

A Survey of Surface Design and Practice on Fabrics in Abeokuta Ogun State

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Abstract

The study focused on the surface design on adire in Abeokuta south local government area, Ogun state. Adire is one of the important traditional fabrics in the Yoruba society. The paper assesses a brief of dyed adire fabric in Yoruba land right from its inception. The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents (consumers); to determine the adire producers' perception on traditional and symbolic designs and production; to assess certain factors associated with adire introduction of synthetic and to determine consumers' awareness on traditional and symbolic designs used in production. A questionnaire was designed to elicit relevant information on perception, design, cost, socio-cultural beliefs, production, knowledge on designs and production. In order to have a broad knowledge of adire design and production, the respondents were interviewed. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that 88.3% of the respondents are between ages 20-30 and a high number of 73.3 of the respondents had formal education. In the course of the study, various statements were generated to assess the design and production on adire. respondents could easily recognize the adire fabric but very few respondents (consumers) were familiar with the designs despite the high level of their education and their proximity to a major and relevant producing centre. Results from the inferential statistics showed that there is no significant relationship between usage rate of respondents and their perception of adire fabric ($\chi^2 = 7.564$, $df = 6$, $P = 2.72$) which implies that there is no significant relationship between their usage rate and the perception of adire with positive correlation. The inferential statistics also shows that there is no significant relationship between the cultural influence and design knowledge of adire production. This implies that their knowledge might not affect the production of adire design and vice versa.

Keywords: Decorative, Designs, Adire, Motifs, Culture

Introduction

The Yoruba are known to be rich with cultural heritage and crafts which are often displayed in their social-economic activities. Abimbola (2002), writes that the Yoruba have high of aesthetic consciousness and they are respected and regarded for their artistic skills especially in traditional textiles (aso-oke and adire); these overrides whatever physical or social shortcomings they may possess in culture. Pattern design has been used in the dyeing of fabric in Africa for more than 2000 years, no scholar recorded it that no other culture has developed the art of dyeing to a higher level than Yoruba, (Suleiman, 2008). Adire pattern gives the designer the initial outline of the design. Apart

from providing the outline, patterns also give an idea of how many yards of fabric that are needed and the type of material or fabric for production thereby minimizing waste during the process. Designing cloth with the use of patterns can increase the standard and rate of Adire as surface design, especially with a good motif. A motif, is a pattern, or an arrangement of repeated design in corresponding parts. A motif is not necessarily a theme; the latter is usually defined as a message, statement, or idea of a design in textile production. According to Grayson and Curzon, (2000) and Akinwunmi (2003), a motif is any recurring element that has symbolic significance through repetition; a motif can help produce other literary aspects such as theme or mood. It can also be created through the use of imagery, structural components, language and other narrative elements. In a visual, a motif establishes a pattern of ideas that serves different concepts in different designs. The aesthetic of motif as surface design on adire fabric materials (from the client choice of pattern) that will be used as a basis or guide for making working patterns of several designs. However, there are several classes of Adire, some of which do not include tying to produce designs.

Adire is made in Yoruba land and its inception starts in large cities like Ibadan and Osogbo about 17th century according to (Akinwumi,2003). Historically, Egba settlers in Ibadan returned to Abeokuta where they introduced the occupation in the 1920s and 30s, Akinwunmi (1992). One of the settlers from Sierra-Leone was Balogun Sowemimo Coker. The craft works of weaving, designing and dyeing are done by women in various households. Sometimes a particular pattern or design could be peculiar to a specific household and even children were assigned the designing tasks such that some of them eventually ended up being designers and dyers of African fabrics. In the early 20th century, an influx of imported European textiles into South Western Nigeria led to an increase in the range and quantity of designed dyed cloths produced, and consequently a boom in the demand for these artistic designs, attracting buyers from all over the West African coast according to Akinwunmi (2008). By the end of the 1930s, the introduction of synthetic indigo dye and caustic soda contributed to a collapse in demand for the cloths dyed with natural indigo. More recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in exploring the beauty of these African designs, and with that, an increase in demand once more, amongst art enthusiasts.

