

Yoruba Philosophy and the Seeds of Enlightenment

Advancing Yoruba Philosophy

Yemi D. Prince
(Yemi D. Ogunyemi)

Vernon Series in Philosophy



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Map of Yoruba-land





Symbol of Yoruba Philosophy

Y=Yoruba

P=Philosophy

O=Head (Ori)

The figure bearing Head and Philosophy represents
philosopher-king
Oduwa, seated couchant.

*To Prince Omoneye Ogunyemi
The youngest blood
Who departed
Without crossing
The Bridge*

Dedicated to Chief Obafemi Awolowo (the Best President Nigeria never had) for his vision and magnanimity was the upshot of the scholarship that his administration awarded me (and other children in Western Nigeria) to complete my Primary School Education.

And to Chief Susanne Wenger and Professor Ulli Beier for sacrificing their time and faculties (ori) to promoting/projecting the aesthetics of the Yoruba arts and culture, and for being instrumental to the mainstay of the Oshogbo School of Arts Movement.

Poetic Birthday

Born in 01-01-01 betwixt Mortality and Immortality. That was when the age, a number, meant nothing to me but immortality.

Shedding Light

Folk Philosophy: A folk philosophy (as applied to Yoruba philosophy) is the cultural philosophy of a people depicting their cardinal virtues such as love, justice, temperance, valour, honour, honesty, morality, prudence and fortitude.

Yoruba Philosophy: Yoruba philosophy is a narrative, cultural, folk or literary philosophy explicating and pointing to the knowledge of the causes and nature of things affecting the corporeal and the spiritual universe

Literary Philosophy: Literary philosophy is the blending of philosophy with religion (autochthonous religion in the case of Yoruba) and literature.

The Demythologized Deities/Divinities: The demythologized Yoruba Divinities are the divinities (often called pedigrees/ancestors) who have contributed immensely to the meaning and life-building of the Yoruba people. Their imaginative and real presence in Yoruba life have made themselves relevant in Yoruba folk philosophy. These Divinities (amongst others) include Divinity-Philosopher King Oduduwa, Divinity-Philosopher Obatala, Divinity-Philosopher Ogun, Divinity-Philosopher Sango, Divinity-Philosopher Oshun, Divinity-Philosopher Oya, Divinity-Philosopher Olokun, Divinity-Philosopher Orunmila, Divinity-Philosopher Sopona, Divinity-Philosopher Yemoja, Divinity-Philosopher Esu, Divinity-Philosopher Oshosi.

Yemi D. Prince, PhD: (Yemi D. Ogunyemi)
(Literary Philosopher)

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Preamble

“Yoruba Philosophy” is a commonplace phrase in the literary, religious, historical, sociological, archaeological and anthropological circles. Broadly, it designates the thoughts of Divinity-Philosophers in ancient Yoruba land. The research on ancient philosophers lets us know that Olofin Adimula Oduduwa is the pioneer of Yoruba philosophy. Thus Olofin Adimula Oduduwa remains the centre or pivot of the ancient and oral and contemporary Yoruba philosophy.

The present or the on-going discussion and study commenced in 19th century with the works of Bishop (Dr.) Ajayi Crowther (1807-1891). From this discussion and study, we will know what we need to know and comprehend about Yoruba philosophy.

The Conspectus

Chapter One: Yoruba Philosophy in the Beginning: This chapter shows the vortex of uncertainties during the proto-history of Ile-Ife and how Oduduwa discreetly used his faculty/head (ori) to put things in order, taking cognizance of the natural virtues. This chapter let us know that Philosophy, the act of reasoning is antecedent to religion.

Chapter Two: The Kernel of Yoruba Philosophy: This shows the trichotomic quintessence of Yoruba culture, embodying philosophy, religion and literature.

Chapter Three: A Leadership Philosophy: Here it is shown to the world that the ability to lead is the ability to understand and consider the opinions of others, young and old, as contained in Yoruba ethical values. Comprehension and reasoning should start at an early stage.

Chapter Four: The Power of Words: Either in an oral culture or in a written culture, this chapter lets us know how words have become a sine qua non in our daily life.

Chapter Five: Some Hints in Teaching Yoruba Philosophy: This chapter pinpoints some fundamental topics while teaching Yoruba philosophy as an academic subject.

Chapter Six: The Philosophy of Sacrifice: This shows how creatures are being sacrificed by the sacrificers on a daily basis. In short, there are sacrificers and the sacrificed. That the world is a whirligig is incontrovertible.

