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An Application of Selected Yoruba Proverbs for the Illustration of Aesthetics and Design; the Case of Indigenous Patterned Dyed Cloth

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Abstract:

This study attempts to illustrate the intrinsic socio-cultural values embedded in the Yorùbá patterned dyed fabric with a view to unfolding the people's perceptions on both the aesthetics and designs of patterned dyed fabrics among the Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria. The study also synthesizes and evaluates the Yorùbá conceptual notions on the patterned dyed fabric both in the past and in our contemporary world. The data for the study is drawn from selected Yorùbá proverbs that are regarded as 'registers' in fabric decoration. These were critically analyzed and interpreted using random and purposive sampling techniques within the Art Historical Methods. The study revealed that use of proverbs in Yorùbá patterned-dyed cloth appeared mainly in three forms; as imagery, icons and texts. These are composed into motifs that make the fabric design very appreciable. These motifs are not only used as a tool to achieving fabric design but they also allow the fabric to communicate. The paper therefore concludes that: the application of Yorùbá proverbs will enhance the socio-cultural and aesthetic values of àdìrẹ which in turn will also promote Yorùbá cultural heritage.

Keywords: Aesthetics, àdìrẹ, design, proverbs, illustration, patterns, dyed, cloth, registers and Abeokuta

1. Introduction

The Yorùbá people of Southwestern part of Nigeria are prolific and renowned for their dexterity in the production of arts and crafts (Thompson, (1973). Scholarly records show that the Yorùbá people have produced works of art in various art forms and media including shrine paintings, sculptures, textiles, carvings, smiting, pottery and dyeing among others (Nichole, 2004). Arising from the foregoing, scholars from various disciplines such as anthropology, ethnography, Similarly, previous studies which include; Bascom (1969), Carrol (1966), Willet (2002), Adepegba (1975), Picton and John Mack (1979), Babour Joanne and Simmonds D, (1974) among others. have described the Yorùbá people as prolific and the largest producers of arts in Africa, (Fagg,1982). Bascom (1969), also observes that Yorùbá people's indigenous art traditions include woodcarving, pottery, cloth weaving, bead-making, blacksmithing, mat-weaving, leatherwork, gourd decoration, and patterned dyeing which is also known as àdìrẹ.

Speaking in the same vein, Owoyẹ, (2016) claims that àdìrẹ is a coinage of two Yoruba words 'Àdì, which means "that which is to tie; and 'Re, today. Àdìrẹ is also a Yorùbá word that describes patterned dyed cloth and the processes of cloth decoration among the Yorùbá. However, Sieber (1974) in a book highlights various craft traditions among the people of Africa including indigo dyeing (àdìrẹ) of the Yorùbá. According to an informant, cloth decoration could be achieved using any available textile techniques including appliqué, embroidery, printing, painting and dyeing which is most prevalent among the Yorùbá.

Although no exact date has been given for the commencement of cloth dyeing practice among the Yorùbá, however, Polakof and Larsen (1982) in a book suggest that àdìrẹ or pattern dyeing can be traced to numerous dyeing incidents that occurred centuries ago. Similarly, Dereje, (2013) observes that; cloth dyeing as an important aspect of cloth decoration has been adopted by the Yorùbá people to improve the surface quality of àdìrẹ cloth and to make it communicate and function beyond its traditional role as nude cover. In support of this Emedolibe (2012) opined that "buyers of àdìrẹ cloth are merely interested in the cloth for its aesthetic appeal and most times not interested in where it was made. Notably, cloth dyeing especially among the Yorùbá is practiced mostly at the cottage level which involves the participation of some specialized individuals who handle various aspects of the decoration.

2. Dying Activities among the Yorùbá

Patterned or resist dyeing (àdìrẹ) as practiced among the Yorùbá is a process of decorating the cloth by using any resist technique such as tying, batik, printing, painting, and stenciling. Alternatively, some starchy substances (cassava/ starch paste) are used to resist the surface of the cloth. This is to prevent dye penetration in order to create patterns on the dyed fabric when washed.

Available studies on Yorùbá pattern dyeing show that scholars have worked on various aspects of àdìrẹ; which includes; its material: its production, its uses and its merchandising. While Keyes-Adenaike (1993) discussed the cottage nature of àdìrẹ production in relation to its economic viability as found in Abẹ̀òkuta, Rice, (2014) focused on the role of women in its àdìrẹ production; using

Abeokuta centre as a case study. Likewise, Zakare (2013) submits that; *àdirẹ* has undergone several innovations in the last decade due to improved technology and high patronage that have helped in wealth creation among the people.

Also, in a comparative study of the neo-traditional and contemporary dyers work in Abèòkúta, Àrẹ̀mú (1996) also established that; there are symbioses of ideas, integration and continuity in their works. Similarly, Borgatti (1983), in a book, presents historical accounts of the developments of *àdirẹ* from 1930 to 1971 where he was able to accentuate certain events at every mile stone.

