Typology and Thematic Analysis of Public Sculptures in Abeokuta Metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Public sculptures constitute important visual and cultural assets that enrich urban landscapes through their commemorative, historical, aesthetic, educational and socio-political functions. In Abeokuta, Ogun State, these sculptures are strategically located in public spaces, roundabouts, parks, institutional premises, cemeteries and civic centres, where they contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and the formation of urban identity. Despite their visibility and significance, there is limited scholarly documentation of their typological classifications, thematic orientations and stylistic characteristics. This study therefore examined the typology, thematic content and stylistic characteristics of public sculptures in Abeokuta with a view to documenting their forms, materials, functions and symbolic significance. The study adopted a qualitative research design, employing field observation, photographic documentation and descriptive visual analysis of twenty-two purposively selected public sculptures across the metropolis. Findings revealed that the sculptures are typologically classified into historical, commemorative, cultural, religious, decorative, social and funerary (cemetery) categories. Stylistically, realism and stylised realism predominate, while reinforced concrete, concrete and fibre glass are the principal media employed. Thematically, the sculptures communicate historical memory, heroism, cultural identity, indigenous beliefs, social cohesion, women's contributions and environmental aesthetics. The study concludes that public sculptures in Abeokuta function as enduring repositories of cultural memory, historical documentation, and urban identity, while contributing significantly to the city's aesthetic character. It recommends the formulation of sustainable policies for the documentation, conservation, maintenance, and integration of public sculptures into urban planning and cultural heritage management programmes.

Keywords: Public Sculpture, Typology, Thematic Analysis, Stylistic Analysis, Public Art, Cultural Heritage, Abeokuta.

INTRODUCTION

Public sculpture has become an integral component of contemporary urban environments, serving as a medium through which cities express their history, culture and collective aspirations. Beyond beautifying public spaces, sculptures enrich the visual character of cities by preserving historical memories, commemorating distinguished personalities, and reinforcing cultural identity. Their presence in roadsides, parks, civic centres, institutional premises and recreational spaces demonstrates the growing recognition of art as an important element of sustainable urban development. Consequently, public sculptures have evolved from mere decorative objects into cultural assets that contribute to environmental quality, tourism, education and community engagement.

Adepegba (1995) observes that sculpture occupies a significant position within Nigerian artistic traditions because of its ability to communicate social values and historical experiences through visual forms. In contemporary practice, Akintonde (2008) describes public sculpture as three-dimensional artwork intentionally installed within publicly accessible spaces where it performs commemorative, educational, religious, political and aesthetic functions. Oladugbagbe and Kalilu (2013) further explain that public sculptures constitute permanent visual records through which societies preserve their heritage and communicate collective memory

across generations. Unlike gallery sculptures that are experienced within enclosed exhibition spaces, public sculptures interact directly with people and their environment, making them accessible instruments of cultural communication.

The principal constructs of this study are public sculpture, typology, theme and style. In the context of this research, For the purpose of this study, public sculpture refers to a three-dimensional artwork intentionally created and permanently or semi-permanently installed in a publicly accessible environment within Abeokuta metropolis, where it is available for public viewing and serves commemorative, historical, cultural, religious, social, decorative, or memorial purposes. Such sculptures may take the form of free-standing statues, figurative representations, symbolic forms, monuments, portrait busts, cultural objects, or site-related sculptural works located along roadsides, roundabouts, public spaces, institutional premises, community centres, parks and cemetery environments.

In this study, a sculpture is considered public based primarily on its location, accessibility, intended function and relationship with the community, rather than solely on its ownership or artistic form. Accordingly, the twenty-two sculptures purposively selected for the study include works that commemorate historical personalities and events, represent indigenous occupations and cultural practices, express Yoruba religious traditions, enhance environmental aesthetics, promote social values, or preserve the memory of deceased individuals. Cemetery portrait sculptures are included where they possess public cultural and memorial significance and are situated within accessible cemetery environments. Private artworks, gallery works and sculptures located exclusively within restricted domestic spaces are excluded from the definition.