Chapter Seven: Head, the Philosophy of the Body: This chapter depicts the head as the captain, the definition and the substrate onto which other parts of the body are answerable to.

Chapter Eight: A Typical Yoruba Narrative Philosophy: This lets us know a classical narrative about how an ostrich lost his flight feathers when he did not properly carry his head (ori). Consequently, he became a flightless bird.

Chapter Nine: Diviners as Philosophers: This chapter lets us know that there are traits of philosophy in a diviner, as there are traits of divination in a philosopher. What is common to both diviner and

philosopher is the knowledge and the truth. They are perpetual seekers. Both of them seek knowledge and truth. This is their principal goal.

Chapter Ten: Artistic Expression of Yoruba Philosophy: This chapter sheds lights on how sculptural artists had worked hard and expressed themselves spiritually and corporeally like philosophers. In proto-history, they formed different Art Guilds in Ile-Ife, which could be likened to our Cultural Schools of Philosophy, today.

Chapter Eleven: The Metaphysical Divinities: Spearheaded by Oduduwa, this chapter supplies the chronology of the ten Yoruba philosophers who opened the door to the Yoruba Book of Enlightenment and prepared them for the act of reasoning.

Chapter Twelve: The Ontological Journey to the Atlantic Yoruba: This chapter lets us know how one of the children of Oduduwa journeyed to the southern part of Yorubaland and founded the Atlantic Yoruba.

Chapter Thirteen: The Theory of Narrative Philosophy: The theory of narrative philosophy is an explicit conspectus about the narrative philosophy, as expounded by Mi Rivera, who went around the world as a raconteur, telling and collecting old and new stories.

Chapter Fourteen: Vicissitudes of Yoruba Philosophy: This chapter seeks to pinpoint the up and down about the Yoruba Philosophy.

Chapter Fifteen: The Sociology of Yoruba Philosophy: This chapter essays to shed light upon the country and urban philosophy.

Chapter Sixteen: Symbolisms of Yoruba Thought: What are the symbolisms of Yoruba philosophy? This chapter seeks to answer the question.

Chapter Seventeen: The Import of Chief Awo's Philosophy: This chapter sheds light on Chief Awo's political philosophy, who is today remembered as the President Nigeria never had.

Chapter Eighteen: The Sublimity of Fagunwa's Metaphysics: This chapter brings to light D.O. Fagunwa, the first folk philosopher in post oral culture Yorubaland.

Chapter Nineteen: The Royalties and the Yoruba Thought: This concerns itself with the king and his royal family. It helps us understand the role played by the king regarding folk/cultural philosophy. Natural virtues are at the disposal of the royalties.

Chapter Twenty: The Import of Ijapa's Philosophy: This chapter reveals how Ijapa is the greatest folk/narrative philosopher the Yorubaland ever knows.

Chapter Twenty-One: Yoruba Philosophy of Happiness: This shows the path to the philosophy of happiness as it relates to the Yoruba people.

Chapter Twenty-Two: The New Dawn—Part One: Shows the Movement towards African/Cultural Enlightenment during the second half of the 20th century.

Chapter Twenty-Three: The New Dawn—Part Two: This chapter manifests the stages of Cultural Movement in respect of Enlightenment.

Chapter Twenty-Four: The Way to Enlightenment: This chapter names four luminaries (Fagunwa, Crowther, Johnson and Soyinka) who have contributed largely to the Way of Enlightenment.

Chapter Twenty-Five: The Effects of Psychology on Yoruba Thought: This chapter manifests how psychology/divination works in tandem with philosophy.

Chapter Twenty-Six: The Characteristics of Yoruba Pragmatism: What are the characteristics of Yoruba pragmatism? This chapter sheds light on them.

Chapter Twenty-Seven: The Effects of Paradoxes on Yoruba Philosophy: Here Yoruba philosophy shows some effects of paradoxes.

Chapter Twenty-Eight: The Impacts of Proverbs on Yoruba Thought: Proverbs are very common when it comes to the act of reasoning. This chapter expatiates on some.

Chapter Twenty-Nine: The Philosophical Aphorisms: This chapter enumerates some of the common-place philosophical aphorisms. It helps one to comprehend the fact that Yoruba land is rich in maxims, proverbs and sayings which are often the precincts of the keepers of traditions.

Chapter Thirty: The Colorful House of Ethics: Here some ethical values and cardinal virtues of the land are made known.

