

Adoption of Adire Fabric in the Designing of Contemporary Wedding Gowns in Nigeria Society

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Abstract

This study focused on the need to adapt to *Adire* fabric in designing contemporary wedding gowns in Nigerian society. The aim is to increase visibility, appreciation, and use of Nigerian material culture as a vehicle of artistic expression and to promote Nigerian culture. The study is exploratory and quantitative. Four research questions were stated to provide the direction for the investigation. Data were obtained from a sample size of 100, drawn randomly from the South-West geographical region of Nigeria. Based on the determination of issues, the study concluded that for Nigerian society to increase visibility, appreciation, and use of the Adire materials, there must be greater sensitization of the public on the need to support the use of Adire materials. There must be a general acceptance of the aesthetic concept of the social-cultural importance of *Adire's* visual symbols on contemporary wedding gowns in society and encouragement on the part of the general public to promote and incorporate *Adire* fabric into contemporary Nigerian society.

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Background to the Study

Adire's contemporary design elements, patterns, and content are a dynamic blend of motifs, textures, colour schemes, techniques, thoughts, and themes that symbolize Nigerian material culture. The Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria are well known for their dynamic cultural milieu, and *Adire* textiles have long been a profitable clothing type in their festivals and ceremonial events. Fashion trends or styles are visual cultures that represent a consumer's identity in a certain place, whilst *adire* motifs have a wide range of ideological connotations. According to Saravanna (2020), the social purpose of fashion trends is to reflect the consumer's individuality in terms of lifestyle choices and attitudes. Most designers are inspired by modern society's vitality and complexity, which they study through its rapid global cultural contacts, socio-economic situations, technological progress, and other factors.

Ukaegbu (2020) attests that the constant urge to celebrate the new, the quest for a new design, and the prospect of a new point of view are what make *Adire* visual elements a cultural barometer for inventiveness. This means that adapting *Adire's* aesthetic aspects is not about clothes, but about how clothes function as a vehicle to capture essential cultural events. As a result, visual components are transformed into a tool that allows art practitioners to investigate intersections between art and society in order to generate novel and appealing trending designs for value-expressive function. In essence, creativity seeks to elicit appreciation by transmitting value expression through clothes and attire, as appearance is a social etiquette as well as an efficient means of nonverbal communication in *Adire*.

The fact is that the precise location and circumstances surrounding the emergence of this ancient skill are unknown. Some experts believe that Abeokuta is the capital of *Adire* in Nigeria (Zakaree, 2017). Others argue that Ibadan and Osogbo are equally prominent in the art of *adire*making as Abeokuta (Doig, 2016). *Adire* is a way to express one's cultural identity. The *Adire* iconography gives the Yoruba people a voice in topics of public significance (Davies-Okundaye, 2001). *Adire* motifs (*Amin*) are typically created from symbols in order to generate a new design direction. This is a highly developed textile skill that is rooted in Yoruba culture and whose designs are embellished on the cloth.

The following figures show the different *Adire* Motif Designs:

Fig. 1: *Adire* Motif Designs

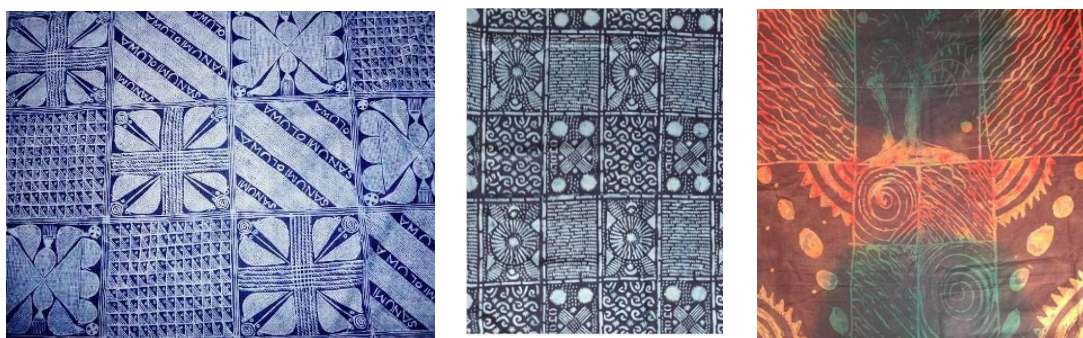


Figure 1 above shows some traditional and contemporary *Adire* design elements. Drawing symbols on *Adire* is the greatest way for Yorubas to understand them. These symbols provide a visual vocabulary that can be used to construct and establish a personal visual message, and these motifs are passed down from mothers to daughters within dyeing households from generation to generation. Sometimes, certain symbols are abstract representations of objects, ideas, feelings, or behaviours. Adapting *Adire*'s design to new African markets is crucial for corporate success and promotion of the Yoruba culture.