Ikpakoronyi (2005) defines typology as the systematic classification of sculptures according to identifiable characteristics such as form, function, subject matter, material, location and purpose. According to Oladugbagbe and Akintonde (2016), thematic analysis involves identifying and interpreting the central ideas, symbolic meanings and cultural messages embodied in artworks. Style, on the other hand, refers to the distinctive artistic manner through which forms, materials, techniques and visual elements are organised to produce identifiable aesthetic expressions (Read, 1984). Collectively, these variables provide complementary perspectives for understanding public sculpture. Typology establishes what categories sculptures belong to, thematic analysis explains what they communicate, while stylistic analysis reveals how those ideas are visually expressed. Together, they provide a holistic framework for interpreting the artistic, historical and socio-cultural significance of public sculptures.

The significance of public sculpture has expanded considerably in recent decades as governments and communities increasingly recognise its contribution to urban regeneration and cultural development. Across Europe, North America and Asia, public sculptures have become important components of landscape architecture, urban planning and tourism development. Getlein (2002) argues that artworks derive greater meaning when they engage audiences within everyday public environments, while Grieder (1990) maintains that the relationship between artwork, audience and environment determines the effectiveness of public art. As a result, public sculptures increasingly function as landmarks that reinforce civic identity, encourage social interaction and transform ordinary urban spaces into places of cultural significance.

Within Africa, sculpture has traditionally served religious, political, commemorative and social purposes, (See Figures 1 & 2). Beier (1960) and Willett (1970) observe that African sculptural traditions have consistently reflected the cultural philosophies, historical experiences and spiritual beliefs of their communities. Contemporary public sculpture continues this tradition by integrating indigenous artistic values with modern urban development. In Nigeria, public sculpture has experienced remarkable growth through government patronage, educational institutions and private initiatives. Cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, Benin, Ile-Ife, Abuja, Akure and Osogbo possess numerous public sculptures that commemorate historical events, celebrate cultural achievements and beautify urban landscapes. Odiboh (1987) documented the patronage of outdoor sculpture in Lagos, while Akintonde (2008) provided a comprehensive survey of public sculpture across Southwestern Nigeria. Similarly, Kalilu and Oladugbagbe (2013) and Oladugbagbe (2012) demonstrate that Nigerian public sculpture has developed diverse typological, thematic and stylistic characteristics that reflect both indigenous traditions and contemporary artistic practices.

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Figure 1: Portrait statue of Republic of Benin **Figure 2:** Amazon-the woman warrior,

Sourse Courtesy: www. alamy, 2026. Sourse Courtesy: Pininterest, 2026.

Abeokuta, the capital city of Ogun State, occupies an important position within the cultural landscape of Southwestern Nigeria. Located approximately one hundred kilometres north of Lagos, the city was founded around 1830 by the Egba people as a refuge during the Yoruba internecine wars. Its name, meaning "under the rock," derives from the famous Olumo Rock, which served as a natural fortress and remains one of Nigeria's foremost cultural landmarks. The city possesses a rich artistic heritage expressed through wood carving, metal casting, pottery, textile production, architecture and sculpture. Cultural festivals such as Lisabi Day, Egungun Festival and other indigenous celebrations continue to sustain these artistic traditions, while historical personalities including Lisabi Agbongbo Akala, Madam Efunroye Tinubu, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and other distinguished Egba icons remain enduring sources of artistic inspiration (Agiri, 2000; Adepegba, 1995).

Public sculptures have become prominent features of Abeokuta's urban landscape. Located at strategic road intersections, public parks, institutional environments and civic spaces, they commemorate heroes, celebrate cultural traditions, preserve historical memory and reinforce the identity of the Egba people. Akintonde and

Seyi-Gbangbayau (2013) observe that carnival sculptures in Abeokuta illustrate the relationship between artistic creativity and socio-political consciousness among Egba youths. Likewise, Seyi-Gbangbayau (2022) identifies diverse stylistic expressions in the city's public artworks, while Ifeta, Idowu, Adenke and Ochei (2021) maintain that the preserved artworks of Abeokuta constitute important visual records of the city's multicultural history and artistic development.