It should be noted here that as rich as scholarship on *àdirẹ* is, there is dearth of scholarly study on the illustration of aesthetics and design in relation to the proverbs on Yorùbá patterned dyed cloth (*àdirẹ*). This may be due to the people's pre supposition that the purpose of clothing is to cover human nakedness or probably to prevent the body from harsh weather and therefore the study may not be worthy of any scholarly attention. that could have been given to sculpture for explication. This paper in the contrary argues and investigates the people's perception of aesthetics and design in *àdirẹ* cloth and also examines the role of Yorùbá proverbs in the overall design of *àdirẹ* with a view to exhuming the varying intrinsic socio-cultural values that are embedded in them

3. The Concept and Processes of *Àdirẹ* Cloth

'*Àdirẹ*' is the name given to indigo patterned dyed cloth produced by the Yorùbá people of Southwestern Nigeria. According to Drewal, (2009) *Àdirẹ* is one of the best indigenous cloths in Africa. It is produced using locally sourced materials that include dyes which are manufactured from indigo plants, mordant (ashes) from cocoa pod and other resist materials. The word "*àdirẹ*" literarily means, "That which is tied and dyed", but it is in fact a generic name for the indigo dyeing process. *Àdirẹ* is a resist technique of cloth decoration. The traditional method (resist) used in the production of *àdirẹ* makes it labor intensive, time consuming and relatively slow to achieve. According to Akpata (1971) the introduction of fast dyes (chemical/synthetic) to the Nigeria market shortly after her independence in 1960, brought a new form of *àdirẹ* which became more popular

In this study, *àdirẹ* is adopted as the generic name for all Yorùbá indigo patterned dyed cloth where any of the resist materials like raffia, twine, or cassava paste have been used to resist or prevent the absorption of dyes for the purpose of and to creating designs/patterns. It is important to mention here that every resist technique used in the production of *àdirẹ* not only produce unique effects but also gives a style name.

Traditionally, Yorùbá dyers produce two types of *àdirẹ* cloth; the plain and the patterned. The plain *àdirẹ* is without pattern. while 'patterned dyed' *àdirẹ* involves the use of any available resist material such as raffia, thread, twine or starch to protect some areas of the cloth from absorbing dyes before it is immersed in the dye bath to create *àdirẹ* patterns/ designs (Ritka, 2011). Two methods of resist are used to achieve this: *àdirẹ eléso* which involves tied and stitched designs and *àdirẹ ẹlẹkọ* where starch paste is used. The paste is most often made from cassava (a root plant) flour, alum or copper sulphate boiled together to produce a smooth thick paste. The paste is applied through stenciling or direct painting. In this paper, only *àdirẹ ẹlẹkọ types will be discussed*

4. Typology of *Àdirẹ* (Patterned Dyed) Cloth

Many varieties of tied *àdirẹ* exist, but due to time and space only three important ones are discussed below. The tie-dyed *àdirẹ* types have many varieties but are classified and explained fewer than three sub-headings namely; *àdirẹ oníko*; *àdirẹ aláberé*; *àdirẹ elésó*. *Àdirẹ* is used as generic name in all.



Fig.1 Sólaro/Amure



Fig.2 Adire Oniko



Fig.3 Adire Aláberé

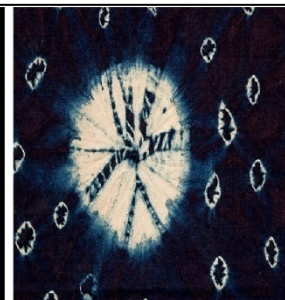


Fig.4 Adire Elésó

Àdirẹ oníko (Fig. 2) is a tie-dyed cloth and the most ancient of all *àdirẹ* types practiced among the Yorùbá dyers. It is often referred to as '*oníko*' among the people. Its production requires the use of raffia, cotton thread or rubber to resist the designated pattern areas of the cloth. The dyer creates his/her patterns by tying series of circles; randomly or at times followed a specific order of arrangement before dyeing the fabric. The fabric is then washed and spread under the shade. The dyer unties the fabric after one hour to reveal the hidden circular patterns.

In "*Àdirẹ aláberé*" (Fig.3) the dyer uses raffia or cotton thread to run stitches manually or through machine on the cloth to create simple or very complicated patterns. The thread (nylon/cotton) or raffia resist the dye during dyeing and when it is removed after dyeing the resist area becomes white and blue.

Adire Elésó; (Fig.4) in this method, pebbles, stones or seeds are covered with cloth and tied with a resist material. Wider and narrow circles are created by this process with the length of the tread as it is wrapped around the seeds or stones. At the end, larger and smaller centre of circles are see with radiant colours of blues.

5. Painted and Stenciled Resist (*Àdìrẹ Èlẹ̀kọ*) Types

Àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ or starch resist cloth is the most ancient of all Yorùbá indigo patterned dyed cloth. Two main varieties of *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ* are produced by the Yorùbá people using stenciling and free hand painting techniques with starch used as resist materials (starch paste) to create patterns on *àdìrẹ* cloth. This method is traditional and most common among Abeokuta dyers. Unlike the tied patterns, the production of *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ* demands for patience, creativity and expertise. In this study, both stenciling and free-hand painting products are generally classified and referred to as *àdìrẹ* cloth. Therefore, *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ* in this paper refers to Yorùbá patterned indigo dyed cloth which carries illustrations contained visual images, texts and proverbial messages

The use of paste is fundamental in the production of *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ*. The paste is most often made from cassava (a root plant) flour, alum or copper sulphate boiled together to produce a smooth thick paste. According to my informant, the paste is applied in two different ways. By using feather, thin stick, piece of fine bone or a metal or wooden comb-like tool. This is done traditionally by women. On the other hand, the stenciled *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ* involves forcing of the prepared cassava paste through a thin metal stencil with flexible metal or wooden tool. This enables accurate repeat patterns to be achieved. In most cases, this is done by men.

