Chapter One

Conceptualizing Dress and Identity in Yorubaland

1.1 Background to the Study

This study writes a history of Yorùbá dress, especially its place in the construction of Yorùbá ethno-national identity. Previous studies on Yorùbá people and Yorubaland have focused on politics and economy, warfare and diplomacy, gender and culture, among other themes[1]; but little or nothing has been written on dress. Also subsumed in this study is a history of Yorubaland as seen through dress. Dress, as the study showed, is an important component of Yorùbá identity; therefore a neglect of it in our understanding of Yorubaland is unacceptable. Writing Yorùbá history through dress is important because Yorùbá dress is central to Yorùbá culture and Yorùbá identity. Identity and the dressed body, among Yorùbá people of South West Nigeria, play fundamental roles in the creation of a person or a group's ideal personality. Historicizing how the body is adorned and what this means in the creation of a person's ideal personality is fundamentally about two phenomena

[1] A brief look at the different themes explored by historians on Yorubaland testifies to the fact that little or nothing exists on Yorùbá dress and that a history of Yorubaland as seen through dress has not enjoyed any favourable attention among scholars. Beginning with Samuel Johnson, who documented ethno-histories of the different Yorùbá sub-groups, the Yorùbá wars and efforts made by the missionaries and colonial administration to end these internecine wars; to N.A. Fadipe who focused essentially on social life of the Yorùbá, while Bolanle Awe examined Ibadan-Ijaye (1860 to 1862) and Ibadan and Kiriji (1877 to 1893) wars. Smith and Ade-Ajayi also examined the Ijaye war while S.A. Akintoye extensively deliberated on the Kiriji war. On their parts, the duo of Falola and Smith focused on diplomacy and Smith, individually, pursued further studies on different ramifications of the Yorùbá civil war. Oguntomisin and Falola together examined warfare, displacement, and refugee crisis; while Akinjogbin examined the wars and their consequences. Others include Biobaku, who pioneered a study on Egbaland; Pallinder-Law, who extended the frontier of knowledge on Abeokuta by examining the role of the educated elite in the administration of the town; Babayemi who wrote extensively on the New Oyo founded by Atiba; Oguntomisin, individually, studied Ijaye while Awe and Falola studied Ibadan. Notwithstanding this flowering of academic and non-academic studies of Yorùbá and Yorubaland; few works have come to light on Yorùbá sartorial tradition.

that are deep in the history of Yorùbá people of Southwest Nigeria: continuity and change. For Yorùbá people, the adorned body is inexorably tied to what Yorùbáness is about and to write Yorùbá history through dress is to write about personhood and the ideal personality. This study therefore is about the provenance of dress and the enormous continuity that Yorùbá dress has witnessed over the years.

Dress, broadly conceived, is an assemblage of modifications and/or supplements to the human body.[2] Conceived in this way, dress includes, but not limited to coiffed hair, coloured skin, pierced ears, and scented breath, as well as an equally long list of garments, jewelry, accessories, and other items added to the body as supplements.[3] Among the Yorùbá, dress is conceived as including cloth and clothing traditions, tattooing, facial marking, jewelry, hair-dressing, including barbing. [4] As this Yorùbá folksong, among many others, shows, the Yorùbá regard dress as a *sine qua non* to living itself:

'Adaba ti ko l'apa; kini yo fi fo?
Olomoge ti ko l'aso;
Kini yo fi lo'gba?[5]

(A wingless dove; with what will it fly?
A lady without dress;
How will she survive the season?)

In addition to folksongs and everyday sayings, Yorùbá cultural practices such as eponymous names (*Oriki*), chants, and other customs demonstrate the importance of dress in the construction and establishment of individual and group identity among Yorùbá people. For instance, integral to *Opomulero* family's eponymous names are these lines:

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[2] Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher, 'Dress and Identity' in Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K. P. Johnson (eds.), *Dress and Identity*, (New York, 1995), 7.
[3] Ibid, 7.
[4] Adeoye C.L., *Asa ati Ise Yorùbá*, (Ibadan, 2005), 179-218.
[5] Just as a wingless dove cannot fly, so a young lady without dress cannot survive a season.

Keke ta didun; Aso l'edidi eniyan,
Bi ko si Aso, bi kosi egbigba Ileke;
Oniruru Idi la ba ri.[6]

(The spindle spurns beauty; cloth beautifies the human body, if not for cloths,
If not for the big beads; we would have seen varying sizes of Buttocks.)

Other Yorùbá cultural practices underscoring the place of dress in Yorùbá worldview abound. Dress, to the Yorùbá, comprises of not just clothes but all bodily adornments. Any Yorùbá person, young and old, male and female, who lacks dress, or dresses improperly is regarded as being 'naked' and incapable of surviving a season. A careful reading of the first sayings above shows that to the Yorùbá, dress must also conform to fashion and seasonal changes. Season, as used here, means change in fashion and has nothing to do with planting seasons or the seasonal changes. In other words, a Yorùbá person, as part of his identity as an individual and as a member of a group, is expected to possess a wardrobe of fashionable cloths and other items of dress. A young lady must not only wear whatever cloth is in vogue, but must also wear hairdo that agrees with current fashion. A young man's dress sense is regarded as faulty and unacceptable if he lacks whatever dress items or fashion items his contemporaries are using.

Almost as a paradox, Yorùbá people also say; '*Aso Nla, ko ni Eniyan Nla'* i.e. a well-dressed person is not necessarily a well-placed or highly remarkable person. Without prejudice to the earlier position emphasizing the place of dress in establishing and constructing individual identity, this second position serves as a caveat that the reality dress espouses may differ markedly from an objective reality of the individual and, as such, individuals should separate a person's paraphernalia from his or her objective identity.

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[6] It must be noted that every Yorùbá person has *Oriki*. The one used above belongs to the Opomulero family, which could be found in different parts of Yorubaland, most notably amongst the Oyo, Ilorin, Oke-Ogun, Ijesha, etc. in Western Nigeria.

Compared to the earlier position, the second subsumes a paradox, if not a contradiction. This paradox or contradiction is made more pronounced in contemporary Yorùbá society, where clerics of religious organizations loudly admonish their followers to 'dress the way you want to be addressed'.

Unarguably, the Yorùbá society makes distinctions between identity and dress. In the praise-names of Obas, the political heads of Yorùbá kingdoms and states, the Yorùbá people reverenced the Oba's dress in the following words: *Kabiyesi, Alase Ekeji Orisa, Ki Ade pe l'Ori, ki Bata pe l'Ese*[7]. In this particular instance, the Oba's personality is fused with his dress, as an Oba's crown and shoe are symbols of authority and units of identity. The mere presence of the Oba's staff (or any of his instruments of office) in any occasion signifies not only the Oba's approval of such occasion, but also his presence. In addition, Obas are regarded as the reflection of their kingdoms' wealth. Hence, the dress, behaviour, and carriage of an Oba must reflect the richness or riches of his kingdom. Invariably, Obas, chiefs and notable individuals in Yorubaland are usually clad in dresses that reflect their positions, statuses, and wealth. The commoners, in the same vein, also dress to reflect their stations in life,as can be seen in the following witty sayings; '*Ibere Osi, bi Oloro lori; ti nwo Aso Ile r'Oko'* (The commencement of poverty is usually like wealth, which compels a poor man to wear his best cloth (dress) to the farm) and also *'Aifi Eni p'Eni, ai f'Eniyan p' Eniyan, lo mu Ara Oko san Bante wo'lu'* (It is sheer incontinence that makes a peasant to dress poorly into the town). In these two sayings, the Yorùbá's conceptualization of dress and dressing is such that dress must not only suit the occasion and fashion of the time but also be commensurate with one's estate in life.

In addition to the above, specific dress pattern, mode, and style gives some Yorùbá communities their identities. For instance, in pre-colonial Yorubaland, Abeokuta and Oshogbo were notable for *Adire* (tie and dye) making; Oyo, Oke-Ogun, and Ilesha were

[7] Kabiyesi, the Commander and the Vice-Regent of the gods; May the crown and the royal shoes stay long on the king's head and legs. This is generally a prayer for longevity for the king and his kingdom.

notable for the production of Ofi[8] etc. In the same manner, groups, within societies, have their dress patterns: Ogun (god of Iron) worshippers, for instance, are famous for wearing *Gberi* – a traditional shirt. In state, religious, and secular matters; different dress and dressing are used among the Yorùbá. As another Yorùbá saying puts it; *'Ohun to ndun ni, nipo l'oro eni, Ologun Eru ku, Aso re ko pe meta'* i.e. one is usually preoccupied with one's care; a great slave dealer died and left less than three pieces of cloths. Here, wealth is not expressed as possession of material things like cloths, rather as the slave dealers' care - the holding of slaves.