Although scholarship on Nigerian public sculpture has expanded considerably, available studies have largely concentrated on outdoor sculpture, institutional sculpture, garden sculpture, carnival sculpture, funerary sculpture and other specialised aspects of public art. Akintonde (2008) investigated outdoor sculpture across Southwestern Nigeria; Ikpakoronyi (2005) examined the classification of public sculptures in Benin City; Kalilu and Oladugbagbe (2013) explored the morphology of garden sculpture; while Oladugbagbe and Akintonde (2016) analysed thematic issues in the garden sculptures of the Ife Art School. More recent studies by Idowu and Ayinmode (2024), Oriola and Akande-Adedeji (2025), Seyi-Gbangbayau and Olowu (2025) and Idowu and Seyi-Gbangbayau (2026) have extended scholarship to indigenous design, heritage preservation, sustainability and funerary sculpture. However, there is still no comprehensive study that systematically documents and analyses the typological, thematic and stylistic characteristics of public sculptures in Abeokuta. Consequently, the city's public sculptures remain inadequately documented despite their significance as repositories of history, culture and urban identity. This study addresses this gap by examining the typology, thematic orientations and stylistic characteristics of public sculptures in Abeokuta, with a view to documenting their artistic forms, interpreting their symbolic meanings and establishing their contributions to the cultural landscape of Ogun State.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing number and cultural significance of public sculptures in Abeokuta, they remain inadequately documented and critically understudied. Existing studies have focused largely on public and outdoor sculptures in broader regional contexts, with little attention given to the typological, thematic and stylistic characteristics of the public sculptures in Abeokuta. This gap has limited scholarly understanding of their artistic significance, cultural value and contribution to the city's historical identity and urban landscape. Unless these sculptures are systematically documented and analysed, valuable aspects of Abeokuta's artistic heritage may remain underappreciated or be lost. This study therefore undertakes a typological, thematic and stylistic analysis of public sculptures in Abeokuta, Ogun State, with a view to documenting their characteristics and highlighting their significance to cultural heritage and urban identity.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the typology, thematic orientations and stylistic characteristics of public sculptures in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives are to:

1. identify and document the public sculptures located within Abeokuta metropolis;
2. classify the public sculptures in Abeokuta according to their typological characteristics;
3. examine the thematic orientations expressed by the public sculptures;
4. analyse the stylistic characteristics of the public sculptures; and
5. evaluate the contributions of the public sculptures to the preservation of cultural heritage, historical memory and urban identity in Abeokuta.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public sculpture constitutes an important aspect of visual art that combines artistic expression with social, cultural and environmental functions. Unlike gallery sculptures, public sculptures are intentionally sited in

publicly accessible spaces where they communicate historical events, commemorate notable personalities and enrich the aesthetic quality of the environment. Adepegba (1995) regards sculpture as a significant medium through which societies preserve cultural traditions and historical experiences, while Akintonde (2008) explains that public sculptures serve commemorative, educational, religious, political and decorative purposes within contemporary urban landscapes. Similarly, Oladugbagbe and Kalilu (2013) and Kalilu and Oladugbagbe (2013) maintain that public sculptures are integral components of environmental design because they combine artistic creativity with cultural communication.

Typology, theme and style constitute the major analytical variables for interpreting public sculpture. Ikpakoronyi (2005) defines typology as the systematic classification of sculptures according to their forms, functions, materials, locations and subject matter, whereas thematic analysis focuses on the ideas, values and symbolic meanings communicated through visual forms. Style, according to Read (1984), refers to the distinctive artistic manner through which sculptors organise forms, techniques and materials to produce identifiable visual expressions. The interaction among these variables provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the artistic, historical and socio-cultural significance of public sculpture.

The theoretical understanding of public sculpture is closely associated with public art and environmental aesthetics, both of which emphasise the relationship between artworks, their environment and the viewing public. Getlein (2002) argues that artworks derive greater meaning when experienced within everyday public environments, while Grieder (1990) observes that public sculpture acquires significance through continuous interaction between the artwork, its audience and its physical setting. African scholars similarly contend that public sculptures function as symbolic texts through which communities express their collective memory, cultural identity and social aspirations (Beier, 1960; Willett, 1970; Vansina, 1984).