Many designers in Abeokuta, Ogun State are of different views in designing and dyeing of fabrics material. This might not be far – fetched from the fact that the knowledge and use of surface design on adire in the process of patterns design construction is important to reduce the production of sub-standard and rate of adire as surface design in Abeokuta, Ogun State, thereby leading to an increase in growth of their business. Assessment of the aesthetic of motifs and patterns as surface design on adire is also important in creating awareness of the method thereby improving the standard of fabrics produced.

Considering many artistic traditions, Adire, the patterned, indigo dyed textile of the people perhaps still remain the most decorative. The symbols of adire which are created, accepted and standardized aspect of the people culture, are drawn from oral tradition such as history, legends, myth, proverbs, folklores. Its various patterns and designs make it acceptable and attractive. A study of this nature will help in providing designers with information on how they can modify their practice through the use of various patterns and designs that will catch the attention of the end users. Also, the aesthetic of the various motif and pattern as surface design will make adire material very attractive and further improve the use of adire for social engagements, interior and exterior decorations. This will boost the economic activities of the traders who deals in adire textile business.

Many art historians and critics have had personal experiences with Africans art and have collected them in various forms and categories. These writers have tried to classify these art works into various categories based on how they have perceived them. Some of these critics especially non-Africans who came out of curiosity and to confirm what they have seen brought into their countries, had thought the African art were faceless, because the works tend to bear no signature of the artist, whether dead or alive (Beier, 1997).

Some had also based their own classification on the functional contents of the works, while some thought about the aesthetic of designs, which they believe had just been included after consideration for their uses. Writer as Griaule thought that the art works of Africa were more of religious consciousness, circular purposes, pure and applied art (Beier, 1997).

Tomori (2011), has written that culture is essentially the way of life of a people, which generates assets such as skills, products, expression, and insight that contribute to the social and economic well-being of the community. These were seen in the people predominating attitudes, norms, behaviors, beliefs, value, art, craft, heritage and creative activities that characterize the functioning of a people. Looking at fabric surface design as expressing universal messages, undermining the intricacies and diversity of culture and cultural designs and expression, (Castheda, 2008). With respect to their inherent power to generate value by leveraging other production variables for creating incremental wealth through the resources at hand, which later translates into a cultural heritage that is passed on from one generation to the other.

Motif and pattern in adire are most positively multi-design, and they give a lot of value to different types of arts, which primarily include ivory carving, weaving, wood carving, leather, calabash engraving, pottery, painting, glass and metal works, and cloth weaving. Perhaps more than any form of these arts, adire textile, which is common among the people of Egba land in Ogun State of Nigeria, reflects the culture from which they come (Tomori, 2011).

The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria are renowned for their vibrant cultural environment. From around the twelfth century to the nineteenth century, they have made significant contributions to the world culture through their great artistic traditions in terracotta, wood carving, stone and metal sculpture, pottery, bead making, blacksmithing, mat weaving, leather work, gourd decoration, cloth weaving, and pattern cloth dyeing known as Adire. At the beginning from the middle of twentieth century up to the present, their contributions to world visual artistic culture have largely been in painting, sculpture, printmaking and textile art. Of all the artistic traditions, the textile art of *adire* fabric remains, perhaps the most decorative. This is perhaps due to fact that the Yoruba are traditionally a deeply religious people. Their thinking is greatly influenced by their history, legends, myths, proverbs, folklores, and deep observations of their natural environment and from all of which most of the traditional decorative symbols have been drawn Kalilu, (2013).

Carr (2001), in his study observes that the name Adire, in essence, points to the cloth's origin or that was tied and dyed. Perani, Fred and Smith (1998) similarly observe that the name of the cloth relates to a specific ethnic group who are the producers of the cloth, and that it also serves as a style and design. In the same vein, Tomori (2001) also observes that the word Adire identifies the culture, the language, and an art tradition of the people while Aronson (1999) observes that Adire motif and pattern and facilitator of the said surface design.

Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria along with selected design Ademefun, (2010) are a properly clothed people. They also lay emphasis on the theme of pattern drawn on their dresses for domestic and fashion occasion. The significance of motif and pattern in the people's taste of fashion expressed in the textile, Ogunduyile (2010). The design appreciation is related to comprehensive symbols, character and religious of the individual. Euba (1986), observed that tradition perhaps still remains the most decorative of all their artistic traditions. They are renowned for the production of both Aso-Ofi, the hand-woven prestige cloth and pattern-dyed cloth, Adire. Traditional dyeing with many indigenous plants as a vocation and art tradition especially indigo dyeing is a specialized art which has become a legacy of the Yoruba women, and a hereditary craft passed from mothers to daughters. Its importance in the area is demonstrated by the iniquitousness of the practice everywhere even in the smallest villages (Eluyemi, 1978)

It is the creativity and the designs in Adire that makes it significant both as process and objects of communication in the world of the Yoruba and perhaps beyond. The designs and the decorative elements on the cloth are meaningful part of the people's day-to-day lives. Adire cloth therefore

functions as visual language. Its significance can however not be accurately and effectively understood without the foregoing appropriate etymological and semantic definitions as has been done here. An exposé of the history and development of Adire will reveal the design orientation and the semiotics of Adire (Kalilu, 2013).

Not until recent time, the design of adire textile production, like other motifs which is a dynamic aesthetic of creating incremental ideas by individual through the use of resources at hand, Muhammed (2001). These designs are assumed to be inborn inherited by birth, and the heritage passed on from one generation to another (Olaoye, 1999). The craft, formerly known to be a family business in Abeokuta. However, with a new period of innovation in handcrafted cloth production in Yoruba land in the 1960s, and the growing availability of chemical dyes from Europe, which introduces a revolution in color and techniques (wikipedia, 2008), the entrants of numerous motifs and pattern who adapt the designs to produce high-quality cloth.

Before focusing on aesthetic of motif and pattern, one needs to make general observation of specific functions and expectations, motif and pattern designs on the surface of adire are much too diverse to be easily analysed according to Jegede (2002). **The Centres of Adire Art Tradition**

Kalilu (1991), argues that need and challenges inspire creative ideas, and that access to materials is catalysts to the origin of art forms, while patronage determines the dimensions of practice and provenance of the arts. Kalilu's theory of the significance of need and access to motifs as factors in the origin, provenance, and function of African forms becomes relevant here. This theory is applicable to the ubiquitousness of indigo dyeing among the Yoruba which may be partly because of the level of availability of indigo plant in each area, and partly because of the different levels of distribution of the dyeing skill.

Cloth is also a motivating factor in the creation of new pattern. Cotton, the commonest and the raw material for adire making grows easily. It is cultivated in vast quantities among the people (Byfield, 2002). Used in Edo kingdom of Benin as early as thirteenth century AD (Adépégba, 1995). Most scholars are also unanimous on the fact that the prototype for Adire is the dyed Kijipa, woven by Yoruba women on the vertical upright loom, with its raw materials made from locally cultivated, hand spun and hand-woven cotton (Eicher, 1976).

Certain notable and large Yoruba cities traditionally noted for Adire motifs and pattern are Osogbo, Ibadan, Ede, Ondo and Abeokuta. There are several other centres, but they are either not as large or active or of international reckoning as the centres in the aforementioned five cities. Of all the centres, Osogbo is traditionally renowned as the home of indigo, and the "home of dyeing"; "Osogboiluar" and the people are so good as dyers as to elicit the Yoruba saying "Aronbel' Osogbo, omoeniyanmbenile Ibadan," (Price, 1971). It is Indigo that dominates Osogbo, while large human population dominates Ibadan. At the peak of the demand for indigo-dyed fabric for export, many Adire producers in Abeokuta had to take their cloth to Osogbo for dyeing, while its neighbouring town of Ede supplied Abeokuta dyers with indigo balls, according to (Akinwunmi, 1996). The advent of European merchants on the coast in the sixteenth century brought a shift from the existing regional trans-Saharan trade to trade on the Atlantic coast. Akinwumi (2008), writes that, in the response to the early European demand for indigenous cloths, the Yoruba adire and aso-oke fabrics served to integrate local economies and placed Africa on an enviable position in international trade.