Chapter Thirty-One: The Religion-Philosophy of Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1807-1891): This chapter relates and illustrates how Bishop (Dr.) Samuel Ajayi Crowther showed his passion for religion and folk philosophy before and after his consecration in 1864.

Chapter Thirty-Two: Philosophy of Yoruba Language: This chapter speaks to Philosophy of Language in general and of Yoruba in particular. It lets us know that language philosophers always seek to understand the way language represents reality.

Preface

Yemi D. Ogunyemi's *Yoruba Philosophy and the seeds of Enlightenment* is a masterpiece that developed in a phenomenal, stage-like process, thereby capturing the essence of the importance of a taste that would make for a thorough understanding that Yorubaland has enough love and wisdom, foundational to possessing a philosophy in its own right.

A former research fellow of Harvard University, Yemi D. Ogunyemi (whose literary/pen name is Yemi D. Prince) has thrilled many a reader with his numerous literary works. His works – particularly this present book – are no doubt imbued with creativity in the realm of rare originality and ingenuity.

The head (**Ori**) that assumes a spiritually-distinguished status among the Yoruba is literarily portrayed in this book. Indeed, **Ori** is synonymous with the Creator, referred to as Creator-Philosopher Olodumare. He is the greatest philosopher that ever lived. The assumption by Oduduwa and his contemporaries that Olodumare was also the creator of the contents of world is in line with the belief system of other religions, since all other religions basically believe in the Almighty God, given different names in the context of the various languages and dialects associated with them. Because God is not visible, the medium of supplications is a necessity. The disconnect, however, arises where, since humans are created in the image of God, dependence on His creation as gods/goddesses is utterly disdained by God, the Supreme Being and the Maker of heaven and earth.

The important hallmarks of this book graphically consist in the dichotomy between worshipers and worship buildings (namely shrines, temples, etc.); between masculine and feminine elements; and the absence of limitation of God solely to a particular religion, regardless of its name. Thus, there is only one God: worshipers differ in their varying modes of worship. Even among the Yoruba, specialization is the order of the day, with, for instance, Orunmila specializing in psychology, thereby interpreting the nature of an individual's **Ori** and its destiny, which is heavenly orchestrated.

Philosophy, in this context, is less leaned upon, though philosophy is generally antecedent to religion itself.

The periods of cultural, enlightenment movement divided into four – when Ile-Ife was rich in aesthetic terracotta, the amalgamation of Nigeria and the preceding period, the nationalist movement, the arts and literary movements, coupled with the emergence of renowned writer-playwrights – give this book a sharper focus. Interestingly enough, the role of Afrocentric scholars and intellectuals in the realm of African Cultural Philosophy readily fits in with these phenomenal episodes.

Of fascinating research significance is the fact that the ancient Yorubaland propagated the knowledge of its worldviews on cosmogony, cosmology, love, and morality via the medium of sculpting and carving. This has paved the way for historiography in which oral tradition is a centerpiece. The sculpting and carving existed in lieu of publication. Having been accorded a literary, modern flavor, this book easily lends itself to be of use for students and the general public, particularly those whose unsolicited encouragement motivated the author to work on it and get it published. Indeed, its cultural, philosophical, literary, and didactic significance as a vibrant, enlightening mechanism cannot be overemphasized.

Joshua Adekunle Awosan, Ph.D.

Introduction

Ever since *The Artist-Philosophers in Yoruba-land* and *We Should All Be Philosophers* were both published in 2016, ever since *The Covenant of the Earth* and *Introduction to Yoruba Philosophy, Religion and Literature* were published in 1991 and 1998, respectively, some students and members of the public wanted to know when I would be writing a book, a full-fledged book on Yoruba Philosophy. First, I began to cudgel my brains in order to comprehend the body of love and wisdom (the Book of Enlightenment/Ifa-Ife Divine Divination) which has aided and sustained the lives of the Yoruba people for hundreds of years. It is incumbent on me to commence to define and define again and again that body of love and wisdom, as other faiths are wedging it apart. Second, I beseeched the divine intervention which every faith-believer does, to guard and guide me on the project, a task that must be done, knowing full well that Yoruba philosophy cannot stand alone without a prop from religion and literature. But I know that the project is worth carrying out if only to give credit to recent researches and advances in the theory of folk/cultural or narrative philosophy.

After a number of years, I recognized that I was faced with two challenges—the challenges as to how to expound to the proto-history philosophy and the current challenge, growing fruitlessly ever since the Yoruba land became a literate milieu. At these two challenges, my heart rejoiced exceedingly, realizing that I would never again run away from my reality just because I have found a comfort zone. The time to scratch my head: the time to take the bull by the horns and the serpent by the tail has come.