Empirical studies reveal a steady growth of scholarship on public sculpture in Nigeria. Odiboh (1987) examined outdoor sculptures in Lagos Metropolis and highlighted patterns of patronage and public appreciation. Akintonde (2008) later documented the evolution, typology and geographical distribution of outdoor sculpture in Southwestern Nigeria, demonstrating their historical, commemorative and environmental functions. Likewise, Ikpakoronyi (2005) classified public sculptures in Benin City according to their cultural relevance, while Kalilu and Oladugbagbe (2013) and Oladugbagbe and Kalilu (2013) investigated the morphology, iconography and stylistic development of garden and institutional sculptures in Nigerian art schools. Expanding this discourse, Oladugbagbe and Akintonde (2016) analysed the thematic orientations of the garden sculptures of the Ife Art School, whereas Akintonde and Oladugbagbe (2017) examined gender representation in public outdoor sculpture across Southwestern Nigeria. More recent studies have extended scholarship to public art in Abeokuta, indigenous artistic traditions, sustainability and funerary sculpture (Akintonde & Seyi-Gbangbayau, 2013; Seyi-Gbangbayau, 2022; Ifeta et al., 2021; Idowu & Ayinmode, 2024; Oriola & Akande-Adedeji, 2025; Seyi-Gbangbayau & Olowu, 2025; Idowu & Seyi-Gbangbayau, 2026).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Abeokuta metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria, covering major public locations where sculptures are prominently displayed. These include Adatan, Ake, Ako-Oba, Ijaye, Oke-Ilewo, Ijemo, Sokori, Ago-Egun, Kesi, Oke-Ijeun, Isale-Ijeun, Imo, Itoku Junction, Olumo Rock and Akinolugbade Lantoro Cemetery, as well as other interior locations within the metropolis.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select twenty-two (22) public sculptures based on their accessibility, historical significance, cultural relevance, visibility and artistic merit. Each sculpture was observed in its original setting and documented photographically to facilitate detailed visual examination.

Data were analysed qualitatively using typological, thematic and stylistic analytical approaches. The typological analysis classified the sculptures according to their forms, functions and subject matter; thematic analysis examined the symbolic meanings and socio-cultural messages embodied in the sculptures; while stylistic analysis evaluated their formal characteristics, including composition, modelling, proportion, technique, materials and artistic expression. The findings are presented descriptively and supported with

photographic illustrations to provide a comprehensive understanding of the public sculptures and their contributions to the cultural landscape of Abeokuta.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Inventory of Public Sculptures in Abeokuta

Figure No.	Sculpture	Location	Medium	Typology
Fig. 3	Lisabi Agbongbo Akala	Adatan roundabout	Concrete	Historical
Fig. 4	Iyalode Tinubu	Sokori	Reinforced concrete	Historical/Commemorative
Fig. 5	Rev. Ransome-Kuti & Funmilayo Kuti	Imo	Concrete	Historical
Fig. 6	Late Oba Adewale Adisa Olaleye, Olowu of Owu	Sokori behind Ori Omi	Fibre glass	Historical/Commemorative
Fig. 7	Madam Majekodunmi	Ita Adekunle	Concrete	Historical
Figs. 8–9	Jojolola	Itoku junction	Concrete	Cultural
Fig. 10	Iya Eleko	Ijemo	Concrete	Cultural
Fig. 11	Ape	Ijemo	Concrete	Cultural
Fig. 12	Ologbojigolo	Ijaye	Concrete	Cultural
Fig. 13	Gangan and Pot	Ijaye roundabout	Concrete	Cultural
Fig. 14	Igunuko	Ago Egun	Concrete	Cultural/Religious
Fig. 15	Ile Orisa	Ago Egun	Relief concrete	Cultural/Religious
Fig. 16	Gelede	Ago Egun	Concrete	Cultural/Religious
Fig. 17	Small London	Itoko	Concrete	Carnival commemorative
Fig. 18	Ologbo (Awon Ologbo)	Oke Ijeun	Fibreglass	Cultural/Carnival commemorative
Fig. 19	The Divers	Ago Oba junction	Concrete	Social/Decorative
Fig. 20	Unity	Oke Ilewo roundabout	Concrete	Decorative
Fig. 21	Sokenu	Ijaye (Sokenu area)	Fibreglass	Historical
Fig. 22	Chief S.O. Kuforiji (Bust)	Lantoro Cemetery	Concrete	Historical/Decorative
Not illustrated	Chief Akinolugbade	Akinolugbade Hospital	Fibre glass	Historical
Not illustrated	Rev. Father Coquard	Kesi	Concrete	Historical
Not illustrated	Sodeke	Ake roundabout	Concrete	Historical