Historically, designs in Adire making was introduced into Abeokuta, a town founded in 1830 by, Egba settlers of Ibadan who returned to Abeokuta, after fleeing from the result of the nineteenth century civil wars. One of such early settlers was Balogun Coker Sowemimo. The remains of old dye pots at Sowemimo compound at Ita-Baale, Olugbode, Ibadan attest to this (Akpata, 1971). Though the original Egba dyers quickly imbibed this patterned dyeing tradition, they were however not very good at the beginning of the twentieth century,⁴⁹ but learnt quickly and by 1926, about 25% of the town's population was involved in Adire production, and by 1933, about 80% of the cloth

trade in the town, was Adire. With importation of different types of material, development of different techniques and technology of Adire production, Abeokuta currently takes the lead in Adire production, with wide varieties of Adire in Itoku market, and a large number of the dyers, designers, and traders of Adire concentrated at Alake, Oke-Ona, Egba and Idomapa. Traditionally, three centres were renowned for flourishing Adire production in Abeokuta. These were Kenta, Ijemo, and Igbein quarters. While the Igbein centre is no longer vibrant, production at Ijemo quarters is on the average but the Kenta quarters still produce high volume of Adire (Roliata, 2006). This may be due to its proximity to the popular Itoku market which is popular for retailers Adire and sellers of materials of Adire production. Also, vibrant contemporary Adire centres using synthetic dyes can be found in the proximity of this market (plate 1). There is also a division of labour.

Figure.1: Sampling Techniques

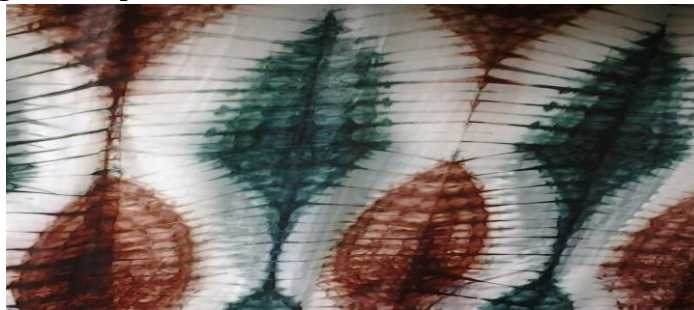


Plate 1: Fold & Dye (Free Pattern), Source: Nosiru, 2014

Figure 2.



Plate 2: Indigo dye (Indigenous dye stuff), Source: Nosiru, 2014

Table 1: Distribution of The Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondent

S/No.	Variable		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age	20-30 years	106	88.3
		31-40 years	8	6.7
		41-0 years	3	2.5
		Above 50 years	3	2.5
		Total	120	100.0
2.	Sex	Male	26	21.7
		Female	94	78.3
		Total	120	100.0
3.	Marital status	Married	29	24.2
		Separated	3	2.5
		Single	88	73.3
4.	Religion	Total	120	100.0
		Christianity	82	68.3
		Islam	38	31.7
		Total	120	100.0
5.	Educational status	Adult education	20	16.7

6.	Native	Formal education	88	73.3
		Informal education	12	10.0
		Total	120	100.0
		Yoruba	94	78.3
		Igbo	8	6.7
7.	Monthly income	Others	18	15.0
		Total	120	100.0
		N10,000-n30,000	66	55.0
		N30,001-n40,000	20	16.7
		N40,001-n50,000	30	25.0
		Above n50,000	4	3.3
		Total	120	100.0

Source: field survey, 2014



Plate 3: Practical work of Indigo dye (Batik), Source: Nosiru, 2014



Plate 4: Practical work of fold & dye by the researcher, Source: Nosiru, 2014

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Summary

The study was conducted on the aesthetic of motif and pattern as surface design on adire in Abeokuta, Ogun State. The study population comprised of designers and traders of adire from the study area.