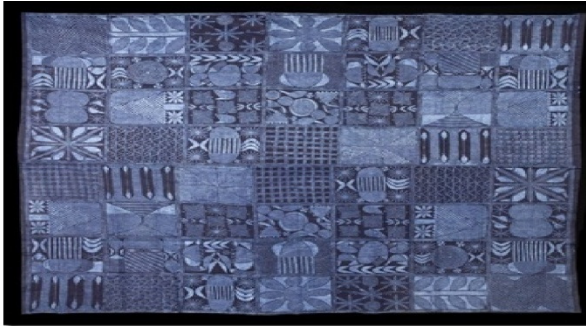


Fig. 5 Painted *Àdìrẹ*

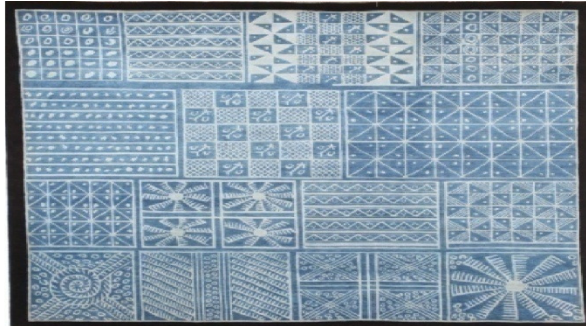


Fig. 6 Stenciled *Àdìrẹ*

6. Painted *Àdìrẹ Èlẹ̀kọ* (Fig.5)

The production of *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ* using painting technique according to my informants requires the following basic materials; cotton fabric, prepared starch, brushes (Hens feathers/fine mid rib of a palm leaf) match stick, small knife and a flat surface. The next procedure allows the dyer to prepare the starch which is applied onto the surface of the fabric using the improvised tool (feather). The starch paste is painted on one side of the cloth while we allow it to dry thoroughly before dyeing. The application of starch paste to the designated areas of the fabric is to resist dye penetration into the design area in order to create patterns on the cloth. This technique is very close to present day batik.

The dyer folds the plain cloth to form the basic lines that serves as guild lines for the dyer. According to my informant, a plain strip is left either at the end of the cloth to accommodate dyers signature. Due to consistent dyeing practices, the painter/dyer produces many similar cloths that allow her to master all the motifs without necessarily referring to any pattern. Traditionally, the painter improvised by using any available man-made objects to achieve excellence in her work. For instance; where circles are to be painted, the painter traces round any circular object (coin, tin, and bottle) to achieve this. Similarly, this technique is often adopted for *àdìrẹ* patterns that contain other forms of motifs.

The dyer starts the process of painting on the fabric by laying a part of the cloth on the table leaving the rest to drop down. The painter puts her bowl of starch beside her with different grades of brushes locally manufacture from feather, palm ribs and old knives. Traditionally, the painter sits on a mat using any of the brushes to apply the starch unto the surface of the cloth to create designs. The finished starched cloth is carefully lifted over a thick bamboo to the drying pole. Usually the bamboo stick requires here is longer than the width of the starched cloth. The starched cloth is left to hang until the cloth is stone dried. There, the dried starched material is dyed in a dye bath. The dyeing process is slightly different for each of the techniques in order to create patterns on cloths. Cloth that is patterned with cassava starch requires precise timing since dipping in the dye for more than two minutes causes the starch to dissolve. The dyed material is rinsed to remove excess dye and bleeding. The dyer also uses dull knife to scrape stubborn starch and rinse again to reveal the actual pattern on the cloth. The material is passed on to a cloth beater for good finishing while the cloth is ready for use.

7. Stenciled *Àdìrẹ Èlẹ̀kọ* (Fig. 6)

The production of stenciled *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ* involves the application of cassava starch through a metal stencil unto the cloth. The stencils were originally cut from soft metal foil, x-ray films or carpet or any other available synthetic materials. To make the stencil, the metal is cut to the required size and pattern. These stencils vary considerably in size and shape. According to my informant the design is chiseled out of metal which is used to pattern *àdìrẹ* cloth.

To commence the application of cassava paste, a layer of cloth material is spread on a table and nailed at the four corners onto the table. A stencil is positioned on the top layer of the cloth while starch is applied through it with a pliable metal. While pressing the starch into the fabric, any surplus is then scraped back into the bowl. The wet starch stands up on the surface of the cloth in the same way as it does on the newly painted cloths. The stencil is then lifted and replaced while the process is repeated until the cloth is fully covered. In many designs several different stencils are combined. The most important stencil in the design is used first all over the cloth, and then the next ones is randomly positioned and painted until the cloth is covered..

If a part of the design is to be combed for linear effect this is done immediately the stencil is removed when the starch is still wet. The comb is used to produce parallel lines in the pattern. To use the comb, it is held at the right angles to the cloth. For circles or semi circles of pattern it is held with one tooth pressed into the fabric and then rotated through the starch. For lines of pattern, it is drawn through the starch. In this process, combs with different numbers of teeth are commonly used to create wide and thin lines.

The finished cloth is then carried to the drying pole. It is lifted in the same way as the craftsman moves the painted starched cloth. Like the painted cloth, the starch must be quite dry before it is dyed. A skilled craftsman can stencil a cloth, using two or more different stencils as well as combing parts of the design in a few minutes. Where the design calls for accurate placing of the stencil, he naturally takes longer period to do the work. After many years of practice, and much experience in making and handling his materials, the *àdìrẹ* maker becomes very slick.

8. Design Formation in *Àdìrẹ Elékọ*

The *àdìrẹ* makers among the Yorùbá take cognizance of the essence of the cloth to be designed before embarking on it. Apart from aiming at achieving aesthetic excellence, the *àdìrẹ* maker considers a number of factors by embarking on production which includes relevance to culture, the message, available icons and the interest of his/her client's. Although, there are similarities in the organization of motifs and the general arrangements of the units in traditional *àdìrẹ* production however, there are peculiarities in the choice of motifs, texts and images used in certain situations. The dyer or *àdìrẹ* designer follows the convention of traditional *àdìrẹ* production by projecting ahead some visual composition that are derivable from proverb, event, common sayings or cultural images which he organizes into abstract, geometric or linear shapes. The dyer folds the cloth severally into squares which is usually not more than two yards into even squares or sometimes uses a tool (ruler) to divide and rule it into squares.