A number of developments have occurred in Yorubaland that impacted on dress. For instance, the coming and spread of Islam and Christianity, colonization and western education, independence and military rule, etc. have all played fundamental roles in dress culture in Yorubaland. Prior to 1880, to consider briefly one interesting example, nationalism in Nigeria took another turn, as dress suddenly became a kind of 'canvas' upon which nationalist discourses were 'written' or espoused. Nationalists of all hues and colours were advocating for a cultural renaissance; demanding for a return to Yorùbá culture, especially in language and dress. Among other things, they argued that Western dress was unsuitable, unhealthy, and incommodious to the tropical climate of Yorubaland. In addition, they used all kinds of Yorùbá dress to vocalize their nationalist agitations; and Yorùbá dress assumed a different role in the nationalist discourse. How have these developments played together to create, establish, reinforce, or alter individual and group identities of Yorùbá people? From slave trade to colonization, Christianity to western education, independence to military rule; how do these developments affect dress, views to dress, and personal/individual and group identity construction in Yorubaland?

As the study shows, issues such as family life, position in the society, occupation, religious belief, etc. also influence or affect dress and decisions about dress in Yorubaland. In the light of this, how is dress used in establishing, announcing or concealing individual and group identities? Since it is part of Yorùbá culture to demonstrate age, sex, religion, power, status, wealth, etc.

[8] Ofi is a kind of traditional hand-woven thick cloth.

through sartorial tradition, given, especially the non-permanent nature of dress; how have the various changes affected dress and identity?

Yorùbá sartorial tradition is not static, as this study shows. The dynamic nature of Yorùbá sartorial tradition, the socio-cultural, economic and political links between sartorial tradition and identity construction in Yorubaland, and how Yorùbá sartorial tradition constitutes a vital part of Yorùbá people's 'Yorùbáness' are also examined and analyzed in this study.

As the study shows, before European contacts, whether through trade, religion, or colonialism; the people later named Yorùbá shared many things in common, including sartorial tradition, these differ from town to town, but nevertheless it unites the different peoples. This sartorial tradition has witnessed changes of different kinds over the years. The changes have stimulated further changes in the trajectory of Yorùbá sartorial tradition, and also in the various ways that this tradition is expressed and understood.

Far and above all other things, as this study shows with respect to Yorubaland, dress creates, denotes, and reinforces identity. From the foregoing, it can be affirmed that dress, among Yorùbá people, plays more roles than to merely cover or adorn the human body.

1.2 Literature Review

In most literature, dress was hardly defined. For the most part, authors assumed that readers know what dress is. Common also in the literature is the general tendency to conceptualize dress only as cloth and clothing tradition. These two gaps can be understood, as the initial efforts at dress studies flowered among artists, art historians, fashion enthusiasts, and anthropologists whose main concerns include treating dress as costumes with specific emphasis on cloth and clothing tradition, religious, and curatorial values, as well as colour and production style. However, in the last few years, others such as archaeologists, psychologists, historians, philosophers, and, even, economists have taken interests in dress studies. Like the artists, these new entrants into dress studies have either continued in the tradition of the artists or detoured to impose their disciplinary ethos on dress study.

While economists have been concerned with production processes, entrepreneurization, and commoditization of dress; historians' main concerns include issues of provenance, utilization, change and continuity; while psychologists, among other things, have concentrated on the role of dress in attitudinal change, personality development, and societal change in general. Although these developments in dress studies have helped in extending the frontiers of knowledge on dress, they however present considerable challenges for readers, researchers and students, as the various disciplines, on the one hand, have presented one-sided, discipline-bound single stories, which, sometimes, mislead rather than elucidate on the phenomenon; and, on the other hand, readers, researchers and students, based on this one-sided, single stories, are forced to consume area-specific or subject-specific literature and to generalize on the phenomenon of dress in its entirety.

Notwithstanding the above criticisms, this flowering of interests in dress studies has helped to extend our understanding of various issues relating to dress as well as the range of key sources available to students of dress studies beyond insights from works of artists, art historians, fashion enthusiasts, and anthropologists to include insights from economics, history, psychology, and a host of other disciplines. However, it must be conceded that the development has nevertheless weaved a maze around the subject so much so that readers, researchers and students of dress studies now have to transcend their narrow disciplinary boundaries and peculiar disciplinary ethos to adopting multi-disciplinary approach if they must make meanings out of the tangled web that have been weaved or created around the subject by the various disciplines.

What then is dress? In most of the literature, dress is considered as cloth and clothing traditions. Only a few, a minute few, have gone beyond this narrow perspective to define dress as '*an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body*'.[9] This conceptualization includes things like '*coiffed hair, colored skin, pierced ears, and scented breath, as well as an equally long list of garments, jewelry, accessories, and other categories of items added to the body as supplements*'.[10]Similar to

[9] Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 'Dress and Identity', 7.
[10] Ibid, 7.

the above definition by Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K. P. Johnson, is the conceptualization offered by C.L. Adeoye, which conceptualizes dress as a process of beautification as well as everything involved in this process, which includes cloth, tattooing, facial marking, jewelry, hair-dressing, including barbing.[11] While lack of definition is not a draw-down on any literature on the subject, I reason that some of the gaps in existing literature would have been bridged if there has been an extensive consideration of what and how dress should be understood. As far as this study is concerned, the two definitions above formed the bedrock of the foregoing analysis.

Of invaluable importance to any study on dress in general are the following works: Robert Ross, *Clothing: A Global History*, which explores the relationship between Western dress and imperialism from a global angle.[12] Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K. P. Johnson's edited work, *Dress and Identity*, which gathers insights from more than thirty contributors to explore the interrelationship between dress as a critical human behaviour and as a factor in the construction of human identity.[13] Ross, on his part, recounts how socio-cultural, economic, and political powers of Europe, initially through colonization, and later North America, through globalization of trade and culture, forced the adoption of 'standard' Western dress on the world; and how global responses, measured as either adoption or rejection, have followed the need, if not a desire, especially for males, to claim equality with colonial Europe while using the female bodies to reject and claim distinction from Western standard dress. In Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K. P. Johnson's edited work, the various contributors weave a single narrative that dress, whether conceptualized narrowly or broadly, either establishes or supports personal identity. To situate this argument, the 62-chapter-long readings move from concepts, importance, and utilities of dress to relationship between dress and human body; to competition for prominence between human body and human dress

[11] Adeoye, *Asa*,179-218.
[12] Robert Ross, *Clothing: A Global History*, (Cambridge, 2008).
[13] Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K. P. Johnson (eds.), *Dress and Identity*, (New York, 1995).

as well as to existential values in both the stated and inferential objectives of dress use. Other issues explored are: what aspects of identity are tied to dress and are therefore communicated through dress; are there private identities that are not shared or shared with a limited few, etc. While these two works consider representative examples across the world, neither Ross nor Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K. P. Johnson talked about provenance of dress, either narrowly or broadly.

Other key sources in dress studies include Barnes, R. and Eicher B. Joanne, *Dress and Gender: Making and Meaning*, which focuses primarily on the relationship between Western dress and gender and covers a great variety of ethnographic areas reaching from Asia, Europe, and Africa, to North and South America.[14] In *Haircuts: Fifty Years of Styles and Cuts*, D. Jones[15] takes our conceptualization of dress away from cloth and clothing tradition to haircuts. He documents a period when haircut and hair-style became accessories to the human body but with an iconic status. His work offers a history of haircut and its related cults. S.B. Kaiser, in *The Social Psychology of Clothing: Symbolic Appearances in Context*, espouses the corpus of (social) meanings associated with human appearance and how this is established, conceived, and interpreted. Kaiser notes the importance of clothing and other accessories to this symbolic meaning-making venture, especially how humans have come to see themselves and how this perception contributes to the making of the human society.[16]

While enormous literature abound on dress in form of books, articles in journals, and newspaper write-ups, it must be noted that invaluable works have been done on dress and its related issues in the specialized journal, *Clothing and Textile Research Journal*, among others. As a specialized journal dedicated to research on clothing and textile, no less important subject of dress and its contributions to identity formation have featured in the different editions of the journal. The journal therefore constitutes

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[14] Barnes, R. and Eicher B. Joanne (eds.), *Dress and Gender: Making and Meaning*, (Oxford, 1992).
[15] Jones D., *Haircuts: Fifty Years of Styles and Cuts*, (London, 1990).
[16] Kaiser S. B., *The Social Psychology of Clothing: Symbolic Appearances in Context*, (2nd Edition, New York), 1990.

one of the key sources for this study in general. Other journals that served in mining resources for this study include *The Art Bulletin, Journal of Social Archaeology, African Arts, Fashion Theory, Journal of Social History,* and *Journal of Material Culture* among many others.

Candidly, there is no way to write any sartorial history of Yorubaland without references to the works of Samuel Johnson's *The History of the Yorùbás*, N.A. Fadipe's *The Sociology of the Yorùbá* and C.L. Adeoye's *Asa ati Ise Yorùbá*. These three books are invaluable reference materials upon which insights into Yorùbá worldview about dress could be garnered. Johnson, like Fadipe, adopted a narrow perspective to dress, conceptualizing dress to mean cloths. Although with its own inherent flaws, Adeoye adopted a broader perspective. More than others, Adeoye, as earlier noted, ambitiously defined dress as a process of beautifying the human body. Like others too, he nevertheless failed to trace the provenance of this process, but went ahead to discuss various modes of dress, highlighting peculiarities common to different cities and towns in Yorubaland.

