



## Traditional Symbols of Yoruba Pattern Designs As Insignia of Cultural Identity On Indigenous Clothing

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**Abstract.** This article looks into the tradition symbols of Yoruba designs and the suggested intent of anonymous indigenous draught man, whose crafts works are represented on the surface design such as textile products with the aim to the promote the Yoruba identity. Apart from textile surface, there are also other objects from the cultural angle are referred symbolic objects such as woods, metals that keep memoire of signs, symbols and sketches functional. These perhaps reflect in the contemporary designs' crafts present on the surface textile design, which makes a synergy between Yoruba art and culture possible. The study was conducted to determine the traditional symbols on textile (batik) as insignia of cultural identity among the Yoruba people.

### 1. Introduction

Design in Yoruba culture of southwest, Nigeria is purely an indigenous aspect of spontaneous signs or visual symbols. In the essence, it is not new practice but, its' reflection on the fabrics were recent than inception. The definition and concept resulted from a guide divination between crafts men and the intend owners of the designs. Indigenous designs in textile are the concept that identified the features that contained cultural creativity for the surface design of several products in textile. The Yoruba traditional textile production tends towards the essences of creativities in order to sustain a robust societal acceptability of motif patterns in the culture. Culture refers to the totality of man's way of existence, which exhibits the way an individual eats, live, dress and converse, the honor given to the elderly and the way young and old people behave in accordance to belief system and norms of the society. The Yoruba traditional society have functional cultural arts and crafts practices that earns her respect and admiration

from other races all over the world, Nathaniel (2007). The stories (folklore or oral generational), have become a ritual that is used to give meaning and substance to personal and communal events that control the Yoruba way of life. Traditional illustrations are the essential components of the imaginative reconstruction of textile designs and that have become primary sources of cultural understanding that connote the real image of the Yoruba tradition.

The Yoruba traditional illustrated images are believed to be governed by spirits, this informed ideas of religious belief in the traditional textile art design that has gained international recognition. Such recognitions are synonymous with the Yoruba traditional textile art and designs in Osogbo, Ibadan and Abeokuta township, where the re-direction of the traditional textile art were interpreted to numerous cultural potency beliefs. It is also believed that all motifs, such as plants and animals and the semblance of them in the traditional Yoruba motifs patterns are totemic representations of gods and goddesses, Aremu (1982). This is evident from the Yoruba literature, where some design patterns are mainly produced to serve the needy the requests by appeasing these images that are believe to have represent several Yoruba gods and goddesses. A lots of traditional Yoruba textile illustrations in indigenous designs production are solely in human distorted forms, using neo-traditional ideas, that is, modern Yoruba forms that are executed in the traditional idiom. However, with the rate of textile production practices, several traditional illustrations and designs, textile can be developed to the standard of a world attraction that can draw tourists from far and near to Yoruba culture.

The study dug into the core traditional design as related cultural memoir and symbols based on the Yoruba oral tradition, the transferred of customs or beliefs from generation to generation. The facts of being passed on in a way that cannot be eradicated or different designs spontaneously created in line with traditional continuum been associated with specific symbolic designs that are produced majorly for several cultural purposes. The study presents a reflection on the relationship between traits of these drawings and Yoruba social and cultural criticism present on the textile designer's surface design, which makes a conversation between art and cultural design.

Cultural symbols and designs do not exist in a vacuum but in a specific tradition or socio-cultural environment. Symbolic designs are cultural concepts rooted in traditional fabric production, shrines decorations and visual practices, which explains the key terms of the social co-existence and belief in Yoruba social norms. Obisesan (2001), writes that, culture is the shared norms and values of a social system that are a most important aspect of Yoruba society. It is generally accepted within the Yoruba culture that a great number of ritual messages social and religious significance are communicated in textile designs apart from wood that were produced as replicated objects. Traditional textile producers express their perceptions and experience of cultural views through the textile medium, which is one of dominant medium. Traditional textile designs like those of other societies in many cultures were motifs meant for aesthetics, but were used to express cultural beliefs, according to Aremu, 1982. Thus, traditional textile designs in most Yoruba societies are believe to pass different categories of messages, ranging from protection, propitiation to mention a few. Traditional textile design are believed to be the main abode of these communicative patterns. However, a great number of religious design patterns with oral generational tradition and socio-cultural significance have been produced in textile. But in most cases, tradition textile religious designs patterns used could add to the aesthetics of the textile materials. Aremu, (2005) has written that the taken as a whole of the process of scheduling norms ethics of a particular society and distinguishes the members of group or category from some other indigenous household.

The study forms an idea of culture with a link of value, style, attitudes, norms, using up a general world view of Yoruba cultural visuals and pattern; the traditional expression, perception, and stages of functional designs, appropriately by the people that identify and distinguish them from other cultural people indigenous designs. Cultural designs

therefore can be defined as a broad and multidimensional concept that cannot be easily comprehended. This is because culture hope to deal with in its entirety in a mono-conceptual aspects of Yoruba traditional symbols. There are two major aspects Yoruba cultural traits, according to Isah, (2009), these include both material and non-material cultures. Material culture is overt and explicit, such as products of small scale craft industries, costume ornamentation, shrines drawing and painting, all the images and sketches that are visible. These include objects or individual physical collections within or outside the culture, such as statuettes, staffs, molded metal or wood, utensils, cooking utensils, traditional crafts. The discernible nature of these object make them to be observable as the cultural antiques in the society.