The importance of this study designed to promote the *Adire* fabric in designing contemporary wedding gowns in Nigeria cannot be overstressed. The study would provide a new adaptable approach to integrating visual vocabulary as a means of fabric embellishment. The outcome will be useful for design lecturers and trainers to further develop classroom lecturing. Adopting *Adire*'s motif patterns will make a substantial contribution to Nigeria's economy. It would analyze the aesthetic effect of colours on Nigerian trending styles and provide colour preference ratings for usage in textile and clothing design in Nigeria. In this way, the Nigerian government will benefit from this study by utilizing the information in this research to boost or promote its industries.

Culturally, the study would serve as a cultural model or means of identification for the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. For example, Yoruba white wedding gowns with an emphasis on Yoruba cultural symbols utilized either in tie & dye, batik, or mixed materials techniques will emphasize the Yoruba culture. The Ministry of Culture will, therefore, find this work invaluable in promoting Nigerian fashion and cultural values. It is hoped that the various departments of Fine Arts and Design, as we have in the University of Port Harcourt, in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Adamawa State, etc., would also benefit from the recommendations of this study, and the data obtained here will enhance teaching and learning. Scholars and researchers in this field will find the information here useful as it will serve as reference material to students and up-and-coming researchers who may intend to research in this area or in related areas of this study, and the general public will also benefit from this research as the information provided here will guide and sensitize them on the need to promote the Nigerian indigenous culture.

Statement of the Problem

In the recent past, there are initiatives to adapt *Adire* to the textile fabric. The efforts have been limited to a few designers, including Nike Davies-Okundaye, Ade Bakare, Quintessence, Kesse Jabari, Jimmy King, African Pride, Rowland Olujimi Abiodun, and others, who now adopt *Adire* to create haute-culture apparel. *Adire* has not fully realized its potential as a motif to embellish contemporary Nigerian bridal gowns, both at home and abroad. Contemporary wedding gowns in Nigeria are influenced by a foreign culture. This has neglected the value of Nigerian indigenous cultures. The cultural heritage of any ethnic group can easily be viewed and assessed through its cultural symbols, and each race has its own values. Driven by these concerns, the study seeks to bridge this gap and evolve the need to promote the *Adire* fabric in designing contemporary wedding gowns in Nigeria. It seeks to explore the need for the applicability of the aesthetic concept of the social-cultural importance of *Adire's* visual symbols on contemporary wedding gowns and the need to project Nigerian indigenous culture.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to investigate the need to adapt *adire* fabric in designing wedding gowns in Nigerian society with the aim of promoting indigenous cultures. Specifically, the study seeks to,

1. Analyze the aesthetic concept of *Adire* cultural symbols on wedding gowns in terms of their social-cultural significance.
2. Ascertain whether *Adire* fabric has the aesthetics and socio-cultural significance for wedding gowns in Yoruba culture.
3. Find out the unique and aesthetic values of *Adire* fabric that make it special in Yoruba land for modernizing wedding gowns and
4. Determine whether the use of *Adire* symbols on contemporary Nigerian wedding gowns (fashion) is generally necessary.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to guide this study:

1. What is the socio-cultural significance of *Adire* cultural symbols on wedding gowns?
2. Does *Adire* fabric have the aesthetics and socio-cultural significance for wedding gowns in Yoruba culture?
3. What are the unique and aesthetic values of *Adire* fabric that make it special in Yoruba land for modernizing wedding gowns?
4. Is it necessary to incorporate *Adire* symbols into modern Nigerian wedding gowns (fashion)?

Conceptual literature

In Africa, the *Adire* (Tie and Dye) is a well-known, elaborate blue indigo dyed or polychromatic patterned cotton cloth. *Adire* literally means tied 'and' dyed', but etymologically *Adire* is derived from *Adi*, which means to bind 'and *re* meaning' to dye' (Areo and Kalilu, 2013). In this process, seeds, raffia, threads, and starch are commonly

used as techniques to give resistance to dye penetration. The origin of *Adire* is unknown, although archaeological evidence unearthed in Tellam burial caves in Mali dates it to the twelfth century (Bolland, 1992, p.72), 615–906 AD in China, 555-794 AD in Japan, and throughout Asia, Indonesia, India, and Africa, particularly Nigeria (Gausa, 2005). However, in Nigeria, the resist technique is thought to have evolved among the Osogbo.