While these three literature could be regarded as baseline literature on dress in Yorubaland, Elisha P. Renne[17], Norman Wolf[18], Judith Byfield[19] and many others, have also written on different issues relating to dress either in the narrower sense of cloth and clothing tradition or in the broader sense of other modifications and attachments to the human body. In conjunction with Babatunde Agbaje-Williams, Elisha P. Renne edited a work on Yorùbá religious textiles[20], which captures the significance of cloth in religious worship among the Yorùbá. Renne, individually,

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[17] Elisha P. Renne, 'Aso ipo, red cloth from Bunu', *African Arts,* 25:3 (1992), 64-102; Elisha P. Renne and Babatunde Agbaje-Williams (eds.), *Yorùbá Religious Textiles: Essays in Honour of Cornelius Adepegba*, (Ibadan, 2005).

[18] Norman Wolf, 'Cloth, dress, and art patronage in Africa', *American Anthropologist*, 103:2 (2001), 583-584.

[19] Judith Byfield, *The Bluest Hands: A Social and Economic History of Women Dyers in Abeokuta (Nigeria), 1890-1940*, (Cape Town, 2002); Judith Byfield, 'Innovation and conflict: cloth dyers and the interwar depression in Abeokuta, Nigeria', *The Journal of African History*, 38:1 (1997), 77-99.

[20] Elisha P. Renne and Babatunde Agbaje-Williams (eds.) *Yorùbá Religious Textiles: Essays in Honour of Cornelius Adepegba*, (Ibadan, 2005).

also worked on funerary dress among the Bunu, a diasporic Yorùbá community in Northern Nigeria. Robin Poynor wrote extensively on dress use (religious and political) in Owo, an eastern Yorùbá town[21]; while Byfield worked on Abeokuta dyers. Betty M. Wass, using photo-albums, focused mainly on the use of dress in colonial Lagos.[22] Titilola Ebua examines dress as a marker of status in colonial Lagos.[23] Perhaps Judith Byfield's major contribution to the study of dress in Yorubaland is not just *The Bluest Hands*, but also her essay on the use of dress and gender in Nigeria's nationalist discourse. She, in this essay, offers a nuanced insight into how early Yorùbá nationalists deployed dress as a metaphor for rejecting colonial rule.[24]

It must be noted that despite the different subjects pursued by these authors, none except Tunde M. Akinwumi attempted to trace origin of the aspect of dress that is the focus of their works. In addition, except for a few, these and many others adopted the narrow perspective. Except Titilola Ebua and, to some extent Renne and Agbaje-Williams, not a single work exists in the literature on the place of dress in Yorùbá identity construction despite that oral tradition, folklores, witty sayings, etc. point to these connections. Notwithstanding these gaps in the literature, these bodies of literature serve as the bedrock or key sources for this study.

Generally, whether in Yorubaland or elsewhere, the common trend is to see dress as cloth and clothing tradition. For instance, Judith Byfield, after acknowledging that Barnes and Eicher interpreted dress as a comprehensive term for direct body

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[21] Robin Poynor, 'Egungun of Owo', *African Arts*, 11:3 (1978), 65-100; Robin Poynor, 'If the Chiefs are like This, What Must the King Be Like?: Chieftaincy Garb as Indicative of Position in the Owo Court', in Bater, *Ethnological Seminar*, (n.a. 1989).

[22] Betty M. Wass, 'Yorùbá Dress in Five Generations of a Lagos Family', in Cordwell, Justine M. and Schwarz, Ronald A. (eds.), *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, (The Hague, (1979), 331.

[23] Titilola Ebua, 'Dress and Status in 19th Century Lagos' in Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri, and Jide Osuntokun (eds.), *History of the Peoples of Lagos*, (Lagos, 1987), 142-162.

[24] Judith Byfield, *"Unwrapping" Nationalism: Dress, Gender, and Nationalist Discourse in Colonial Lagos*, (Discussion Papers 30, *African Humanities*, Boston: African Studies Center, 2000).

change, which includes from tattooing to plastic surgery, went further to interpret dress as cloth.[25]Similar views pervaded the 259 page edited volume by Elisha P. Renne and Babatunde Agbaje-Williams, which collated views from ten contributors on Yorùbá religious textiles. [26] Although Tunde M. Akinwumi, earlier mentioned, set out his argument by claiming that dress refers to all items that cover or are attached to and held by the human body, he nevertheless detoured from this line of argument and narrowed his conceptualization to cloths and clothing tradition.[27] In other parts of the world, dress is also narrowly defined. Marybeth C. Stalp, Rachel Williams, Annette Lynch and M. Elise Radina writing about the Red Hat Society in America, conceptualized dress as essentially related to costume culture of (purple) cloths and (red) hats. [28] Although Barbara Voss admitted that dress is '*an individualistic medium for personal expression and social mobility*', she however narrowed her discussion of dress as cloths.[29]Mitchell Strauss[30], Johnson, Schofield and Yurchisin[31] as well as Nancy Nelson[32] also admitted that cloth is '*one aspect of*

[25] Judith Byfield, *The Bluest Hands*, 2.
[26] Elisha P. Renne and Babatunde Agbaje-Williams (eds.), *Yorùbá Religious Textiles*, 2005.
[27] Tunde M. Akinwumi, "Oral Tradition and the Reconstruction of Yorùbá Dress", in Toyin Falola and Ann Genova (eds.), *Yorùbá Identity and Power Politics*, (Rochester, 2006), 49.
[28] Marybeth C. Stalp, Rachel Williams, Annette Lynch, and M. Elise Radina, 'Conspicuously consuming: the Red Hat Society and midlife women's identity', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 38:2 (2009).
[29] Barbara L. Voss, 'Poor people in silk shirts: dress and ethnogenesis in Spanish-colonial San Francisco', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 8:3 (2008).
[30] Mitchell D. Strauss, 'Identity construction among Confederate civil war reenactors: a study of dress, stage props, and discourse', *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 21:4 (2003).
[31] Kim K.P. Johnson, Nancy A. Schofield, and Jennifer Yurchisin, 'Appearance and dress as a source of information: a qualitative approach to data collection', *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 15:3 (2002).
[32] Nancy J. Nelson, 'Listening to Jane Cunningham Croly's "Talks with Women": issues of gender, dress, and reform in Demorest's Monthly Magazine', *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 18:3 (2008).

dress', their arguments were never pursued beyond a tacit admission of a wider perspective to dress.[33]

Two distinct arguments can be offered for this narrow conceptualization of dress in the literature. On the one hand is the nature of the subjects pursued by these writers. For instance, the subject of Elisha Renne and Agbaje-Williams' edited work is religious textile. The ten contributors to the volume therefore limit their conceptualization to cloth and clothing tradition. Judith Byfield, who wrote about the *Adire* (tie-and dye) makers of Abeokuta, was also compelled by the subject-specific nature of her subject to narrow her conceptualization of dress to cloth and clothing tradition. Marybeth C. Stalp, Rachel Williams, Annette Lynch and M. Elise Radina focused primarily on the Red Hat Society in America, a subject that compelled them to narrow their discussions to purple cloths and red hats.

The other contention warranting this narrow conceptualization of dress deals with the common practice of interchanging dress with words such as appearance, cloth, clothing, ornament, adornment, and cosmetics.[34]

Notwithstanding the subject-specific nature of most literature and the common practice of substituting dress for cloths or any other categories, there is no gainsaying the fact that a broader conceptualization, outlook, and analysis of dress that recognizes the multi-dimensional nature of dress would have enhanced the various subjects pursued in the literature.

From extant literature, it can be argued that two different conceptualizations of dress have emerged: the narrower perspective, which sees dress as cloth and clothing tradition, and a broader perspective, which sees dress as all forms of modifications and supplements to the human body. Both conceptualizations are however used in this study.

Conceptually, identity, as a sociological and psychological concept, describes a process by which an individual or a group develops distinct personality or characteristics through which such

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[33] Kim K.P. Johnson, Nancy A. Schofield and Jennifer Yurchisin, 'Appearance' 125.

[34] Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K. P. Johnson (eds.) *Dress and Identity*, 7.

individual or group is known and/or recognized. It could also be defined as the means through which social subjects construct relationships of taxonomic sameness and difference. Understood in this way, identities then become multi-scalar and are constantly undergoing negotiations with tension between similarity and alterity. [35] Individual or group identity includes a sense of continuity, a sense of uniqueness or difference from others, and a sense of affiliation. Individual or group identity therefore defines an individual or a group as well as differentiates an individual or group from other individuals and groups. Whether at the personal or group level, identity manifests in variety of forms. Examples include cultural, religious, national, professional, etc. identity. Cultural identity, as Coleman noted, is the feeling of identity of a group or culture, or of an individual as far as the individual is influenced by being a member of a group or culture. Cultural identity, more often than not, is synonymous with ethnic identity, which describes identification with a certain ethnicity, usually on the basis of a presumed common genealogy or ancestry. Ethnic groups are also often united by common cultural, behavioral, linguistic, ritualistic, or religious traits. At a higher level, members of a particular nation espouse national identity, an identity that describes the process whereby all humans are divided into groups called nations. Members of a 'nation', called citizens, share a common identity, and usually a common origin, in the sense of ancestry, parentage or descent.