Source: Field Survey by the author, 2025.

Note: Due to space limitations and the need to maintain a balanced presentation of the study, not all the documented sculptures are individually illustrated in the photographic section. The selection of photographs was therefore based on considerations of space, visual clarity, typological representation, and the avoidance of unnecessary repetition. The sculptures not illustrated photographically are, however, fully documented and included in the inventory and analysis presented in the study.

Typological Analysis of Public Sculptures

The inventory reveals that historical and commemorative sculptures constitute the largest typological group, reflecting Abeokuta's rich political and cultural history. These sculptures honour prominent figures such as Lisabi Agbongbo Akala, Sodeke, Iyalode Tinubu and the Ransome-Kuti family, reinforcing collective memory and civic identity. (Figs. 3- 6) Cultural sculptures depict indigenous occupations, traditional objects and community life, while religious sculptures preserve Yoruba ritual traditions through masquerade and shrine

representations. Decorative, social and funerary sculptures occur less frequently but contribute to the aesthetic, symbolic and memorial functions of public spaces. This typological pattern supports earlier observations that Nigerian public sculptures primarily perform commemorative and socio-cultural roles (Akintonde, 2008; Ikpakoronyi, 2005).

Fig. 3: Lisabi Agbongbo Akala.

Fig. 4: Iyalode Tinubu

Source Courtesy: The Researchers, 2026

Fig. 5: Rev. Ransome Kuti and Mrs Funmilayo Kuti.

Source Courtesy: The Researchers, 2026

Historical/Commemorative Sculptures

This is the most dominant category, accounting for almost half of the documented sculptures. They commemorate personalities whose contributions shaped the political, cultural and social development of Egba society. Examples include Iyalode Tinubu, Oba Adeleye, Sodeke, Madam Majekodunmi, Chief Akinolugbade, Sokenu, Lisabi Agbongbo Akala, Jojolola the second Iyalode of , Rev. Ransome and Mrs. Funmilayo Kuti, and Rev. Father Coquard. (Figs. 7- 10). These sculptures preserve collective memory and transform urban spaces

into historical archives. Their locations at major junctions and community centres ensure continuous public engagement.

Fig. 6: Late Oba Adisa Adeleye, Olowu of Owu.

Fig. 7: Madam Majekodunmi

Source Courtesy: The Researcher, 2026

Figs. 8 & 9: Jojolola Square, Itoku

Source Courtesy: The Researchers, 2026

Cultural and Descriptive Sculptures

The second major typology comprises sculptures representing indigenous occupations, community symbols and material culture. Sculptures such as Iya Eleko, Ape, Ologbojigolo, and Gangan Drum and Pot document occupations, traditional crafts and local identity. (Figs. 11 - 14). Rather than commemorating individuals, they celebrate the everyday cultural experiences that define various Abeokuta communities.

Religious and Ritual Sculptures

Religious sculptures include Igunuko Masquerade, Ile Orisa, and Gelede Masquerade. (Figs 15- 17) These works preserve Yoruba religious traditions and ritual performances while reinforcing indigenous belief systems. Their concentration around Ago-Egun reflects the historical significance of masquerade traditions within Egba culture.

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Fig.10: Iya Eleko, Ijemo junction.

Fig 11: Ape, Ijemo junction

Source Courtesy: The Researcher, 2026

Decorative Sculptures

Decorative sculptures, represented by Small London and Ologbo, primarily enhance environmental aesthetics. (Figs. 18 & 19) Although decorative in appearance, they equally possess symbolic associations with community history and annual carnival activities, demonstrating that decoration and cultural symbolism frequently coexist in public sculpture.