According to my informant, the cloth is usually divided into squares or rectangles and designs represent everyday tools, carvings, comb, beadworks, activities or traditional images of the artists own culture or tribal history. This according to him is supported by a Yorùbá adage which says *Kàrìn kápò, íyẹ níyeni* (there is success in walking together) which means the more the squares the more the beauty. By implication, it is these squares that unites all the design elements together that results in aesthetic balance of the cloth. Application of 'register' in form of text, images and icons are next to creating the *àdìrẹ* squares. The registers are key elements that makes *àdìrẹ* communicate the hidden socio-cultural and political messages in the cloth such as *ègàn mí kòye ó; a fasé gbòjò*. In addition, inclusions of peculiar symbols or icons are also monumental in creating *àdìrẹ designs*.

The designer should be able to choose appropriate symbols or icons to reflect peculiarities and clear understanding of the subject matter. Like the Yorùbá sayings "*Òkú kò papò mó Ìyàwó*" meaning, burial is not synonymous with wedding. To complete the processes of designing, the *àdìrẹ* maker fill-up the areas not occupied by any motifs in the squares using lines, circles and abstract shapes. Notably, what makes *àdìrẹ* is the deep blue black indigo colour which most admirers of *àdìrẹ* use to authenticate its real form. The designer ensures that, already patterned cloths are immersed in a concentrated indigo dye solution to get the desired result.

Among the Yorùbá and Igbo of Nigeria, the Akan people of Ghana and the Zulu people of South Africa they hold proverbs in a very high esteem because they regard it as collective wisdom, philosophy of life, experience, fears and aspirations. In line with this, Akmanjian (2003) observes that; proverbs are repositories of sayings which have fixed sentential forms and which encapsulate the interpersonal common truth or the societal wisdom with some literary values. The foregoing descriptions of the genre can therefore be summed up to mean that proverbs are a strong matrix of human personality and the societal regulating device.

Thus, Finnegan (1970) is right when she posits that "in many African cultures there is a feeling for language, for imagery and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology that comes out particularly in proverbs. Therefore, the application of Yorùbá proverbs in form of text, phrases or imagery on Yorùbá patterned dyed cloth (*àdìrẹ*) is to communicate or pass on culturally monumental messages or an attempt to create social awareness or to visually preserve Yorùbá culture through *àdìrẹ* cloth.

9. Data Collection and Methodology

Data on Yorùbá proverbs that are commonly found on *àdìrẹ* cloth were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source is mainly through oral interviews, while the secondary sources include journals, magazines, photographs and the internet sources covering a period of eighteen months. To eliminate the shortcomings that is usually associated with the results of secondary data. The researcher adopted a one by one interview technique to verify the authenticity of the information gathered. In this study, proverbs that are used as motifs in *àdìrẹ elékọ* which are commonly referred to as 'registers' were identified and their interpretations were obtained directly from individual native speakers of the language using purposive sampling technique. By Yorùbá patterned dyed cloth with 'registers', I mean the *àdìrẹ* cloth that carries pictures/icons, texts and phrases as motifs in their overall design as illustration of aesthetics and designs (see tables 1-6).

The researcher adopted the concept and theory of the arts based research technique in the illustration process as these proverbs were created from the interpretation, consideration and visualisation of the selected proverbs, texts and phrases processed to symbols for easy identification and quick remembrance. The researcher created the icons/imageries based on the interpretation of key informants on Yorùbá proverbs. These proverbs were processed to motifs that were used in creating *àdìrẹ designs*.

In this study, thirty Yorùbá proverbs were randomly selected from the pool by the researcher. Interpretation and correct usage of these proverbs were obtained from 45 representatives of the population whose age ranges between 35 years and above comprising 10 traditional drummers, 6 dyers, 6 *ayò* game player, 8 farmers, 5 herbalists, 6 university dons and 4 palm wine sellers. This selection was based on the fact that quite a large number of the groups selected use proverbs with other rural people on daily basis. They are therefore considered as ardent users of the language. Interviews were conducted based on peculiarity and availability of the chosen

group. The use of handset and tape-recorder were also adopted to interview the informants from the identified groups who provided interpretations for the proverbs.

In addition, the researcher also employed participant observation technique particularly with the drummers, *ayò* game player and the palm-wine sellers. These enabled the researcher to have an insight into how Yorùbá proverbs are conceived and used in a particular situation because proverbs can be contextual and be loaded with variegated interpretations.

10. Analysis of Findings

Gerald, (1981) argues that in the study of African art, ‘aesthetics’ is a term used to sum up the characteristics and elements that are clearly present in all arts objects. These elements include: colour, form, value, space, line, and texture. Similarly, in Western art perception, aesthetics is the term used to sum up the search for beauty, balance, proportion and conscientious use of materials in order to achieve good craftsmanship in art objects. Using Gerald’s theory as a model, this study examines the characteristics and elements of art as given above to determine the aesthetic values and status of Yorùbá patterned dyed cloth (*àdìrẹ*). Conceptually, cloth goes beyond ordinary covering or a wearing apparel. It is made to communicate as can be found in *Kente* the traditional cloth of the Ashanti. Citing the example of Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria, this study is used to investigate the technique of illustration and the people’s perception of aesthetics and design which also include the role of proverbs in the perception and appreciation of the Yorùbá patterned dyed cloth (*àdìrẹ*).

11. Results

Arising from the fore going, it has been established that: contemporary *àdìrẹ ẹlẹkò* production is based on the old tradition and its principles of designs. However, this is not limited to the use of indigo dyes only but may include the use of dyes of varying colours. Based on the interpretations given by these key informants, the researcher suggests the use of text, icons and images from the selected proverbs as motifs for the production of contemporary *àdìrẹ ẹlẹkò designs*. The study also established that there are innate cultural and aesthetics values in *àdìrẹ* cloth. That text, phrases, icons and images are key elements of design in the production of *àdìrẹ*. Yorùbá proverbs contain inherent cultural and aesthetics symbols, motifs, and illustrations that are used to communicate non verbal messages in the cloth.