Another expression of identity is religion. A religious identity involves adherence to codified beliefs, practices, and rituals and study of ancestral or cultural traditions, writings, history, and mythology, as well as faith and mystical experiences that are generally held by an individual or a group. Whether cultural, ethnic, or religious; claimants to identity depend on recognition by other individuals and/or groups for such identity to be a distinct cultural, ethnic, or religious identity. Such recognition of a unique identity is called ethnogenesis.

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[35] Meskell L., 'The intersections of identity and politics in archaeology', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31:2 (2000), 279-301; see also Young R. J. C., *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*, (New York, 1995).

Identity, whether of an individual or a group, is inexorably tied to self-concept or self-identity. Self-concept, which is the sum total of an individual's (or a group's) knowledge and understanding of his or her self, comprises of physical, psychological, and social attributes. These attributes can be influenced, on the one hand, by the individual's or group's attitudes, habits, beliefs, and ideas; and, on the other hand, by individual's or group's bio-social environment. It can be argued that dress interfaces with identity at the level of self-concept. Dress, as Roach-Higgins and others argued, rather than cloth and clothing tradition, comprises of physical, psychological, and social attributes that could be influenced, on the one hand, by the individual's or group's attitudes, habits, beliefs, and ideas; and, on the other hand, individual's or group's bio-social environment.

In some of the few literature on dress in Yorubaland, the arguments have focused on the enduring appeal and transformation of cloth/clothing; the effects of colonization, Islam, Christianity and Western education, modernity, and globalizationon dress and identity. As many of these authors, especially Judith Byfield, Ruth Nielsen, Elisha P. Renne, Tunde M. Akinwumi, etc. claimed, owing to interaction with Islam and Christianity, many local dress practices changed in complex ways and Yorubaland today presents two broad dress cultures based on (i) the draping of cloth; and (ii) tailored Western-styled attires. Examples in these regard include the *boubou* (loose gown worn by women and men); cloth wrapper and head tie; and Western-styled dress such as trousers, shirt, suits, etc. In response to local, regional, and external influences, the boundaries of these dress cultures are still shifting.

Renne's ethnography of *Bunu* cloth in Nigeria examined culture and history of a specific part of Yorubaland, where distinct categories of women and men wear differently coloured and patterned cloths. Young women, Renne noted, wear black cloth at marriage, while hunters wear black-and-white-striped shirts, and chiefs wore 'red masquerade cloth with magnificent patterns'. White is the color of spiritual relations. Nielsen insisted that the associative power of these dress practices, endures as part of everyday life side-by-side with factory-produced imported cloth and tailored clothing. Renne, like Nielsen, informed us that most *Bunu* clothes, in much of Yorubaland as in the rest of West Africa,

outlive their owners and are, usually, passed-down from one generation to another.

For Perani and Wolff's, Hausa, Nupe, and Yorùbá clothing traditions are commodities with social lives.[36] Technologies of cloth production and artistic works converge in their study of several types of cloth, the effects of conversion to Islam on the clothing trade, the impact of British colonialism, and the coming of factory-produced yarn. They also discussed the fashionable Yorùbá dress-world, where *lurex* yarns entered strip-cloth weaving to produce the popular *shain-shain* styles of the 1990s. The cloth dynamic in Nigeria continues to shift and most recently, in response to structural adjustment programmes that reduced Nigerians overall purchasing power. LaRay Denzer examined how the reforms affected demand for custom-made clothing.[37] Tailors continued to produce traditional garments for ceremonial occasions but had fewer requests for Western fashions, Byfield noted concerning Yorubaland. Comaroff and Comaroff posit similar argument on the centrality of clothing to missionary conversion in Bechuanaland, a frontier region between colonial Botswana and South Africa, during the nineteenth century.[38] The struggle for souls entailed dressing African bodies in European cloths, it appears. Prior to this time, colonial administration had introduced uniform made of *Khaki*, which, as Renne noted, were originally imported from India, and forced on Africans. Initially, Africans accepted the development with great enthusiasm and European cloths became a popular prestige good even before the arrival of missionaries. With Christianity insisting that unless draped in European dress and able to drink tea, African converts could not be true converts, conflict soon arose and Yorùbá Christians began to reject European dress and a cultural renaissance in Yorùbá dress was born.

In other parts of Africa, Martin discussed urban vistas of vibrant and rapidly changing styles that the culturally diverse

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[36]Judith Perani and Norma H. Wolff, *Cloth, Dress and Art Patronage in Africa*, (Oxford, 1999).

[37] LaRay Denzer, "Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 1994, 1-39.

[38]Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (1997), *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a south African Frontier*, (Chicago, 1997).

African townspeople integrated into their dress in Brazzaville during the French colonial period.[39] This colonial cosmopolis was a historical crossroad of trade and exchange where ostentatious body display accentuated long-held cultural ideas that connected dress and social status. Because of the contingent meanings of the dressed body, clothing readily becomes a contested issue.[40]

Recent works by Byfield,[41] Fair,[42] Allman,[43] De Jorio,[44] and Moorman,[45] examined struggles over class, gender, and generation as well as attempts to create "national dress" before and after independence in Africa. Tensions over "proper dress" arising from the popularity of miniskirts over long skirts continue after independence, revolving around issues of national culture,[46] revolution,[47] and gender and sexual dynamics.[48] Several works examine the incorporation of European styles and fabrics into the local dress universe, such as the combination of Yorùbá *Adire* and

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[39]Martin, Ann Smart. "Makers, Buyers, and Users: Consumerism as a Material Culture Framework",*Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol.28, Nos. 2/4, (Summer/Autumn 1993), 141–157.

[40]Jean Marie Allman, *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, (Indiana, 2004).

[41]Judith Byfield, "Dress and Politics in Post-World War II Abeokuta (Western Nigeria)" in Jean Allman, (ed.), *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, (Indiana, 2004), 31-49.

[42] Cited in Rosabelle Boswell, "Say What You Like: Dress, Identity, and Heritage in Zanzibar, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 5, 2006,440-457.

[43]Jean Allman, (ed.), *Fashioning Africa*, ibid, 5-7.

[44]Andrea De Jorio, The Mime of the Ancients Investigated Through Neapolitan Gesture, cited by Joan Acocella, "The Neapolitan Finger", in*The New York Review of Books*, (New York, 2002).

[45]Marissa Moorman, "Putting on a Pano and Dancing Like Our Grandparents: Dress and Nation in Late Colonial Luanda", in Jean Allman, (ed.), *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, (Indiana, 2004), 84-103.

[46]Andrew Ivaska, "Consuming 'Soul' in 1960s Tanzania", in Jean Allman, (ed.), *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, (Indiana, 2004), 104-21.

[47] Cited in Rosabelle Boswell, "Say What You Like: Dress, Identity, and Heritage in Zanzibar, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 5, 2006,440-457.

[48]Karen Tranberg Hansen, "The World in Dress: Anthropological Perspectives on Clothing, Fashion, and Culture", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 33, 369-392; see also Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Fashioning: Zambian Moments", *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2004, 302-309.

European cloth,[49] the smocked Sotho dress[50] and the Herero long dress,[51] that serve as visible markers for "traditional" dress in West and Southern Africa. While dressing "our way" is part of the embodied experience of indigenous dress, the shared sensibility of wearing them is also means of establishing ethno-national identities.[52]

However, Ruth Nielsen, referring specifically to the use of elaborate clothing such as wrapper and over-blouse (*iro ati buba*) worn by Yorùbá women, claimed that elaborate cloth wearing was a nineteenth century phenomenon in Yorubaland. T. M. Akinwumi, although with a different time frame, also affirmed that the art of covering the totality of human body, most especially by women, is a recent development in Yorubaland. While Nielsen anchored her arguments on the nineteenth century developments in designing, printing and importation of Manchester and Dutch wax-prints into West Africa and Zaire; Akinwumi depended on *Ifa* corpus. However, Elisha P. Renne, Judith Byfield, and many others, negated Nielsen and Akinwumi by maintaining that the use of elaborate cloths including wrapper and over-blouse, *Agbada* and *Babanriga* were of longer antiquity in Yorubaland. Their sources include travelogues, reports and diaries of earliest explorers and merchants who visited Yorubaland before the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and who reported the elaborate dress culture they witnessed.