How this will defy the conventional wisdom is the news that a new child has been born, born to drag philosophy from the back burner to the front burner and let it breathe freely like religion.

Happily enough, the research that led to the publication of *The Oral Traditions in Ile-Ife* in 2010, lets me know that the head/faculty (ori) is the substrate onto which other parts of the body are answerable. Other parts of the body are answerable to the

head because Yoruba narrative/folk philosophy is a body of **love and wisdom**. Additionally, it gave me an added confidence when the Ifa-Ife Divination (the body of **love and wisdom or knowledge**) is being recognized worldwide as *the Book of Enlightenment*.

Yet another Gordian knot crept in like a blessing in disguise, as the search for the appropriate title of the book was proving difficult to me to find. I started by entitling it Cultural Enlightenment, which could have touched on the Cultural Enlightenment of the Yoruba People and the Political awakening sweeping throughout the African continent in the 1960s. However, after writing three thirds of the manuscript, I change the title to **Yoruba Philosophy and the Seeds of Enlightenment**. (The word, seeds, contained in the title is what everyone must taste in order to comprehend that Yorubaland has enough **love and wisdom** to lay the foundation of its present, as the seeds of its philosophy are being planted). This must be the final title, I said to myself. **Chapter Twenty-Two** and **Chapter Twenty-Three** shed some iridescent light on my initial proposed title of the book.

The head (the good head) and its essence appear in every spoken and unspoken word of the Yoruba people. To them and for them, the head is the definition of the entire body. It is the foundation of the house, the taproot and the source of reasoning for other parts of the body. Every thinker knows how vital the head is to the body and philosopher Bertrand Russell must have put that import into its right perspective when he once said, "To understand an age, or a nation, we must understand its philosophy, and to understand its philosophy, we must ourselves be in some degree philosophers."

Can one understand an age, or a nation without (ori) head? This is not possible as long as we invite rationality to play a part, an active part for that matter. And we must see why this is not possible as emphasized and explicated in chapter seven and chapter twenty-two that shows that the head (**ori**) is the most important and definable destiny man possesses. As shown in chapter one, during the proto-history Yoruba it is the head that made the divinities recognize their respectful and philosophical responsibilities. During the modern times, the essence of the head made it possible for Herbert Macaulay to found the first political party in the united Nigeria. It is the head that made it possible for Chief Awo to become the first premier of the Western Nigeria. It is the head that made Queen Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti to show a dynamic leadership in respect

of the Women's Rights in the 1950s. It is the head that makes Wole Soyinka the avant-garde writer and the winner of Nobel Prize for literature in 1986. It is the head that makes the former President Olusegun Obasanjo the first ex-president-farmer in Africa. It is the head that makes Governor Fashionable of Lagos State an exceptional governor in West Africa. It is the head that makes Ijapa the best invisible folklorist and folk philosopher in the land. The fact is vivid as the whorls on the palms. The vividness is that there is nothing, practically nothing, a Yoruba person can do or achieve without a head, as there is nothing he or she can do without the Creator-philosopher Olodumare/Olorun. Oftentimes, it is said that without the head, there will be no Book of Enlightenment and without the Book of Enlightenment, Ile-Ife could not have existed. And without Ile-Ife, there could not have been a race called the Yoruba people. The rationale of what the Book of Enlightenment stands for, by courtesy of (ori) head, seems to be endless.

Yoruba Philosophy and the Seeds of Enlightenment is thus an attempt to depict with felicity that philosophy and religion have stopped butting each other. Each has carved its own identity. In other words, the stranglehold of religion over philosophy has been loosened. While watching it loosening, step by step, my soul was filled with trepidation but I was lucky to reason it out of fear. The book is about Yoruba philosophy which is essentially narrative, explicating and pointing to the knowledge of the causes and nature of things, affecting the corporeal and the spiritual universe and its wellness. I have now fully accepted the invitation by the students and the general public to postulate that which is fundamental on Yoruba folk philosophy, otherwise referred to as the cultural/folk or simply narrative philosophy. For all intents and purposes and for what it is worth, I will stick to the nitty-gritty: that is, there will be no complicated or jargonized words. Except a few double entendres, there will be no tongue-twisting words or phrases, no learned quotations or references to obsolete theories. But it must be understood that Yoruba culture, by its encyclopaedic nature, speaks to many areas of social sciences and the Humanities.