Yorùbá people believe that the use of *àdìrẹ* cloth goes beyond mere clothing or covering of the body against harsh weather. The study established that, the use of indigo dye is beyond mere aesthetics because the colour of the indigo dye and its smell are very significant to its production. This according to Adetoro (1972) is rooted in their coolness, calmness, images, text and illustrations that are entrenched in *àdìrẹ* cloth. Corroborating this view Drewal (1986), mentions that Indigo has a special place in Yorùbá culture, where colour has associations with moods. For example, white connotes cool, calmness, wisdom and age, while blue evokes balance and brightness.

In this regard, the use of indigo dye in *àdìrẹ* is an essential part of the aesthetic standard among the Yorùbá dyers. Commenting on the aesthetic qualities of indigo dye; Grahams (1995) remarks “it is the colour itself, which is the most potent aspect of the dye, it surpasses the colour of the deepest ocean or the firmament above. It has a universal quality some say of serenity, and deep inner peace. Indigo dye according to him is the mysterious seventh colour of the spectrum where most people see only six, indigo lies deeply between violet and blue”. This study exposes the intent aesthetics and illustrations in *àdìrẹ* cloth in form of images, text and icons.

11.1. Illustration in Yorùbá Patterned Dyed Cloth

The word illustration as defined by Holland (1887) is a general term that refers to decoration, interpretation or visual explanation of a text, concept or process. It is an artistic expression of an abstract idea or thought in a visual form. According to Diana (2015), illustration is a depiction or explanation of an idea which presents itself in a visual form. The above has gone to explain the inclusion of some ‘registers’, images, icons, text and proverbs in *àdìrẹ* cloth. Today, illustrators use a wide range of styles and techniques including printing, drawing, painting, appliqué, embroidery and photograph among others to decorate fabrics.

Among the Yorùbá dyers, sequencing and pattern content in *àdìrẹ* were handed down from mother to daughter. As mentioned by my informant, only the ‘fixed concept’ of the patterns are taught; but occasionally, they are altered to accommodate new motifs that are generated from direct observation or subjective interpretation of event, character idea, proverbs Traditionally, there is a common pool of motifs in existence which the individual dyer learnt according to her ability. Depending on the purpose, illustration may be expressive, stylised, realistic or technical. As earlier mentioned, Yorùbá dyers use free-hand painting and stenciling techniques of illustration to pattern *àdìrẹ* cloth. The free-hand application of paste allows for greater freedom of expression while the stenciling technique has a limiting ability in patterning *àdìrẹ*. For better understanding, Six categories of elements used for illustration on *àdìrẹ* cloth were identified and discussed under the following headings; nature, creatures, text/writing, man-made objects, cultural objects, status symbols and object of Authority.

Object/icon/images	Proverbs	Meaning
(a) <i>Akòko</i> leaf (<i>markhanua tomentosa</i>)	<i>A kî fî ewékéwé joyè lèhìn akòko</i>	Things should be done appropriately
(b) <i>Ewe Ege</i> (Cassava leaf)	<i>Ewé ẹgẹ kòsè pón ẹko, epo alákan kò sé é sebè</i>	We cannot make bricks without straw
(c) <i>Ewé Odán</i>	<i>E má se afefeyèyè mọ nitorípé ewé odán se jùbe lo eran ló fije</i>	Stop bragging to avert an avoidable disaster
(d) <i>Ọgèdè</i> (plantain)	<i>Ọgèdè ún bàjé a loun pón, ilé ayé n bàjé aló ún dára sii</i>	People celebrate immorality with impunity
(e) <i>Obi</i> (kolanut)	<i>Enu àgbà ni obi tí ngbó</i>	The elders are the custodian of wisdom

Table 1: Nature

In a general term ‘nature’ refers to man physical environment including rivers, mountain, moon, stars, flora and fauna. By implication, it includes all categories of plants, flowers, trees, vegetables and grasses. However, in this study, nature refers to all icons that represent any of the aforementioned that are used as motifs by the *àdirẹ* makers.

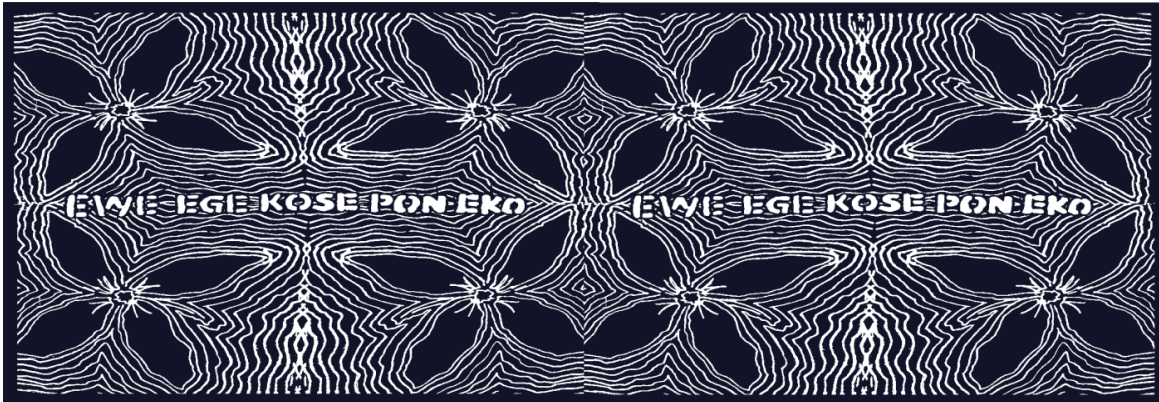


Figure 7: Ewe (leaf) see a,b &c in Table 1

Illustration of Akòko leaves on *àdirẹ* cloth is also associated with the crowning rites of a new king among the Yorùbá. More importantly, the use of *akòko* leaf (*markhanua tomentosa*) is very important in the installation rites of Yorùbá *Oba*. The *akòko* leaf is a prominent representation in *àdirẹ* designs. It is part of traditional chieftaincy rites that *akòko* leaf is attached into the cap of a newly appointed king in Yorùbá land as a symbol of authority and confirmation of acceptance of the king by his people. In this regard, one can confirm that, the use of *akòko* as motifs in *àdirẹ* designs is a confirmation of its relevance to Yorùbá cultural life. Below are five selected objects and their corresponding proverbs.