As seen in the above, little or nothing exists, whether written by academic historians or non-academic lay-persons, on the nexus between dress and identity in Yorubaland. Although responding to a view that given the avalanche of works already done on Yorùbá history, there were no more "broad areas of virgin field" in Yorùbá history and therefore little or nothing remains to

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[49]Judith Byfield, "Taxation, Women, and the Colonial State: Egba Women's Protest in Abeokuta (Nigeria), 1918-1948", *Meridians: A Journal on Feminism, Race, and Transnationalism*, (Vol. 3, No. 1, 2003), 250-277.

[50]Cited in Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Fashioning: Zambian Moments", *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2004, 302-309.

[51]Hildi Hendrickson, *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial an Post-Colonial Africa*, (Durham, 1996), 19-33.

[52]Cited in Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Fashioning: Zambian Moments", *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2004, 302-309.

be written on Yorùbá and Nigeria again, Ade-Ajayi noted that efforts so far made by authors and scholars amounted only to "*scratching the matter on the surface*", and that "*the rich ores are no longer at the surface level.*"[53] Writing in the same spirit, most especially about most historians' preferences for events and happenings where written records could be found, Toyin Falola decried little or no historical reconstructions on issues and phenomena before the eighteenth century. He voiced dissatisfaction on how African historians, overtly or covertly, are obstinately fascinated with periods (and events) about which written records could be found while leaving aside those periods on which no written evidence exists.[54]Both Ade-Ajayi and Falola's comments served as possible explanations to why there has been little or no reconstruction on Yorùbá sartorial tradition.

Another possible reason may be that when dress is narrowly conceived as cloth and clothing tradition, it is easy to fall into the error of seeing dress as impermanent, perishable and therefore something that can disappear almost with no trace. By digging deeper and going beyond the surface for the rich ores in Yorùbá (sartorial) tradition, this study goes back into the pre-eighteenth century period, using varieties of source materials, to reconstruct, in a broader sense, the nexus between Yorùbá dress and Yorùbá ethno-national identity.

As many historians have argued, historical events and personalities can best be understood within the especial contexts that produced them. In relation to dress and identity in Yorubaland, it can be argued that the especial circumstances of world religions, most especially Islam and Christianity; and global trade, which were the harbingers of colonialism, and, subsequently, Western education must have, either singly or collectively, played important roles in the metamorphosis of Yorùbá sartorial tradition. What were these changes and how were they fostered? What obtained before these changes occurred and how much of what existed today could be adduced to an indigenous period of Yorùbá history

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[53] Ade-Ajayi J.F., "A critique of themes preferred by Nigerian historians", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 10:3 (1980), 38.

[54] Toyin Falola, "A research agenda on the Yorùbá in the nineteenth century", *History in Africa*, 15:1 (1988), 212.

or to a later period? Answers to these questions and many more are either lacking in extant literature or are glibly treated.

From these representative examples from the literature, there is no gainsaying the fact that dress history and its various contributions to Yorùbá ethnogenesis, are still at its infancy. Not many things are known yet. In fact, a lot is still shrouded in controversy, as scholars are yet to arrive at a common point on, for instance, dress provenance, forms, patterns, and progress of dress through time. These and many other issues are examined and, to a larger extend, resolved in this study.

1.3. Research Methodology

It must be asserted that from Samuel Johnson to majority of academic and lay historians that followed Johnson, the use of traditional historical methodologies remained the vogue. This is in spite of Ade-Ajayi's 1980 challenge that to yield-up the rich ore, historians would need new tools, techniques and approaches, which will take them below the surface; and Falola's 1988 call for new tools and insights. Except for Betty M. Wass, whose work was anchored on the use of photo-albums, most works of history that have come to light on Yorubaland since the 1890s still deployed the traditional methodologies characterized by an examination or presentation of written, mostly archival, documents and oral accounts. For instance, in a ten-chapter collection edited by Elisha P. Renne and Babatunde Agbaje-Williams on Yorùbá religious cloth, contributors limit their methodologies to written records and oral accounts. Not even the various insignias of the religious votaries and their artistic hairstyles featured in the 259-page book. Ironically, most of the contributors canvassed for a multidisciplinary approach, which they themselves hardly applied.

The validity of the use of a multidisciplinary approach in the study of dress stems in part from the fact that, whether conceived broadly or narrowly, dress study has drawn interests from variety of disciplines. All these disciplines have, no doubt, imposed their respective tools of data collection and analysis on it, therefore creating a skein, which can only be properly understood through a multidisciplinary approach. On the other hand, when dress is defined narrowly, it becomes perishable and impermanent; hence, except a study on dress depends on reflections from other

rather permanent sources, reconstruction becomes extremely difficult. However, when broadly conceived, the study, as it is done here, therefore benefits immensely from other disciplines.

This study differs in many respects from others before it. Besides an extensive conceptualization of dress, the various landmark events in Yorùbá vis-à-vis Nigerian history and how these have touched on Yorùbá sartorial tradition are highlighted, analyzed, and discussed. In addition to these, the study analyzed sartorial tradition as one of the key developments that have united Yorùbá people over the years.

Before colonialism, Yorùbá people shared many things, including sartorial tradition, which differs from town to town. More salient to the study is the discussion of dress as a form of language and how different Yorùbá groups have used dress, as a language, over the years and how the various epochal events in Yorùbá (and Nigerian) history have enriched the vocabularies of this language as well as changed its course over time. Furthermore, dress, as a language, is also discussed along gender lines. As already noted, it is part of Yorùbá culture to demonstrate age, sex, religion, power, status, wealth, etc. through dress. However, dress is not static but equally competitive in a competitive place like Nigeria.

Therefore, for data collection, this study used primary and secondary sources. Significant primary sources used in the study include archaeological excavations and art works, travelers and missionary records, traders and colonial reports, death and local government records, palace records and newspaper reports, oral interviews and memoirs, diaries and photographs. Other primary sources used, which proved very invaluable, but rarely used in previous studies, include witty sayings and anecdotes, proverbs and ethnographic data.

For the most parts, these primary sources were found in public and private archives and depositories in Yorubaland, especially in Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta and Benin-City. In addition to these locations, which were essentially in Southwestern Nigeria, invaluable records were also obtained from the British Museum, where records on pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria, Yorùbá ancient arts, Nigerian leaders, and important national events through which insight about dress and its relation to Yorùbá ethno-

national identity were obtained. Newspaper reports, most especially early newspapers like the *Nigerian Herald*, *West African Pilot*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Iwe Iroyin Yorùbá*, etc. served as invaluable treasure throve for the study. These newspapers cover from as early as 1800s up to the closing days of the 1960s. Contemporary ones like the *Nigerian Tribune*, *The Nation*, *Vanguard*, *Guardian*, *The Punch*, etc. served critical roles in understanding current trends and perspectives about dress as it relates to the construction of Yorùbá identity. In addition to the above, photo-albums, both in the ministries of Information in all the eight states in Southwestern Nigeria and in private collections by different families, most especially Obas, chiefs, and notable politicians, were equally used as sources for data collection. In addition to private and government collections, photos were also obtained and examined both in the British Museum and CMS archive at Birmingham.

With regards to oral interviews, it is important to note that although death has decimated the number of direct witnesses to the phenomenon under study, especially during the pre-colonial and colonial periods; respondents, mainly people from ages 60 and above, were however purposively selected from Yorùbá communities like Ibadan, Abeokuta, Oyo, Lagos, Sagamu, Oshogbo, Ogbomoso, Ile-Ife, Ilesha, Ondo, Akure, Saki, and Kisi. Responses were analyzed both for content and for context. In order to shift truth from embellishment, exaggeration, and biases that are the inherent weaknesses of oral accounts, especially on events and traditions that spanned a very long time; corroborative evidence was sought from archeological excavations and descriptions, secondary literature, most especially those that were recorded by early merchants, explorers, travelers, and missionaries who came to Yorubaland when some of the dress were still in vogue.

The use of photograph for historical reconstruction is no doubt a challenging task. In a research study such as this, photographs are of primary importance, because they offer vivid illustration of the various issues and also serve as cold, mute and (sometimes) unintended witnesses to events and changes. Photographs used in this study were obtained from my private photo collections as well as those of other people. Some were

obtained from books, encyclopedias, government repositories, archives and private collections.

Notwithstanding their importance, details such as when the photographs were taken, where they were taken, who took them and why, which could help any researcher in the task of historical reconstruction are, oftentimes, lacking. This can be explained as stemming from the fact that when photographs were taken, they were taken for different purposes and not for any future historical reconstructions; hence, some of these details, as important as they are, were not put into considerations. In addition to this, most of these photographs were taken at random; therefore sequence of photographs that could help researchers to piece information together may be lacking or inadequate.