Social Sculpture

The sculptures titled Unity and Divers (Figs 20 & 21) represents the social typology. Unlike commemorative monuments, it symbolises communal harmony, peaceful coexistence and collective progress. It serves as a civic symbol rather than a historical monument.

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Fig. 12: Ologbojigolo, Ijaye **Fig. 13:** Talking Drum and the Pot, Ijaye

Source Courtesy: The Researchers, 2026

Fig 14 & 15: Igunnuko masquerade and Ile Orisa, Ago Egun. **Fig. 16:** Gelede Masquerade, Ago-Egun

Source Courtesy: The Researchers, 2026

Portraiture and Cemetery Sculpture

The Bust Portrait of Chief Kuforiji ((Fig 22)) represents funerary or cemetery sculpture. Unlike sculptures installed in public squares, cemetery sculptures preserve personal memory and honour deceased individuals while contributing to funerary heritage.

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Fig 17: Small London, Itoko **Fig 18: Awon Ologbo,** Isale Ijeun

Source Courtesy: The Researchers, 2026

Fig 19: Divers, Ago-Oba Round about. **Fig 20:** Unity, Oke-Ilewo rounabout

Source Courtesy: The Researchers, 2026

Thematic Analysis

The public sculptures communicate diverse themes that reflect the historical and socio-cultural evolution of Abeokuta. The dominant theme is historical memory, expressed through monuments commemorating heroes, traditional rulers and nationalist figures. Closely related is the theme of cultural identity, evident in sculptures portraying indigenous occupations, traditional musical instrum ents and Yoruba customs. Religious sculptures reinforce indigenous beliefs and ritual traditions, while works such as Unity promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Collectively, the sculptures project leadership, heroism, communal values, women's contributions and the preservation of Egba heritage. These findings corroborate the view that public sculpture functions as a visual repository of history and culture (Oladugbagbe & Kalilu, 2013; Oladugbagbe & Akintonde, 2016).

Historical Memory and Heroism

The strongest theme is historical remembrance. Sculptures of Sodeke, Lisabi, Sokenu, Oba Adeleye, Iyalode Tinubu and Chief Akinolugbade celebrate leadership, courage and the founding history of Abeokuta. They reinforce communal identity by reminding residents of individuals whose achievements shaped Egba civilisation.

Cultural Identity

Sculptures such as Iya Eleko, Jojolola, Gangan Drum and Pot, and Ape celebrate indigenous occupations, textile production, traditional music and material culture. They visually preserve aspects of everyday Egba life that might otherwise diminish with modernization.

Religion and Indigenous Belief

The representations of Igunuko, Gelede, and Ile Orisa express the continuing relevance of Yoruba spirituality and ritual traditions. These sculptures reinforce the cultural importance of masquerade institutions as vehicles of morality, entertainment and communal cohesion.

Women and Social Development

The sculptures of Iyalode Tinubu, Madam Majekodunmi, and Jojolola acknowledge women's leadership in politics, commerce and textile production. This demonstrates deliberate efforts to recognise female contributions within Egba history, thereby balancing the predominance of male heroic monuments.

Social Cohesion

The Unity sculpture communicates peace, cooperation and collective progress, while carnival sculptures such as Small London reveal community participation and creative expression among local youths.

Stylistic Analysis

Stylistically, the sculptures reveal remarkable consistency despite differences in subject matter.

Realism

Realism is the dominant stylistic approach. Most historical monuments portray recognisable human anatomy, costume and facial features to ensure immediate public identification. Sculptures of Sodeke, Lisabi, Oba Adeleye, Iyalode Tinubu and the Kuti family exemplify this representational style.

Stylised Realism

Several cultural sculptures simplify anatomical details while retaining recognisable forms. Examples include Iya Eleko, Jojolola, Gangan Drum and Pot, and the masquerade figures. The stylisation enhances symbolic expression without sacrificing recognisability.

Symbolism

Non-figurative sculptures such as Ape and Ologbo rely primarily on symbolic representation rather than literal depiction. Their meanings derive from local historical narratives and community associations instead of anatomical realism.