Davis-Okundaye, as cited in Oyelola (2016), maintains that *Adire* was the predominant method of textile dyeing among the Yoruba before the availability of imported synthetic embellished materials such as shirting, poplin, velvet, brocade, and quality wax (paraffin and bee wax) for production, Production occurred in two variants prior to the initial *Adire* design. The first was dyeing handspun cotton yarn that was woven into expensive luxury textiles and everyday wear. The potential of indigo to rescue and re-use or re-process old women's wrappers or clothing remnants for future use was the second. However, as a consequence of interaction with the inhabitants of Ibadan in Oyo, and Osogbo, as well as missionary and colonial Europeans who brought their victuals (tea chests and cigars), the Abeokuta people transformed over time. Many researchers, including Mack and Picton (1979), Barbour (1971), John Picton (.), Stanfield (1971), Eicher (1976), Gillow J. (2001), and Jackson G. (2004), state that the three basic procedures used in *Adire* pattern dyeing are: *Adireoniko*, a phrase taken from the Yoruba word for raffia *oriko*, a fiber formed from the leaves of the raffia palm tree, The resisting agent is raffia or cotton thread. The pattern is attached to the fabric before dyeing. *Adirealabere* patterns are embroidered with a needle and thread, whereas *Adireelekois* starch-resist cloth. However, this study will only focus on a few *Adire* visual elements.

Furthermore, *Adire* has essential traditional applications, and the symbols have cultural value. Craftsmen and women strive for creativity and are identified with Yoruba *Adire* culture. *Adire* now appears in a wide range of social contexts, just a handful of which are related to its original use in Yoruba land. Due to the incredible shift to foreign culture, Yoruba clothing culture may see a succession of adjustments, adaptations, and inventions in key traditional outfits (Ojo, 2000). The indigenous manner of production and techniques have also altered and are no longer limited to handcrafted textiles, but also cover all other arts and design production practices in Nigeria.

The above statement supports the significance of *Adire* symbols among the Yoruba people, and Eicher (1976) contends that the Yoruba people adorn their garments to define a variety of phenomena. These symbols have mythological significance and are based on environmental history and culture, as seen in Figs. 1 & 2 (Traditional and contemporary marriage attire), which are often based on environmental history and culture. Barbour believed that in Ibadan and other Yoruba towns, every motif and inscription had a name, a meaning, and was recognized and a request was made again. Examples are Amuga (scissor), Igioye (Chieftaincy), Ibadanduu (Ibadan is sweet), eye-pe (all the birds are here), etc. As observed by Ajogbe, the names will enable clients to request specific types of designs.

Fig. 2a: Yoruba Traditional Marriage Attire



Medium: Batik Technique
Source: Olumide (2003)

Fig. 2b: Contemporary Traditional Marriage Attire



Medium: Batik & Tie Dye Technique
Source: Pinterest (2022)

The beauty of *Adire* cloth is based on subtle differences in colour combination, design, motifs, and texture, rather than a highly developed technology. The Yoruba culture is firmly rooted in the practice of resisting dyeing. Young girls learn to make patterns with their mothers from an early age. Without a doubt, Yoruba cloth dyers have made significant contributions to the advancement of modern art and the preservation of the Yoruba culture through the legacies generated from their traditional motifs, which have had a stronger influence on many contemporary Nigerian artists.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the Cultural Revival theory of Ryand Bronny, a German cultural theorist who argues that culture is ever-changing, dynamic, and elastic. However, indigenous culture becomes fluid and lost in transit at some point. Similarly, Sotade (1993) supports the facts that cultural regeneration has been the name of the game in the worlds of arts and fashion. She elaborated that a new voice has joined the call for a return to the continent's textiles, such as *Aso-oke*, *Kente*, *Toghu*, *Akwete*, *Agher*, and *Adire*, to create innovative styles as well as corporate wedding gown designs, which is the aim of this study.