In the different chapters, a large proportion of photographs used were from my personal collections. In Yorubaland, collection of photographs is not just considered as an integral part of life, but also serves as a way of preserving memories of important events in life. Some of the photographs used here were taken some twenty or more years ago. In some of the photographs, I can recall vividly the events, names of celebrants, family members and key individuals. In others, I cannot adequately remember most of the people and the precise dates of the events when the photographs were taken. Similar problems also apply to photos that were sourced at the University of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), Lagos and different other institutional sources across Nigeria. These problems also apply to photographs obtained from even professional photographers, most especially Onile-Ayo Photo, Mokola, Ibadan; Sammy Photos, RCCG Camp, Getty Images, Pechu Family Album and others. In most cases, while efforts were made to preserve some details about the people photographed and life-events that were celebrated in these photos, especially those source from the universities in Ibadan and Ile-Ife; little is however known about who took them, when (date, location, and time) and (in some cases) why? At the individual level, I can confess that I have never taken any of these questions seriously (when taking my photographs) and could therefore relate with others (individuals and institutions) for not taken any of these important factors into consideration, as neither they nor me knew that the photographs

would serve any other purposes than to preserve for future references the particular events and peoples in our lives. This may not be a good excuse, but it is the truth.

Another source of photographs was the Facebook page of the group, The Nigerian Nostalgia 1960-1980 Project. The group was put together by one Mr. Uchenna, a lawyer at Afriwest Partners, Wesley House, Marina, Lagos. The group focuses primarily on exchanging photographs of life-events in Nigeria from 1900 to 1980. As a ground rule, members must state the provenance of their submissions; write a brief biodata of their submission as well as how the photographs connect to the task of nation building in Nigeria. The group proved to be a treasure-trove of colonial and family photographs. I must state that notwithstanding being a member, I sought express permission of the various individuals and the group before using any of the photographs from the group. I placed a general notice of intent to use the photographs on the general page as well as wrote personally to individuals whose submissions I found important to my work. I got not just the group permission to use the photos, but also individuals' permission.

Although members assiduously tried to provide detailed background about who took these photographs, when (date, location, and time) and (in some cases) why; for some of the photographs, the details were not just available. However, these inadequacies should not in any way deter anyone from using these photographs for historical reconstructions, especially as it is a common knowledge in the discipline of history that no source of history is infallible. It is precisely for these kinds of problems that historians are advised to subject their sources to internal and external checks and to reconcile them with insights from other sources and disciplines. The inadequacies inherent in these photographs were adequately redressed by other sources and disciplines, also almost all the circumstances and events been illustrated by the photographs are still on-going among Yorùbá people. These make these inadequacies easily redressed. Where the circumstances and events were out of use, for instance, the use of facial marks, I assembled a number of artistic illustrations, most especially those done by C.L. Adeoye who wrote a little earlier. It is important to state that although Adeoye did not also tell us the

sources of his illustration other than to say how different facial marks and caps look like, I also grew up in Oyo Town in the 1970s, where facial marks and wearing of caps were common practices. In addition to this is the fact that during my elementary school days, I and others like me that were not given facial marks were at the receiving ends of taunts and jokes for being plain faced amidst a colony of students with facial marks. In addition, my parents also have facial marks. In addition to artistic illustration, I combined insights from travellers and missionary reports with these photos to show what had existed and what changes there were as well as that I did not invent them.

A few of the photographs, most especially one in Chapter Three, which depicted indigenous Yorùbá female dress, was derived from an online postcard. The postcard is available at www.delcampe.net. Details of where, who took these photographs, when (date, location, and time) and (in some cases) why were not available. However, the fact that they illustrate a particular Yorùbá dress that can be dated to a particular period in Yorùbá history is not contestable, especially in view of insights from other sources.

Of immense importance to this study are my lived experiences. As a Yorùbá, I grew up knowing, both by training and by experience, a number of things that relate to dress and identity among Yorùbá people. To illustrate with just an example, the concept of *Omoluabi* discussed in Chapter Two, and which formed the core of Yorùbá identity, remains an integral part of my upbringing from childhood. It remains a guiding light on my path into adulthood. On many occasions, my parents would admonish me on what is the proper way to behave, the proper way to dress, to talk, to walk, to sit, etc. Any infraction, depending on gravity, was either punished with the cane or a simple statement: *"Se eyi to se yi si ye o?* (Does that fit you?) Or *Omoluabi kan ki hu iwa be yen!* (No responsible Yorùbá man would behave that way!). This process of bringing up a child is common to all Yorùbá man and woman. The only difference relates solely to how much force parents apply to ensure that children abide by the training. I have either been taught or I have experienced a number of issues in this study that deal with how a Yorùbá man or woman ought to behave or conduct him or herself both in private and public. In this study, I do not just put these issues down based on my training and

experiences, but check their correspondence with what others experienced or were trained to know and appreciate. These were further compared to written and other sources (e.g. interviews) to ascertain their veracity. The use of this method therefore allows me to view the different issues discussed as both an insider and outsider.

Given the eclectic nature of the study, a number of qualifications need to be made on how these different primary sources were used in the study. Writing on the *Ifa* literary and divinatory corpus, Wande Abimbola remarked that "*the subject-matter of ese Ifa is the whole range of Yorùbá thought and belief. There is no subject that cannot feature in ese Ifa*".[55] He outlined some of the issues found in the corpus to include myths, histories of origins, medicine, magic, observations about nature as well as abstract and speculative philosophical issues. As a source for historical reconstruction, Abimbola, like Jan Vansina, warned that enormous problems exist in using *Ifa* literary and divinatory corpus for historical reconstruction, as its psychological function and its aesthetic qualities distort the facts described. In addition, the kind of historical information transmitted by poetry is usually of a rather vague, generalized nature, and is often impossible to attribute to any definite period in the past. However, he went further to state that *Ifa* literary and divinatory corpus can be used in historical writing because it gives indications of the psychological attitude adopted by certain people towards certain historical events. Notwithstanding the inherent problems noted by Abimbola, I found the problem of dating *Ifa* literary and divinatory corpus very daunting, especially where such dating is essential to the analysis. Despite this and many other inherent problems, I found that *Ifa* divination poems offer historians invaluable insights into events, issues, etc. where written and, to some degree, oral evidence are lacking. Given its intangible nature, dress, especially where it is narrowly conceptualized, is perishable and therefore could not keep for so long. *Ifa* literary poems, in this particular example, serve as hints, hints that one finds invaluable, especially when corroborated by other sources like archival, archaeological and

[55]Wande Abimbola, "The Literature of the Ifa Cult", in Saburi O. Biobaku (ed.), *Sources of Yorùbá History*, (Oxford, 1973), 45.

even written sources. The sheer fact that *Ifa* corpus were handed down from one generation to the other makes it indispensable to a study of this nature, especially since most people who could testify to dress and its usages over the long run are dead, sometimes without written records. *Ifa* corpus, thus, serves as indirect witnesses to the events they hinted about.

In this study, the provenance of dress, usages of dress, and the entire arguments on religious or esoteric use of dress among the different Yorùbá groups derived from such hints as could be garnered from the *Ifa* literary and divinatory poems. It must be emphasized that the conclusions were not an uncritical acceptance of the corpus, but a critical balancing of the hints with insights provided from other sources, such as from archaeology.

As it is done with *Ifa* corpus, so it is done with witty sayings, proverbs, anecdotes, folksongs, etc., all of which are used in this study. As I.O. Delano argued, Yorùbá proverbs are self-evident truths, which give the full gist of what one intended to say in an unmistakable and concise form and which drive home the point or circumstances being described in a short, but succinct form. A Yorùbá proverb illustrates the importance of proverbs and witty-sayings to historical reconstruction: *Owe l' Esin Oro, Oro l'Esin Owe; B'Oro ba sonu, Owe la fin wa* – A proverb is like a horse, which can carry one swiftly to the idea sought. [56] Eponymous names, *Oriki*, also proved to be invaluable material for this study. This is considered as very important, as throughout Yorubaland, no child is given a name without also being given an *Oriki*. This describes the child's character, or the especial circumstances of birth, or what is hoped for concerning the future of such child. *Oriki* are of three kinds: *Oriki Orile* (town's), *Oriki Idile* (family's) and individual's *Oriki* (individual's). *Oriki*, among the Yorùbá, are sung or performed as Ijala-Ode, the style of the hunter's guild; *ewi*, a peculiar style of the Egbado Yorùbá, the style of the Egungun of the *labala* group; *ege*, a style originally peculiar to Owu people, and *rara;* a style peculiar to Ibadan and Oyo, sung by men and women during festivals and celebrations and may be accompanied by drums, which can themselves be used

[56] Delano I.O., "Proverb, Songs, and Poems", in Saburi O. Biobaku (ed.), *Sources of Yorùbá History*, (Oxford, 1973), 77.

to perform Oriki.[57] Oriki records a man, or a town or a family's life and, like *Ifa* literary and divinatory corpus, they are passed down from generation to generation. They are therefore exposed to the same historiographical problems already discussed above. They nevertheless hold invaluable resources to historians and are therefore treated cautiously here and the various hints given were balanced with other insights from other sources.

Generally, secondary sources like journal articles, chapters in edited volumes, and encyclopedic entries were used in obtaining critical insights into what had been done in the literature, and to substantiate contentious issues, even in oral interviews and archival data. Given these wide ranging sources of data, to weave a readily understandable narrative, the analysis in this study focused primarily on content and context.