Simple random sampling technique was used to select one hundred and twenty (120) respondents. A well-structured questionnaire was used to get information in both English and Yoruba language from the respondents. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistical (frequency, percentage).

Based on the findings from the study, 88.3% of the respondents falls within the age group of 31-40 years, based on the sex, 78.9% of the respondents were female, while 21.7% were male. About 73.3% of the respondents were married, 68.3% of the respondents were Christian, 73.3% had formal education. 78.3% of the respondents used in then study were Yoruba, 55% earn between N10,000 – N30,000.

From the findings below, 30% and 36.7% of the respondents respectively agrees that only designs can do this: 64.2% and 31.7% of the respondents respectively agrees that the designs are usually well illustrated. 54.2% and 31.7% of the respondents respectively strongly agrees that freehand gives a free reflection of the socio-cultural life 43.3% and 29.2% of the respondents respectively disagrees that the symbols and designs produced by freehand drawing are usually foreign not indigenous. 53.3% and 31.7% of the respondents respectively strongly agrees that freehand illustrations are favoured in communications of ideas.

Findings from the study indicates that 95% of the respondents believes that art is part of the socio-cultural life of the people. 86.7% believes that adire fabrics colour fabrics are attractive. 87.5% of the respondents believes that patterns and designs bring out uniqueness. 70.8% believes that aesthetic of motif and pattern as surface design communicates with the on lookers. 78.3% of the respondents believe that aesthetic of motif and pattern as surface design is an important aspect of African art designs. 78.3% believes aesthetic of motif and pattern as surface design promotes balance for frame work. 83.3% believes it gives the surface design a multicolour effect. Also, 86.7% believes that it makes the adire material more unique. This meant that for the selected motifs to be operative on an adire wear, acceptable and good communicative designs must be incorporated in its production.

Based on the findings from the table below, 40.2% and 10% of the respondents respectively strongly disagrees that the use of multi-colour effect has made the traditional method of dyeing to fade away, 37.5% and 10.8% of the respondents respectively disagrees that the traditional method only involves the use of only indigo blue and it's not usually attractive. 27.5% and 12.5% strongly agrees with this statement. 27.5% and 32.5% of the respondents respectively agrees that the use of contemporary motif design to produce more detailed surface patterns replaces the old traditional design of dyeing fabric. The study also reveals that 35.8% and 46.7% of the respondents agrees that modern dyeing involves the use of synthetic dyes and colour other than blue while 14.2% and 3.3% disagrees with the assertion.

Conclusion

Findings based on the study carried out on the aesthetic of motif and pattern as surface design on adire in Abeokuta, Ogun State. It could be concluded that majority of the respondents have high preference for the freehand design to the pattern use as they believe it could be corrected easily, design is well illustrated and it gives a free expression of our socio-cultural life. Also based on this study, it could be concluded that majority of the traders and designers believes that with motif and pattern design used, it gives the adire fabrics uniqueness and a multicolour effect.

From the study it could be deduce that majority of the respondents (producers) still prefer the traditional method in the production of adire to the modern production method.

Recommendations

Based on this study, the following recommendations will help in promoting the face design on adire;

- The designers should develop the traditional methods of adire production to international standard and produce adire design beyond their cultural frame.

- The federal and state government should provide incentives and soft loan for designers (producers) and traders to boost adire production and create more employment for the youths.
- Designers should use freehand design that will reflect the socio-cultural value of the people which will thereby promote our cultural heritage.
- The study considered more comprehensive design visuals that will not be narrowed to a singular cultural frame but look beyond traditional designs, preference choice and cultural history.

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