Egonwa (1994), observes that the quest for understanding cultural symbols and materials tradition and syncing them with modern art practice has been a trend since 1959 when the Zanianist proclaimed it as a way forward for the development of art practice in Nigeria. The Chinese and Igbo Ulli drawings convey the same subject (in their illustrations). People's cultural preservation and perpetuation of identity can be retained with *Revival Theory* and *Chinese Cultural Ideology*, which states that a new dimension will be welcomed, and by the time hypnotizing-invoking culture with sea mingling dies, there is a tendency that it will be revived"

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive survey and an exploratory approach. Geographically, the study covers the South-West geographical areas of Nigerian society where *adire* fabrics are

manufactured. The historical method was also used to investigate *Adire* as a material culture as well as the trend of *Adire* symbols (motifs) as proposed by Adetoro (1997). The descriptive method was utilized to describe and analyze *Adire* symbols, while the exploratory method of the studio was also used to investigate and adapt *Adire* symbols on current Nigerian bridal garments. According to Nwankwo (2013), descriptive designs do not make use of hypotheses because they only describe phenomena as they exist at any point in time.

A descriptive survey uses tools such as the research questionnaire or observation or interview for data generation. This study's population consists of two (2) Contemporary Nigeria Wedding Gowns (with *Adire* motifs) and thirty (100) respondents (craftsmen-36, and women-64) from dyeing facilities at Abeokuta, Ibadan, and Osogbo in Nigeria, which has the possibility of reflecting a true sample of the entire population. The selection of respondents and participants was simple and purposeful, and in order to ensure the validity and reliability of this study, only relevant people were involved. The researcher utilized the simple purposive sampling method as suggested by Patton (2002) to draw a sample of the available population for the study. This involves identifying and adopting *appropriate* symbols and those that are knowledgeable about the craft or a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell and Clark, 2011).

The data are derived from primary and secondary sources. The former contains *Adire* symbols as well as information gathered through oral interviews, questionnaires, observations, and participation. Fieldwork and the studio approach were the primary data collection methods used in this study. Researchers such as Saliu (1994), Duniya (2009), and Babalola (2010) have used this fieldwork approach with success. The method enabled the researcher to use instruments like interview schedules, questionnaires, observation, participation, and online searches.

The questionnaire contained 25 items and was patterned on a modified 4-point Likert Scale. Available images on the internet were also sampled to help in the discussion session of the study. Official records, tape recordings, and drawings of such were used. Data was partly drawn from secondary sources such as statistical materials, annual reports, the internet, journals *etcetera*. To gather information (data), the Likert Scale, questionnaire, observation, and oral interview were employed, as well as photographs and video images of *adire* symbols. Images from the internet were also sampled to aid in the study's discussion session. There were official records, tape recordings, and drawings of such. Secondary sources of data include statistical papers, yearly reports, the internet, journals, and so on.

The method of data analysis is quantitative and qualitative, and the researcher drew inferences from Feldman's (1970) method of art analysis, employing descriptive (what does one see), formal analysis (how is the work), and interpretation (what messages does the work communicate). At this point, excerpts from oral interviews and questionnaires with the craftsmen and women, as well as the individuals' intuitions, assisted in

interpreting the work, which enriched the study. Finally, the evaluation factor took into account how the works achieved aesthetic, socio-cultural, and adaptability essences among Nigerian Yoruba. This study's adaptation inspiration is divided into two categories: Applied Design and Structural Design.

Results and Discussion

Research Question One: What is the socio-cultural significance of *Adire* cultural symbols on wedding gowns?

The first research question of this study was to find out the social-cultural significance of *Adire* cultural symbols on wedding gowns. This research question necessitated the description and analysis of some of the *Adire* symbols on the wedding gown in this study. A systematic analysis of all works obtained was done symbiotically (contextually), as opposed to formal analysis, which only seeks to describe an artwork visually. The *Adire* cultural symbols and patterns were aesthetically organized on the wedding gowns in this study. It is believed that the beauty of *Adire* fabric depends on the designer's aesthetic appeal to the wearer.

This gesture makes the motifs discernable with all the decorative attributes therein, clearly seen by the beholder. It was added that the motifs vary significantly from one gown to the other, mark one's ethnic identity, and finally provide self-esteem for the brides. It serves as a means of cultural identification, beautification, and attraction for the brides. The Yoruba are in love with aesthetics in all its ramifications, and efforts are always undertaken to cater to the beautification of their clothes. Also, *Adire's* wedding gowns will become as fashionable as the costumes and attire of the new brides in Yoruba land, even later becoming part of her trains.

Finally, several of the design elements were discovered to be symbolic, primarily geometric shapes. They have no meaning other than to be decorative components. The results of the interviews with the craftsmen and women demonstrate that the majority of the *Adire* symbols strictly adhere to traditional methods and materials used in art production. In defense of their traditions, the craftsmen and women stated that the *Adire* cultural themes mostly used in this study for dyeing work and color adhesion are nearly as durable. The findings of these interviews revealed that, while people now enjoy the *Adire* bridal gown art visually, most are unaware of its cultural significance. For example, the majority of people voiced their admiration for the new work.