Portraiture

The cemetery bust of Chief Kuforiji adopts a portrait tradition that emphasises individual likeness, remembrance and memorialisation. This style differs from civic monuments because it addresses personal rather than communal memory.

Materials and Technique

Concrete is the overwhelmingly dominant material, reflecting its affordability, durability and suitability for outdoor conditions. Fibre glass appears mainly in more recent commemorative works, while reinforced concrete is represented by the sculpture of Iyalode Tinubu. This preference for concrete indicates the influence of local materials and construction practices on public sculpture in Abeokuta.

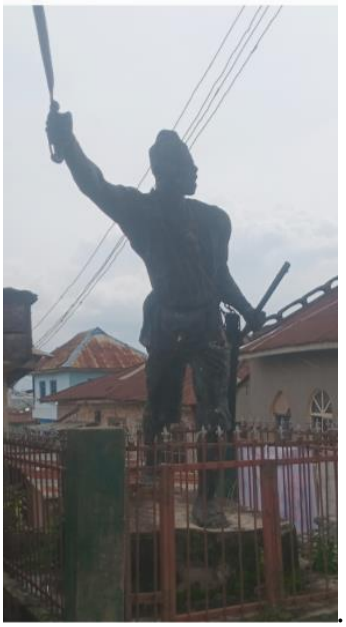

Figure 21: Sokenu, Sokenu area, Ijaye.

Fig 22: Chief S.O. Kuforiji, 1998

Source Courtesy: The Researchers, 2025

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings demonstrate that public sculptures in Abeokuta serve purposes beyond aesthetic embellishment. Their typological diversity reflects the city's historical evolution and cultural plurality, while their thematic content reinforces collective memory, indigenous identity and civic consciousness. The predominance of historical monuments agrees with previous studies on public sculpture in Southwestern Nigeria, which identify commemoration as the principal function of public monuments (Akintonde, 2008; Odiboh, 1987). Likewise, the dominance of realism supports earlier observations that Nigerian public sculptures favour representational styles to facilitate historical communication and public engagement (Kalilu & Oladugbagbe, 2013; Oladugbagbe & Kalilu, 2013). Unlike earlier studies that focused on outdoor sculpture generally or on specific categories such as garden, carnival or institutional sculpture, this study provides an integrated typological, thematic and stylistic appraisal of public sculptures across Abeokuta, thereby extending existing scholarship on public art in Southwestern Nigeria.

Artist Identity

The study reveals that most of the public sculptures in Abeokuta metropolis do not have the artists' names or signatures inscribed on them except for Lisabi and Sodeke at Adatan and Ake roundabouts respectively by Funke Ifeta and Sokenu at Sokenu area of Ijaye by Paul Seyi-Gbangbayau inscribed on the gun of the statue. Some of them that have commemorative plaques don't have the artist's name on them except the two by Ifeta.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the typological, thematic and stylistic characteristics of public sculptures in Abeokuta, Ogun State. Findings show that Abeokuta's public sculpture tradition is predominantly historical in typology, cultural in thematic orientation and realistic in style. Historical and commemorative sculptures constitute the largest category, reflecting the city's commitment to preserving Egba heritage and honouring notable personalities. Thematically, the sculptures communicate heroism, cultural identity, indigenous traditions, social

cohesion and historical consciousness, while realism and stylised realism dominate their stylistic expression. The study concludes that public sculptures in Abeokuta are important visual repositories of history and culture that reinforce collective memory, urban identity and the aesthetic character of the city, while contributing to scholarship on Nigerian public art.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the followings:

Government and cultural institutions should strengthen the documentation, conservation and maintenance of public sculptures in Abeokuta.

Public sculptures should be integrated into tourism, heritage and cultural education programmes to enhance their social and economic value.

Artists, art historians and urban planners should collaborate in the planning and siting of future public sculptures.

Artists should always inscribe their names, signatures or other forms of identity on their public sculptures for the purpose of proper documentation.

Further studies should investigate the iconography, patronage, conservation challenges and public perception of public sculptures in Abeokuta and other Nigerian cities.

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