



Yoruba Art and Language: Seeking the African in African Art

Rowland Abiodun

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Yoruba Art and Language: Seeking the African in African Art Rowland Abiodun

The Yoruba?ba? was one of the most important civilizations of sub-Saharan Africa. While the high quality and range of its artistic and material production have long been recognized, the art of the Yoruba?ba? has been judged primarily according to the standards and principles of Western aesthetics. In this book, which merges the methods of art history, archaeology, and anthropology, Rowland Abi?o??du?n offers new insights into Yoruba?ba? art and material culture by examining them within the context of the civilization's cultural norms and values and, above all, the Yoruba?ba? language. He begins by establishing the importance of the concepts of ori?ki?, the verbal and visual performances that animate ritual and domestic objects, such as cloth, sculpture, and dance; and a?s?e?, the energy that structures existence and that transforms and controls the physical world. Both concepts served as the guiding principles of Yoruba?ba? artistic production. Through analyses of representative objects, Abi?o??du?n demonstrates how material culture expresses the key philosophical notions at the heart of the Yoruba?ba? worldview. Abi?o??du?n draws on his fluency and prodigious knowledge of Yoruba?ba? culture and language to dramatically enrich our understanding of Yoruba?ba? civilization and its arts. The book includes a companion website with audio clips of the Yoruba language, helping the reader better grasp the integral connection between art and language in Yoruba culture.

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