Combining these and many other sources like written, archival, and archaeological records together; this study is able to probe deeper than the surface, and into the crust of past events to yield-up the invaluable ore in Yorùbá sartorial history and unearth and salvage Yorùbá sartorial tradition beyond a mere consideration of a few items of dress, or a particular purpose of dress, as replete in extant literature, and to ascertain the main purpose of Yorùbá sartorial tradition.

1.4. Theories of Identity and Dress

Identity is a derivative from the Latin nouns *identitas*, which, in itself, derives from the Latin adjective, *idem* – meaning 'the same". Even in its Latin sense, identity is used in the comparative sense to emphasize the sharing, within a given social space, of a level of sameness or oneness with others. Used in this way, identity is both relative and contextual.

Identity, as an area of study, is a subject of interest to a number of other disciplines. In both Psychology and Sociology, identity is understood strictly in term of a person's conception and expression of individuality and group affliations. In Philosophy, it is understood in term of the self. These and other disciplines have not only imposed their respective ethos and analytical imperatives

[57] Ayorinde J.A., "Oriki", in Saburi O. Biobaku (ed.), *Sources of Yorùbá History*, (Oxford, 1973), 63.

on its study, they have also yielded up many and different theories. Among these many theories, this study shall limit itself to Individualistic or Personal Identity theory, Reductionist or Bundle theory, Social Identity theory, Self-Categorization theory and Elimination or No-self theory. Of these few, only one will be used as basis for analysis in this study so as to conserve space and weed-out avoidable digressions.

Personal or individualistic identity theory deals with the necessary and sufficient conditions under which an individual at one time and at another time can be said to be the same person. Among so many others, Eric Olson[58] and Derek Parfit[59] are two proponents of this theory. In the main, Olson argued that identity through time depends on human's continuos bodily existence. In other words, we exist because we are alive and in the same body, irrespective of time and space. Using thought experiment, Parfit however argued that possession of identical physical body at different time and space is not enough to justify identity; rather identity depends on the mind. In the same etiological reasoning, John Locke considered personal identity to be a subset of continuity of consiciouness and not of material substance. According to Locke, we are the same person to the extent that we are conscious of our past and future thoughts and actions in the same way as we are conscious of our present thoughts and actions. In this way, personal identity becomes a subset of repeated act of consciousness.[60] As individual and as a group, identity is formed by our ability to call up our past and future thoughts and actions in relation to our present. A number of criticisms have followed this theory.

Although propornents of reductionism or bundle theory are many, David Hume pioneered the study by looking at the mind-body problem. As Hume argued, as humans, we think that we are the same persons that we were five years ago, although we have changed in many respect. Hume located human identity in his or her capacity to perceive and that, as humans, we are a bundle or

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[58] Eric Todd Olson, *The Human Animal: Personal Identity Without Psychology*, (UK, 1997).
[59] Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, (UK, 1984).
[60] John Locke, *Of Ideas of Identity and Diversity*, (UK, 1964).

collection of different perceptions, which follow one another with an inconceivable rapidity and are in a state of perpetual flux and movement. So, in constant revolution of our ideas, our imagination moves from one idea to another, which resembles the previous idea to establish, what Hume called, bond and association. In bonding and associating, personal and group identity is born.

This view to identity tallies with those of Buddha, who conceives of the soul as a commonwealth that retains its identity by being composed of many different, related, and yet constantly changing elements. Identity, in this wise, is weaned through cohesion of our personal experiences, which depend on relation of causation, contiguity and resemblances. [61] From the above, individual and group identity derives from humans' collective past.

Social Identity theory and its further development, the Self-Categorization theory can be traced to Henri Tajfel and John Tunner[62] who located personal and group identity as a subset of social relation within social spaces. According to the duo, social identity is that portion of an individual's self-concept that derived from being a member of a relevant social group. By introducing social identity, the duo carefully explains inter-group behaviour on the basis of perceived status, legitimacy and permeability of the inter-group environment.

As noted, social identity theory posits that human social behavious will vary along a continuum between inter-personal and inter-group behaviour, where inter-personal behaviour is the total individual characteristic and relationships within a group. Inter-group behaviour, in the same vein, would comprise of all behavioural characteristics determined solely by the group. Other components of these theories are positive distinctiveness, which describes a situation whereby individual seeks to be distinct and

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[61] A.E. Piston, *Hume's Philosophy of the Self*, (USA, 1998).

[62] Turner John and Oakes Penny, "The Significance of the Social Identity Concept for Social Psychology with Reference to Individualism, Interactionism and Social Influence", *British Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 25, No. 3, 1986, 237-252; Tajfel, H. and Turner, J.C., "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict", in W.G. Austin and S. Worchel (eds), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, (Monterey, 1979); Tajfel, H. and Turner, J.C., "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour", in S. Worchel and W.G. Austin (eds); *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, (Chicago, 1986).

seeks cohabitation with similar individuals; individual mobility, which describes a situation whereby individuals move within a society depending on the degree of openness or closeness of this society; social creativity and social competition, which also depend on how open or close a society is.

From these theories, we understand that identity, whether at the personal or group level, is predicated on relation of taxonomic sameness and difference within a social space. Identity is therefore relative and space-bound.

Elimination or No-self theory posits that the self cannot be reduced to a bundle because the concept of a self is incompatible with the idea of a bundle, which implies a notion of bodily or psychological relations that do not exist. James Giles, one of its major proponents, argued that there is no subtantival self and all that we have is an evolutionary artifact.[63]

In sum, all these models describe human behaviour both as individuals and as members in a group. Although all these and other models offer invaluable insights into dress and identity in Yorubaland, only the social identity theory would be applied in this study. This is, as already noted, mainly to conserve space and to ensure limited digression from the main course of the study. This subsection will now turn to dress theories.

Owing to the multi-disciplinary nature of dress studies; different theories, concepts, and ideas have also been developed. Two key theories and concepts around which most of the arguments on dress and identity have been built are the biological and symbolic interaction theories. Essentially, these theories are based on the use of dress in human society.

The biological theory conceptualizes the use of dress as owing essentially to the need to provide for the human body. This need includes protection of the body from vagaries of nature, unauthorized (visual) intrusion and censorship, and the need to sustain efficient and effective functionality of body processes. The biological function could be negative or positive in their effects on the body. For instance, while the removal of a bad tooth may help reduce pain and odour, the same could disfigure human face and

[63] James Gilles, *No Self to be Found: The Search for Personal Identity*, (USA, 1997).

lead to embarrassment. In addition, plastic surgery may help in fixing ailing or defective body parts while, at the same time, it could lead to death, as the example of Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, the late wife of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a former Nigerian president, suggests or gradual or intense erosion of the body, as could be seen in Michael Jackson's nose-jobs. In other words, the biological function could negatively or positively affect the body.

In addition to the above, the biological theory conceptualizes dress as an interface between the micro-physical environment and the macro-physical environment. At the micro-physical level, dress interacts directly with the body. For instance, a woolen socks alters body temperature and provides heat in a way that helps body processes. In the same way, hand-gloves and eye-glasses, as mechanisms, increase the body's capabilities to perform tasks. Similarly, cloth interfaces between the human body and wind, sunlight, external visual intrusion etc. Proponents of this theory therefore argue that dress performs two functions: alterant of body processes as well as an interface between the body and its physical environment. As alterant of body processes, dress becomes a micro-physical environment and as an interface between the body and the macro-physical environment. It must be emphasized that some dress performs dual functions – serving as alterant and also as interface.

The symbolic interaction theory, which was propounded by George Herbert Mead, is a major sociological perspective that places emphasis on micro-scale social interaction, which is particularly important in subfields such as urban sociology and social psychology. Symbolic interactionism holds that people act toward things based on the meaning those things have for them; and that these meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretations. As Mead argued, there are four main tenets of pragmatism. The first is that true reality does not exist "out there" in the real world; it "is actively created as we act in and toward the world. Secondly, people remember and base their knowledge of the world on what has been useful to them and are likely to alter what no longer "works." Thirdly, people define the social and physical "objects" they encounter in the world according to their use for them. Lastly, if we want to understand actors, we must base our understanding on what people actually

do. Three of these ideas are critical to symbolic interactionism, i.e. the focus on the interaction between the actor and the world; a view of both the actor and the world as dynamic processes and not static structures and the actor's ability to interpret the social world. Thus, to Mead and other symbolic interactionists, consciousness is not separated from action and interaction, but is an integral part of both.

Gregory P. Stone, applying the basic insight of Mead' symbolic interaction theory to dress and identity construction, noted that identity is established, maintained, and altered through communication. Dress, he noted, as a form of non-verbal communication, is a communicator of identity and values. He therefore argued that every social interaction must be broken down into two analytic components, appearance and discourse. Appearance, as Stone argued, is as just important for the establishment and maintenance of the self as is discourse. Therefore, the study of appearance provides a powerful lever for the formulation of a conception of the self. Appearance, as Stone noted, is communicated through non-verbal symbols or codes such as gestures, grooming, clothing, and location; while discourse is mainly verbal symbol. Non-verbal and verbal symbols, according to symbolic interaction theory, are both important to identity formation and establishment.