Object/icon/images	Proverb	Meaning
(a) Lizard (Alangngba)	<i>Gbogbo Aláńgbá ni ó da ikùn délẹ a kò mọ èyí tí inu ñrun</i>	Celebrate your success with caution
(b) Wall-Gecko (Omoólé)	<i>Omoólé ò toro ilé tó fi ñgbé ilé</i>	The wall gecko does not need clearance before taking over an abode
(c) Turkey (Tòlótóló)	<i>Níjọ tí eti ñjẹ tólótóló baba adię a ò dé ilé yín jẹun rí</i>	However affluent you are, I have not partaken of you wealth
(d) Bat (Adán)	<i>Adán tí o dorí kodò tí ó nwo iṣe eyẹ</i>	Leap before you jump
(e) Spider (Ala-n-takùn)	<i>Òwú alá-àntakùn kò sẹni tó lẹ fi ránsọ</i>	The thread of a spider is not a material for the weavers

Table 2: Creatures/Animals

Creatures like lizard (*aláńgbá*), wall gecko (*omóólé*), turkey (*tólótóló*), bat (*adán*) spider (*alánùntakùn*), fishes (*ẹja*), lizards (*aláúńgbá*), snakes (*ẹjò*) and cockroaches (*ááyá*) usually sourced from proverbs are illustrated on *àdirẹ* cloth to make visual communication. In addition, birds of all varieties and aquatic animals appear on *àdirẹ* cloth mostly in profile or sometimes in silhouette that make them solid on the surface of the cloth. Culturally, each of these identified creatures has relevance in the spiritual and folk life of the Yorùbá people. Where these creatures are illustrated and used as motif on *àdirẹ* according to my informant, they function significantly as spiritual objects.



Figure 8: see (a) Lizard in Fig. 2 above

Text, letters or phrases illustrated on *àdìrẹ* cloth are mostly generated from; proverbs, popular sayings, slogans, and jargons or slang of the moment and sometimes coined from prayers. These are combined with some visual images, symbols or icons in a particular design and sometimes they are done without them. According to my informant, 'Texts' are expressive in nature and they communicate better with the wearer and the society. For example; *Tèmi á dára, Èdá kò lá ròpin* (don't underrate humans) is a phrase generated from Yorùbá common sayings to counsel the hopeless and warn the egoist who are full of themselves (See table 3.). In a similar situation, *bó júrí ẹnu a dáké* (when you see you seal up your mouth) This is a warning to always conceal an open secret with friends, business associate, families, and two incongruent parties.

11.2. Text & Phrases (Table. 3)

Object/icon/images	Proverb	Meaning
(a) Tèmi á dára	<i>Tèmi á dára tí ó fi oko tirè sílè tí ó ún ro oko olóko</i>	You work to attain success
(b) Èdá kò lá ròpin	<i>oti se mò pé enikan kò lè ní láarí</i>	It is difficult to determine peoples destiny from birth
(c) Bójúrí enu adáké	<i>Bí omo bá mo àlè iyá a rẹ kò gbodò dé ilé wí</i>	It is not every information that should be divulged.
(d) Ótí seé se o	<i>Bá ò kú, ìse òtán</i>	One should not be despair
(e) Arísiségi	<i>Arísiségi, orí ara rẹ̀ ní yóò fí rùú</i>	Those who dine with the tiger will end up in the belly of Tiger .

Table: 3 Text & Phrases

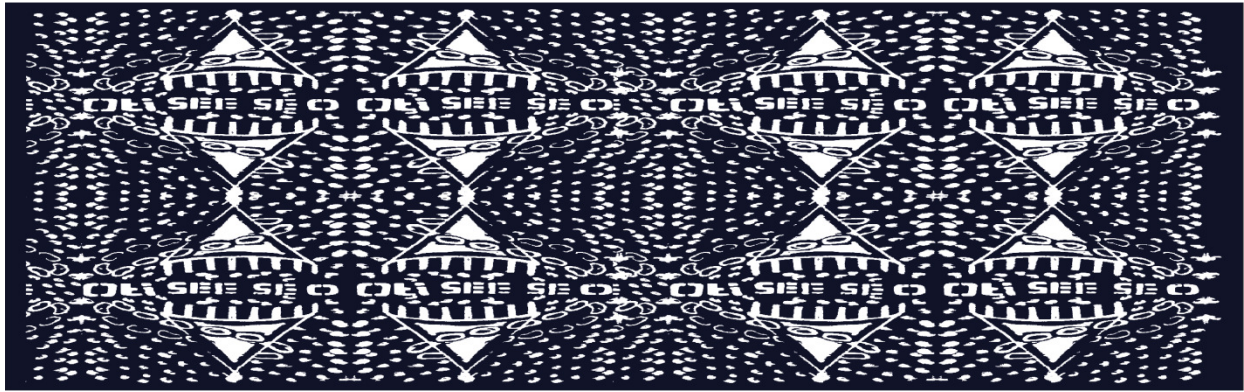


Figure 9: See (d) Oti se e se o in Table 3.