Research Question Two

Does *Adire* fabric have the aesthetics and socio-cultural significance for wedding gowns in Yoruba culture?

Table 1: The aesthetic and socio-cultural significance of *Adire* fabric for wedding Gowns in Yoruba land

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	35	35.0
Agree	64	64.0
Undecided	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

The second research question of this study is to ascertain whether *Adire* cultural symbols have aesthetic and cultural significance for the creation of contemporary Nigerian fashion and to exhibit them through modeling. This study has revealed that many new motifs that form patterns that symbolize a lot of things have been incorporated into the *Adire* modernized wedding gown Nigerian style. They have a particular tendency for innovation. Modernity, nevertheless, has an impact on the trade, with notable changes in style and design. For wedding gowns, adaptation and construction have a particular proclivity for creativity and innovation. The adapted *Adire* symbols include representing plant life, animals, and birds' activities; everyday objects; and these can be found on the wedding gowns, as shown in Plates vi and vii.

Table 1 indicates that 64 (64.0%) and 35(35.0%) of the respondents, which represent strongly agreed and agreed that *Adire* has an aesthetic concept and socio-significance for wedding gowns in Yoruba culture, while those who are undecided are few in number. This inferred that the aesthetic concept and socio-significance of *Adire* among the Yoruba people are of great importance for wedding gowns. This revealed the fact that in many socio-cultural activities such as naming ceremonies, chieftaincy, birthdays, burial ceremonies, *etcetera*, *Adire* fashion is worn to celebrate these occasions

Research Question One

What are the unique and aesthetic values of *Adire* fabric that make it special in Yoruba land for modernizing wedding gowns?

Table 2: The Unique and Aesthetic Values of *Adire*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	31	31.0
Agree	65	65.0
Undecided	3	3.0
Strongly Disagree	1	1.0
Disagree	31	31.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 2 revealed that the majority (65.0%) and 31 (31.0%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the uniqueness and aesthetic of *Adire* for wedding gowns make it special. While 32 (32.0%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with this assertion, only 1 (1.0%) of the respondents was undecided. This implies that the *Adire* art tradition is special among the Yoruba people as a result of its aesthetic and uniqueness. The Yorubas attached a lot of respect to *Adire* fashion because of its beauty for occasional outings and ceremonies.

Research Question Two:

Is it necessary to incorporate *Adire* symbols into modern Nigerian wedding gowns (fashion)?

Table 3: The Necessity of Adapting *Adire* Symbols on Contemporary Nigerian wedding gowns.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	2	2.0
Agree	43	43.0
Undecided	51	51.0
Strongly Disagree	3	3.0
Disagree	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 3 indicated slightly above half 51 (51.0%) of respondents were undecided about the importance of incorporating *Adire* symbols into modern wedding gowns in general, while 45 (45.0%) agreed or strongly agreed with this assertion. This implies that *Adire* symbols are not a design necessity in contemporary Nigerian fashion. This may be because other better symbols or designs that have been developed technologically may be of better quality and better design than the locally made *Adire* symbols. As a result, to optimize their creative potential, traditional African design components should be redesigned toward fashion vogue and sustainable consumption worldwide.

Conclusion

The study sought to investigate the need to adapt *adire* fabric in designing wedding gowns in Nigerian society as a way of promoting indigenous cultures. The paper probes misperception by demonstrating the longstanding and ongoing importance of textuality in African cultural materials using paper design and batik technique. The exploratory, descriptive research methods and literacy materials were used to create *Adire's* infinite design possibilities on wedding gowns to assert claims to inventiveness, creativity, historical knowledge, and identification. Because of their adaptability in modern textile design, these symbols can be transformed into appropriate, elegant wedding gowns. The designs' potential to be adjusted for use in different conditions enhances their potential.

The responses and analyses of primary data show that utilizing the fundamental elements of design in *adire* to create captivating and elegant patterns on contemporary wedding gowns can significantly enhance and promote the African unique culture. It will stimulate creative ingenuity and the creation of patterns from existing civilizations and further optimize creative potentials in the traditional African design components.

The study concludes and admits that that the *Adire* symbols can be altered for modern bridal garments. This has demonstrated creativity and innovation, which would encourage textile and fashion scholars to reposition themselves in their respective fields for this opportunity to do a strategic focus on setting new horizons in the fashion and textile industries, as well as provide scholars with the opportunity to catalyze those aspiring to be professional fashion designers in the near future.

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