually, the painting reflects a dialogue between tradition and representation how a modern painter reinterprets sacred Yoruba imagery while respecting its spiritual codes. It's not just a portrait; it's a visual meditation on leadership, spirituality, and African identity.

Composition: The subject is centrally placed, occupying the foreground with symmetrical elements on either side, creating visual balance.

Color Scheme: Dominated by deep reds, gold, and earthy brown tones associated with royalty and ritual. The warm palette evokes spirituality and historical depth.

Light and Shadow: The light focuses on the Oluwo's face and upper body, emphasizing his presence and spiritual prominence. The shadow areas add mystery and solemnity.

Background: The pale, brick-like texture contrasts with the bold red symbols, helping the figure stand out while referencing the walls of traditional shrines or temples.

Texture and Brushwork: The thick brush strokes and layering create a tactile feel, suggesting age and reverence, as though the painting itself is an artifact.

Mood: Dignified, reverent, and mystical

### Overall Meaning

This artwork communicates respect for Yoruba tradition, leadership, and spirituality, celebrating the Oluwo as both a historical and metaphysical figure. It merges portrait realism with symbolic abstraction, bridging contemporary art with ancestral heritage.

The painting ultimately asks the viewer to reconsider what power and sacredness mean in African society not as domination, but as wisdom, guardianship, and harmony between the physical and the spiritual.

**Figure 9:**



**Title: The Portrait of an Oluwo of the Ogboni society**

**Medium: oil paint, top bond and calcium on canvas (mixed media)**

**Artist: Happiness Oluwabukunmi Oyebadejo**

**Size: 4 x 3ft**

**Date: October, 2025.**

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter precisely deals with the summary, conclusion and Recommendations.

#### **Summary**

This is a painting of an Oluwo, a high-ranking priest and leader of the Ogboni society, seated in a position of power and reverence. The Oluwo is representing a symbol of authority, spirituality, and cultural identity within Yoruba tradition. Dressed in royal attire, he represents wisdom, justice, and connection to the ancestors.

The red circular symbols behind him are the logos and identity of the society, while the wooden figures on both sides symbolize ancestral presence and protection. The warm color palette of reds, browns, and gold enhances the sense of dignity and sacredness associated with his role.

This study reveals that:

1. Portraiture can effectively communicate the cultural and spiritual essence of traditional Yoruba figures through the integration of symbolism and realism.
2. The choice of medium, colour harmony, and composition plays a significant role in conveying spiritual depth and emotional resonance in portrait painting.
3. The inclusion of traditional motifs and cultural symbols enhances the authenticity and narrative strength of African-themed portraiture.
4. Contemporary artistic techniques can be harmoniously combined with indigenous aesthetics to preserve and reinterpret Yoruba visual heritage.

## **Conclusion**

This painting highlights the cultural and spiritual significance of the Oluwo within the Ogboni society and the broader Yoruba tradition. Through portraiture, the themes of leadership, ancestral connection and spirituality were successfully communicated. The

composition, color, and symbolism collectively honor the Oluwo as both a custodian of tradition and a spiritual authority who embodies wisdom and moral balance.

This work demonstrates how contemporary African art can preserve indigenous identity while using modern techniques to reinterpret traditional subjects. It serves as a bridge between the past and present, showing that African portraiture continues to be a powerful medium for cultural expression, storytelling, and documentation of heritage

### **Recommendations**

1. Cultural Preservation: Artists should continue to explore and document traditional figures like the Oluwo through visual art to ensure that Yoruba spiritual and cultural heritage remains relevant to younger generations.
2. Educational Use: Institutions and art schools should include such artworks in their curriculum to help students understand the relationship between art, culture, and spirituality in African societies.
3. Exhibitions and Documentation: This painting and similar works should be exhibited in galleries and cultural centers to promote awareness and appreciation of indigenous leadership systems.
4. Further Research: Future studies should examine how portraiture can serve as a tool for cultural preservation and spiritual communication, especially within other traditional societies in Nigeria and Africa at large.

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