The non-material aspects of culture consist of the acquisition of skills through perceived morals, character, languages, motivation, values, and norms shared and transmitted in a society. The non-material includes work values, ethos, ideology and other cultural traits exhibited at work. Obisesan,(2001), opines that, these aspects of culture are sometimes referred to as the covert or implicit aspects of culture that are acquired by members of a society. They are not visible or tangible but they are manifested through the mental and emotional states and cultural trait of a people. These are necessary knowledge for better results when it comes to creation and visual effects.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Sample Size and Sample Technique

Multi stage sampling technique was used to select the targeted respondents. A total of 150 respondents (individual within the age range of age 25 and above in selected communities in Odo-Oyo, Asero and Oke-Ijeun, Abeokuta) were purposively selected. Simple random sample technique was used for the selection of the three (3) settlements and two (2) dye workshops from each street chosen. While 25 singles elites were purposively selected among the socialites in each communities selected which include 10 male and 15 female individuals respectively.

### 2.2 Method of Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were used to collect the data. Secondary data were collected from literatures in textbooks, journals, dictionary, newspaper and the internet While Primary data collected through the use of a well-constructed questionnaire. The study involves two:



Practical illustration procedures followed in the course of the study

The practical illustration aspect of this study involves the production of drawing designs using batik resist technique on cotton fabric.



Picture

Plate 1: Batik material after the first colour waxing: Source: Study Work, 2022

Plate 2: Batik fabrics in cultural form, ready for the first dyeing: Source: Study Work, 2022

### 3. Results

Table 1.1 Frequency Table

COMMUNITY	Frequency	Percent
OKE-IJEUN	50	33.3
ODO-OYO	50	33.3
ASERO	50	33.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Study Work, 2022

The table above shows the distribution of the respondents by Communities, it is observed that each colleges have 50 (33.3%) of the respondents.

**Table 2:** Distribution of respondents by Settlements

Settlement	Frequency	Percent
AGO-OBA	25	16.7
OJAGBO	25	16.7
AGO-OWU	25	16.7
ASERO	25	16.7
ALADESANMI	25	16.7
IJEUN	25	16.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Study Work, 2022

The table above shows the distribution of the respondents by Settlements, each settlement have 25 (16.7%) of the respondents.



Plate 3: Batik fabrics in one of the Yoruba Motifs, titled ‘Menuumo’ : Source: Study Work, 2022

**Table 3:** Distribution of respondents by Dye Workshop

Workshop	Frequency	Percent
OKE-IJEUN	100	66.7
ASERO	50	33.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Study Work, 2022

The table above shows the distribution of respondents by Workshop, it is observed that 100(66.7%) of the respondents were in Oke-Ijeun and 50(33.3%) of the respondents were in Asero workshop.

**Table 4:** Distribution of respondents by AGE

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-21	30	20.0
22-35	98	65.3
36-59	22	14.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Study Work, 2022

From the table above showing the distribution of respondents by age, it is observed that 30 (20.0%) respondents were between the age of 18- 21years old, 98 (65.3) of the respondents are within the age of 22-35 years old, 22 (14.7%) of the respondents were between the age of 36-59 years. This shows that majority of the respondent are within the age of 21 – 36 years old and 3(2.0%) of the respondents were 50years above.

#### 4. Surface Designs

The term surface design is a recent concept In Yoruba cultural art used by indigenous cultural textile art producers and designers. According to Areo and Kalilu (2013), the Adire freehand starch patterned type has also further evolved into the contemporary blocked, stamped and free-form designs, which now come not only in indigo but also in a kaleidoscope of synthetic dye of various tints and hues. Cultural surface design in Yoruba cosmology symbolized the form of traditional autonomous knowledge of historical investigation that created the awareness of the concept. The term surface design is known beyond the traditional antecedent of Adire clothes, according to Areo, (2013). With the introduction of imported English cotton products, calico and shirting by British trading firms between 1880 and 1925, Adire artists started using calico for their products instead of the hand-woven materials hitherto used (Oyelola 1992: 62)

The Yoruba surface design discovered its themes in the traditional norms and spread those images in time and space of the most concrete references to their cultural/religious beliefs, Makinde, (2003). This made the adire and textile artist of traditional background to improve on the art of appreciation, knowledge and understanding of textile images in Yoruba art and design. The Yoruba surface design has as characteristics the raw coloration, structures and patterns, depending on the fibers and fabrics available. A lot of processes are involved, such as dyeing, printing, paste painting, embroidery, beautification, quilting, weaving, and wall painting for ritual performance.

#### 5. Conclusion

From the view of the research, one can conclude that there are different types of cultural illustration on Yoruba traditional fabrics. However, some qualities such as uniqueness, symbolic visuals, cultural values and so on serve as the basis of their Yoruba visual appreciations. Also, there is high possibility that the use of traditional drawing for social cultural engagement backdrop might likely increase as time goes on as it is noticed in the finding that a high percentage of the respondent agreed to the option.

Market, which is what is available for people to buy, it observed during the course of this study that if the illustration on cultural clothes such as tie-dye, batik and African prints can be produced in contemporary readymade wears, people will appreciate and patronize more, as this will also promote the usage of Yoruba traditional batik among Nigerians both at home and in diaspora.

#### 6. Recommendations

- Individuals should encourage the use of indigenous fabrics with cultural illustrations for engagement traditional attire social function as this will help to create more awareness.
- Craftsmen and clothing and textile artists should embark on practical researches other contemporary illustrations on fabric for batik and adire (tie-dye) production.
- More craftsmen should undergo traditional training on how to improve both contemporary and indigenous illustrative designs, even at the graduate level to become experts in special and cultural designs and pattern of cloth production.
- Fashion designers should have exhibition of models wearing Yoruba batik outfits in other to encourage African illustrations.

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