Reflecting on how the world has changed during the last one hundred years, Steven Pinker, in his book, *The Blank Slate*, said, as paraphrased that the world is changing and systematically too. There is potential mood everywhere, noting that most Victorian gentlemen would be amazed to see how things are changing around the world, not least among the African-American public intellectuals, and how

industrial plants are springing up in Bangalore, India. Writer Pinker went further to say that both men and women are now able and capable of realizing their full potential in life.

On the score that the book, when published, would be of great use and benefit to the general public, the university students and the academics, the path towards the enlightenment is now lit and people of both sexes and all races are cognitively treading it.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that the ancient Yoruba land propagated the knowledge of its worldviews—cosmogony, cosmology, love, morality—philosophy in sculpting and carving. Like the present, it was/is a commonplace to find a sculptor, a potter, a carver or a weaver in every family in Yoruba land.

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References

Proto-History Philosophers

Divinity **Esu**: He was a great philosopher who subscribed to the aesthetics of contradictions. He belonged to the Divine Hall of the Yoruba pantheon.

Divinity **Obatala**: Philosopher Obatala or Orisa-Nla was a popular philosopher during the period of creation. He is versed in human anatomy. He belonged to the Divine Hall of the Yoruba pantheon.

Divinity **Oduduwa**: Oduduwa was a pacifist, liberalist, transcendentalist, a great reasoner/thinker who planted the seeds of enlightenment and founded the holy city of Ile-Ife. Thus he is the father of Yoruba folk philosophy. He belonged to the Divine Hall of the Yoruba pantheon.

Divinity **Ogun**: Philosopher Ogun was the classical commander-in-chief of iron and steel. He believes in the theory that there are good things in fighting as there are opportunities in tragedies. A fleet-footed man, he always sets out at dawn. He belonged to the Divine Hall of the Yoruba pantheon.

Divinity **Olokun**: He is an important philosopher who is in charge of waters. He belonged to the Divine Hall of the Yoruba pantheon.

Divinity **Orunmila**: He is a knowledgeable philosopher and psychologist and the brainchild of, or cultivator of **IFA-Divination**, an integral part of the Book of Enlightenment/the Body of Knowledge, containing love and wisdom. He is a natural healer and member of the Divine Hall of the Yoruba pantheon.

Divinity **Oshosi**: He is versed in hunting and the art of hunting. He was a sharp shooter who never failed to find his hunted or quarries. He is credited to have introduced hunting to Yoruba land.

Divinity **Oshun**: She is one of the youngest female philosophers. She characterizes character, beauty, sweet waters and productivity. She identifies herself with River Oshun, a river said to be a blessing to mothers and mothers-to-be. She is a member of the Divine Hall of the Yoruba pantheon.

Divinity **Oya**: She is foremost amongst the Yoruba female philosophers. She identifies herself with River Niger. She is a member of the Divine Hall of the Yoruba pantheon.

Divinity **Sango**: He was the philosopher who represents fire, lightning and thunder. He belonged to the Divine Hall of the Yoruba pantheon.

Divinity **Soponna**: Philosopher Soponna typifies destruction upon malevolence. He acts and fights for whosoever needs his help and that person must possess a contrite heart. He is a member of the Divine Hall of the Yoruba pantheon.

Divinity **Yemoja**: She is a respectable female philosopher who represents the ocean, the essence of motherhood and a protector of children worldwide. She belonged to the Divine Hall of the Yoruba pantheon.

Post-Oral Philosophers

Chief Moshood Abiola (1937-1998): He was a philanthropist, liberalist and a political philosopher.

Sir King Adesoji Aderemi (1889-1980): He was a discreet, respectable and peace-loving traditional king of the holy city of Ile-Ife and political philosopher. He was a social democrat, pacifist and liberalist. He vouchsafed for the fundamental unity that put an end to the schisms that hitherto existed among the royal houses in Nigeria.

Oba Efuntola Adefunmi (1928-2005) Oba Adefunmi was a lover of Yoruba/African royal values. He was the first African-American to be coroneted a king by a Yoruba royal authority outside of Yorubaland. In order to bring closest to the hearts of African-Americans in Diaspora, he founded the Oyotunji African Kingdom (as a New World Yoruba initiative) in 1970.

Adegoke Adelabu (1915-1958): A writer, a journalist and the first chairman of Ibadan District Council. He was a charismatic pacifist.

Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola(1910-1966): A national and international orator, and a gifted user of Yoruba proverbs and aphorisms. He was both a liberalist and pacifist.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1909-1987): A dynamic political philosopher who made Western Nigerian civil service one of the best in the world. He was considered a social democrat, a

revolutionary, pacifist and liberalist. He is a scenarist, often referred to as the President Nigeria never had.

Beier, Ulli (1922-2011): He was a well-travelled scholar, researcher, writer and artist. Ulli Beier was a connoisseur of the Yoruba literature, religion, philosophy and artefacts. Together with dramatist Duro Ladipo, he founded Mbari-Mbayo Centre in Ibadan-Oshogho in 1962. And in 1982, he founded and directed the Iwalewa House, an art centre at the Bayreuth University, Germany.

Chief Tai Bola (1898-1989): A local historian, liberalist, pacifist, philosopher and keeper of traditions

Bishop (Dr.) Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1807-1891), he was the first nineteenth-century language and idealist/folk philosopher. The first Anglican African Bishop of the Niger Territory, he translated the English Bible into Yoruba language. He was, according to our record, the first religion philosopher of the land. Additionally, he was a pacifist, an abolitionist, a missionary who was on the vanguard of, and belonged to the Way of Enlightenment that emerged after the Yoruba wars in the 19th century.

D.O. Fagunwa (1903-1963): A writer and narrative, folk philosopher. He was the first Yoruba folk philosopher, employing metaphysics or naturalism to tell his stories.

Dr. Samuel Johnson (1846-1901): An influential classical Enlightenment thinker, he was a pacifist, liberalist, philosopher and historian. He was the first person to complete the historical writing of Yorubaland—A History of the Yoruba(s), published in 1921. He belonged to the Way of Enlightenment that emerged after the Yoruba wars.

Duro Ladipo (1931-1978) A popular international playwright and the author of **Oba ko so**—the king did not hang. **Oba ko so** is a melodramatic play of how the famous king Sango was presumed dead but alive and kicking, as he became king of Thunder and Lightning. He was often referred to as a playwright whose mouth emitted fire while acting.

Herbert Macaulay (1864-1946): Doyen of Lagos politics, he was an astute political philosopher and pacifist. He essayed to turn the fears and scars of the Yoruba wars into intrepidity, the irascibility into rationality and the defeated into valiant survivors. These pacific efforts of his enabled him to found in 1944, a viable political party in Nigeria—National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC), together with Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe. Also, he was the founding visionary of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1923, the first political party in the united Nigeria. He belonged to the Way of Enlightenment that was rapidly taking root after the Yoruba wars.

Hubert Ogunde (1916-1990) A pacifist, liberalist and prolific artist, he was an actor, playwright, theatre manager and musician who founded Ogunde Concert Party in 1945, the first professional theatrical company in Nigeria. He was the doyen of modern Yoruba /Nigerian playwright and dramatist.

Kola Ogunmola (1925-1973) He was the founder of Ogunmola Travelling Theatre in 1947. A gifted dramatist, actor, mime, director and playwright, he staged the musical version of Amos Tutuola's *The Palm wine Drinker* which was performed at the first Pan-African Culture Congress in Algiers in 1969.

Ajibike Ogunyemi: He is one of the many men who worked with Susanne Wenger to make Oshun Grove the artistic statement it is today. A prolific sculptural artist, Ogunyemi's work is known throughout Oshun state.

Twin Seven-Seven (1944-2011) Member of the Oshogbo School of Art Movement, Twin Seven-Seven began his art career in the 1960s in the workshops conducted by Ulli Beier and Georgina Beier in Oshogbo. A versatile and gifted artist, he was designated UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2005, in recognition of his contributions to the promotion of dialogue and understanding amongst peoples, particularly in Africa and in Diaspora.

Wole Soyinka: A liberalist and political philosopher. In embracing pacifism, he took delight in political activism, displaying an exceptionally discreet/tactful bravery. Soyinka is a multi-talented avant-garde litterateur. He was the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1986, the first wordsmith of African descent to be so honoured.

Chief Susanne Wenger (1915-2009) An exceptional artist, pacifist, liberalist and philosopher (a connoisseur of Yoruba cultural values and cardinal virtues), Susanne Wenger is instrumental to the formation of the New Sacred Art Movement otherwise known as the Oshogbo School of Art Movement. Due to her devotion, her wisdom and love for sculptural art and culture of the Yorubaland, the Oshun Oshogbo Sacred Grove was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005.

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