11.3. Man-Made Objects (Table. 4)

Man-made Objects such as game boards (*ayò*), scandals (*bàtà*), Sieve (*àşè*), *òkòtò*, comb (*ìlárí*), scissors, knife (*òbè*), spoon (*síbí*) are common features of *àdìrẹ*. The significance of this motif is expressed in many Yorùbá proverbs and common sayings as presented in the table below.

Object/icon/images	Proverb	Meaning
(a) Game board (Ayò)	<i>Ìgbèhìn ní àlàyó nta</i>	The end justifies the means
(b) Scandals (bàtà)	<i>Àrìnká ún já bàtà</i>	A vagabond will end up exhausting his usefulness.
(c) Sieve (Aşé)	<i>Afa şe gbòjò ún tan ara rẹ̀ je ni</i>	A wasteful effort will end up in penury.
(d) Comb (Òòya)	<i>Oòyà kòní yàwá, bójú ba yejú kí ohùn kó mó yè</i>	Out of sight should not be out of mind.
(e) Knife (Òbè)	<i>Sánbe sùn fapó rorí iwà omo ní mú omo je òkígbe</i>	It is peoples illicit intention that makes them to be unnecessarily worrisome

Table 4: Man-Made Objects

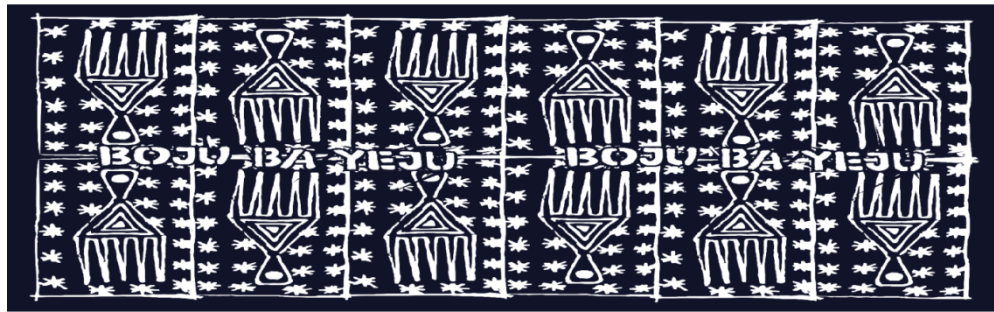


Figure 10: See (d) Oðyà kòní yàwá in table 4

11.4. Cultural Objects (Table 5)

Cultural objects and emblems are mostly associated with traditional religions and festivals in Yorùbá land. Cultural elements are objects used in the context of religion or social ceremonies like calabash, Sàngó wand, cowries, horn and gong among others. They are important in the conduct or service of traditional religions and festivals

Object/icon/images	Proverb	Meaning
(a) cowries (<i>owóeyo</i>),	<i>Owóeyo ojú éégun kò sé e fi dáko mu</i>	The sacredness of the gods should be adorned
(b) gong (<i>agogo</i>),	<i>Eèwò akí pa ohùn mó agogo lènu</i>	Natural phenomenon cannot be altered
© talking drum (<i>iyá-ilù</i>),	<i>Ìyá- ilù kí ròde ibànújé</i>	Principle of appropriate selectivity is divine
(d) Sango wand (<i>osée sàngó</i>),	<i>Eni Sàngó tojú rè wolè, kòní báwon bú kòso</i>	Bitter experiences linger for ever
(e) ritual/cooking pot (<i>ikòkò</i>),	<i>Ìyí tí ayí ikòkò, akò gbodò yí odó bée</i>	Round peg should be in a round hole

Table 5



Figure 11

11.5. Cultural Objects (Table 5)

According to my informant, different traditional religion and cultural objects exists among the Yorùbá. Every object is symbolic to secure the presence of the gods and probably the associated spirits during worship. For example, among the Sango worshipers, the use of wand is paramount in performing certain religious rite while the Obàtálá priests would require the use of *ifá* staff (*okinni*) òpèlè and divination tray) to perform similar rites.

11.6. Symbols and Object of Authority (Table 6)

Symbols/Objects of Authority such as, beaded shoes, horse tail, beaded crown, staff thrown, and beads are commonly illustrated in *àdìre* cloth to commemorate or celebrate the king, heroes or political office holder among the people. Yorùbá dyers are conscious of the supreme spiritual and political powers of their rulers which they depict in *àdìre*

Object/icon/images	Proverb	Meaning
(a) Beaded Scandals (<i>bàtà</i>)	<i>Kòsì ohun tí bàtà ìlèkè ñwá lésé alágbàro</i>	Beaded scandal is the mark of royalty
(b) Crown (<i>Ade-Oba</i>)	<i>Adé lafí ñmo oba</i>	The crown is the mark of royalty
(c) Horse tail (<i>irùkèrè</i>)	<i>Màálú tí kò ní irù, Oluwa ní bá lé esinsin</i>	God is the provider for the hopeless
(d) Beads (<i>ilèkè</i>)	<i>Ìlèkè la fí ñmo Ijòyè</i>	The use of bead is the identity for the chief
(e) (Royal horn) <i>kàkàkí</i>	<i>Olè tí ógbé kàkàkí Oba níbo ní yó tí fón on</i>	The kings paraphernalia cannot be misappropriated

Table 6: Symbols and Objects of Authority

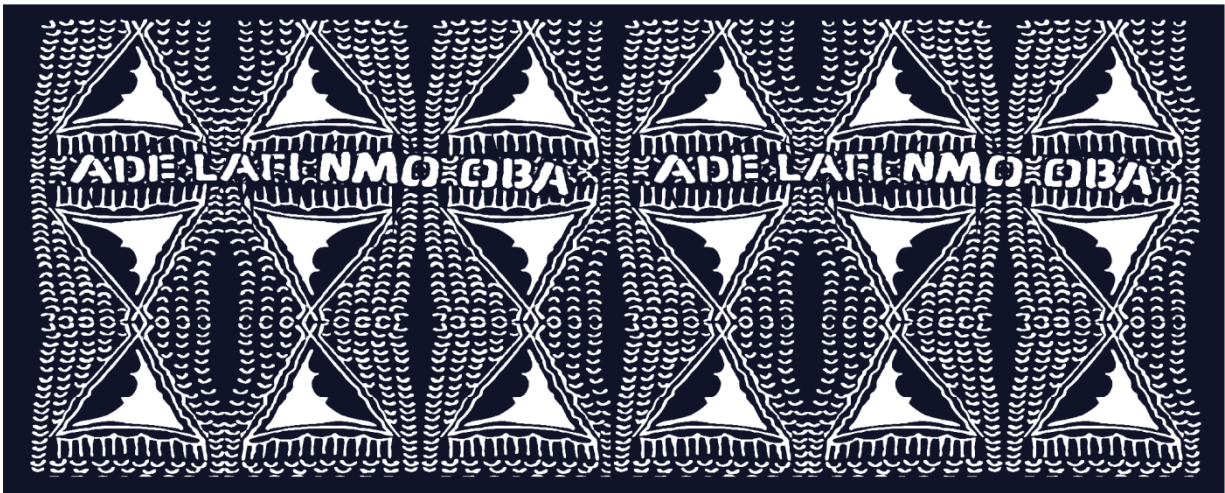


Figure 12

11.7. Icons and Imageries (Fig.6)

Mákindé (2016) in a study defines iconography as the study of symbolic discourse that consists of texts and imageries, interpretative principles that makes sense to people in their symbolic representations. Icons and pictures according to the above definition remain key elements that are used in the production of *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ*. Icons and imageries are conventionally represented in linear or pictorial forms (See Figure 7-12). Essentially, these elements contain some hidden or coded messages that are interpretable to the knowledgeable members of the society and designers. Producers of *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ* constantly combine visual images from any of the six categories above as motifs that represent thoughts, messages, events, history and personality that are keenly related to their community. In this regard, no other cloth can be cited as better example than *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ* cloth.

Arising from the foregoing, a cursory look at Yorùbá patterned dyed cloth presents a repository of cultural images in form of icons including fish bones, calabash, birds, and snakes among others. Notably, illustration in *àdìrẹ* is one of the main characteristics or cultural identities and key elements to achieving visual aesthetics and good design in *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ*. Essentially, the application of cultural elements on *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ* cloth is a means of expressing cultural identity why the iconography on *àdìrẹ* provides them a voice on matters of public interest.

12. Discussion

The results have indicated that *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ* production among the Yorùbá people of southwestern Nigeria is an ancient craft traditions dominated by women prior to Nigeria independence in 1960. The study also established that availability of improved imported cotton fabrics and varieties of synthetic dyes and chemicals influenced male participation in the craft; also established is the fact that; illustration of aesthetics and design using proverbs makes *àdìrẹ* cloth truly indigenous to Yorùbá people. Essentially, what makes *àdìrẹ* is not just the indigo dye but rather it is the ability of the dyer to combine effectively text, phrases, icons or pictures derivable from any Yorùbá proverb, events or popular sayings in the society and use them as motifs on *àdìrẹ* cloth. The study also recognized that; the communicative ability of *àdìrẹ* depends mainly on the amount of knowledge or skill that has been acquired over time by the dyer. We can conclude here that; to avoid reproduction or re-circulation of old *àdìrẹ* designs like; *Súnbèbè*, *Ìbàdán òun* and *Olóba* among others, there is need to explore more Yorùbá proverbs and combine them with current happenings or events in our society such as politics, sports and kidnapping among others.

13. Conclusion

The main concern of this paper was to investigate the application of Yorùbá proverbs in the illustration and creation of aesthetics and design on Yorùbá patterned dyed cloth (*àdìrẹ*) with a view to exhuming the varying intrinsic socio-cultural values that are embedded in them. This study concludes that; much *àdìrẹ* cloth became subject of antiquity because of their unique form of illustration, use of common proverbs known as registers, richness in indigo dye, overall design concept and their communicative powers. Such *àdìrẹ* include; *Sunbebe* (fig), *Ibadan dun* (fig) and *Olóba* (fig) among others. Without doubt, these *àdìrẹ èlẹ̀kọ* types have communicative powers that are self explanatory as exemplified in the *Olóba* series.

The bane of our society now, therefore, is our total disregard for indigenous culture and believes in western oriented ones. Today, proverb use among our youths is becoming a specialized function of few cultured people rather than being part of a general Yorùbá language that should be spoken by every son and daughters of Yorùbá extraction. This study confirms that non use of proverbs in our daily interactions hinder the production of contemporary *àdìrẹ cloth* among the Yorùbá dyers which in effect is affecting our creative ability. The study concludes that, to create *àdìrẹ* of our time that will be monumental and of antiquity in nature and value; there is need for our textile artists/designers to have full understanding of the basic elements of culture such as; proverbs and folklores, identifying wise and common sayings in the society, acquisition of skills in iconography and good visual composition.

An understanding of the functions of folklore will increase patronage of this unique cloth (*àdìrẹ*) and will also help to preserve this cherished indigenous heritage. Textile artist/designers should take the bull by the horn by sourcing their motif from indigenous culture.

Notably, the Yorùbá people say “*ejé kí a sé bí nwón tún sé, kí olè rí bí óse ye kórí* (things should be done appropriately to get the result). In essence should ensure that the tradition of dyeing should continue unabated so that our legacy is not thrown aboard. This is supported by a Yorùbá aphorism that says ‘*Òrìsà tí a bá kò tì akò filé omo lówó, òrìsà ná yóo parun ni* meaning if the present generation fails to transfer knowledge/technology such will be lost for ever

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