Stone, among others, argued that in communication encounters, dress and appearance are encountered by the audience before conversation of any kind can be initiated. Appearance, therefore, has a certain priority over discourse in establishing identity either of an individual or a group. From this theory, it can be argued that individuals and groups acquired identities through social interaction in various social, physical, and biological settings. Dress therefore announces social positions such as age, sex, religion, political affiliation, school, etc. of both the wearers and observers within specific interaction setting. Just as dress announces identity, identity can, in turn, announce dress. Although some identities are assigned at birth, some are socially acquired. Irrespective of when or how identity is acquired, it must be emphasized that body variations and modifications can establish, sustain, announce, and reinforce identities.

These two theories are important for understanding dress and identity in Yorubaland. Dress, among the Yorùbá, is a *sine qua non* to life. It is comparable to a bird trying to fly without wings. Yorùbá people believe that dress is a critical part of life and they go to a greater extent to dress appropriately and fashionably. As a social phenomenon, Yorùbá dress communicates age, sex, gender, social class, school affiliations, and religion. The meanings associated with dress depend on individual's subjective interpretations of dress. In addition, the meanings an individual attributes to various outward characteristic of dress are, in most cases, based on the individual's socialization within a particular socio-cultural environment. For instance, to most non-Moslems, the wearing of *hijab* by Moslems is an infringement on female's fundamental rights, whereas to Moslems groomed in the socio-cultural milieu that regarded such practice as a religious obligation, it was not.

Goffman, and Weigert, Teitge and Teitge argue that dress' overt function is to communicate identity and values through appearance and symbols.[64] As noted above, because dress is seen even before verbal communication takes place in social encounters, (dress) discourse has a certain priority over discourse in establishing identity. To this end, the Yorùbá adage says: *Bi a se rin ni a ko ni* (dress the way you want to be addressed). As noted in symbolic interaction theory, individuals acquire identity through social interaction; hence, individual Yorùbá people must dress in the way that conforms to the various social, physical, and biological settings or environment that they found themselves.

As the history of Yorùbá sartorial tradition chronicled in this study shows, the symbolic interplay of bodies and changing social experiences devolves on dress in different ways. Just as Masquelier offered vivid insight into the power of clothing to define identity in Muslim Mawri communities in Southern Niger, where spirits of the *bori* cult choose their hosts and mediums,

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[64] Stone G. P., 'Appearance and the Self' in Rose A. M. (ed.), *Human Behavior and the Social Process: An Integrationist Approach*, (New York, 1962), 86-118; Weigert A. J., Teitge J. S., and Teitge D. W. (eds.), *Society and Identity: Towards a Sociological Psychology*, (Cambridge, 1986); Goffman E., *Behavior in Public*, New York, 1971).

Renne's research on style interaction in Yorùbá ecclesiastical dress demonstrates how hand-woven textiles connected cloth and body, asserting an African identity that is also Roman Catholic. In Cherubim and Seraphim churches (African Independent Churches), church leaders' visions and dreams inspire creativity in clothing designs, tailored by church members to reflect aesthetic aspects of belief and practice. Wearing visionary garments, almost as a souvenir from another world, church leaders emphasize their otherworldly connections and supernatural abilities in material terms.

Among the Yorùbá, communal or uniform dress, popularly called *Aso-Egbe-Jo-Da* or *Aso Ebi*, are worn at occasions mostly by groups and family members. More often than not, this communal dress not only signifies the importance of the celebration or occasion necessitating their use, but also communicates the identities of the wearers. Just as a policeman needs not carry guns, tear-gas, and baton to announce his presence, his uniform and the various epaulets attached to the uniform communicates not only his identity as an officer of the law but also his status in the police force. The same goes for soldiers and any other private or public office-holder using official uniform. As noted with the example of a police officer, uniforms communicate not only identity and status but also power and authority. For instance, the mere presence of a policeman at the scene of a crime not only signifies state-presence but also state-power to exert compliance. The policeman needs not use guns, tear-gas, and baton to exert compliance, as the various stakeholders in the social interaction space mutually understand and recognize not the personality of the police officer but his/her uniform as a representative of state power and authority. Notwithstanding this, dress is linked to individual and/or group identities. In fact, identities are believed to be communicated by dress, as well as by the material and social objects (other people) that contribute meaning to the social spaces of interaction.

The above examples, among many, illustrate that dress functions both in protecting the body as well as in communicating socially defined values. In both cases, it must be noted that dressing differently than cultural norms prescribe may provoke politically charged reactions, as Bastian (1996) described for

southeastern Nigerian women's adoption of the Hausa-style tunic on top of wrappers or trousers. The same issue was pursued further by Nielsen (1979) in her work on Nigerian female 'Alhajis' and entrepreneurship. Experimenting with elite dress from the Muslim northern Nigeria that politicians and businessmen took up in the wake of the 1970s oil boom, women created their own dress practice, as young male tailors used colours, fabrics, and accessories to subvert the dress aesthetic associated with chiefly rank in their hierarchically, male-dominated society. This example, among other things, illustrates that other than protecting and communicating values, dress also has power, which when deployed can be as potent as existential power and authority.

An individual can occupy a number of social positions and thus exudes a number of identities all of which contribute to his/her total self-configuration. As Stone affirmed, individuals acquire identities when they are '*cast in the shape of a social object by the acknowledgement of his* (sic) *participation or membership in social relations*'.[65] It can be argued, therefore, that individuals communicate identities as individuals and as members of social relations. As individuals or as members of social relations; individuals could determine, modify, or alter their identities within specific social contexts. These negotiations of identities derive from the deliberate communication of individual's self-identity through dress, described as 'program' by Stone, and other people's appraisal of the individual's program, otherwise known as 'review'.[66] On the basis of their experience through time and with other people; individuals develop, in advance of social interaction, notions of how other people are likely to react to their dress (review). Where such notion corresponds with others' reactions; the projected identities (program) are validated, which ultimately leads to satisfactory social interaction. Where the notion differs from other's reactions; negative reviews follow.[67]

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[65] Stone G. P., 'Appearance and the Self' in Rose A. M. (ed.), *Human Behavior and the Social Processes: An Interactionist Approach.* (New York, 1962), 93.
[66] Ibid, 94.
[67] Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K. P. Johnson (eds.), *Dress and Identity*, 13.

Although the biological function of dress is equally important, the social function of dress, i.e. dress as communicator of values, remains the overarching theoretical imperative driving this study. The biological function of dress is commonplace in all human community and, essentially, cannot explain the varieties of dress, let alone their uses and changes that they have witnessed over time, especially in Yorubaland. It is on account of the above that this study limits itself to the social function of dress in Yorubaland. Essentially, the arguments in the study are weaved around these five basic questions:

(i) What values do the Yorùbá people project when they dress?
(ii) Why do the Yorùbá people dress the way they dress?
(iii) When do the Yorùbá people dress the way they dress?
(iv) What predictive value(s) are inherent in the way the Yorùbá people dress?
(v) How do the Yorùbá people project these values through their dress?

At the heart of these questions is the need to know the value(s) Yorùbá dress projects and the conscious or unconscious efforts made by these people to modify, alter, and enhance these values. In relation to other people; the study seeks to know the uniqueness of Yorùbá dress that marks both the dress and the Yorùbá people out from others. History, as it is generally known, is about change and continuity. Generally, dress scholarship has focused on changes in clothing practices through complex socioeconomic and political transformations set into motion by shifting local and Western economic and military dominance and, more recently, by processes of globalization. Hence, by examining issues such as (i) the origin of dress and dress culture in Yorubaland; (ii) the developments in dress culture in Yorubaland; (iii) the political economy of dress in Yorubaland; (iv) colonial rule, Christianity, Western education and dress in Yorubaland; and (v) naturalistic self-image: European versus Nigerian concept, etc., the study shall show, in sharp relief, what changed and what endured.

1.5. Setting and Structure of the Study

This study is set in Yorubaland, Southwest Nigeria. In pre-colonial Nigeria, the area was a home to a number of people who, although sharing a common ancestry from Ile-Ife and a common eponymous father - Oduduwa, had different political authorities and went by different names. The area constituted Western Region during the colonial period. However, in post-independence period, most especially during the military autocracy that abolished regions and established states all over Nigeria, the area has been divided into eight states: Ekiti, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Kwara, Kogi, and Lagos states.

While Yorùbá people abound in other parts of Africa, notably in Benin Republic, Brazil, Cuba, etc., this study however focuses primarily on the Yorùbá people of Nigeria. Although dress has a longer antiquity in Yorubaland, this study takes 1880 as a take-off time for the examination of the phenomenon of dress in the construction of Yorùbá ethno-national identity. Notwithstanding the date, the study however adopts a long term historical perspective to weave a narrative that, on the one hand, situates dress as a peculiar human behaviour, which could not be denied, and, on the other hand, examines the role of dress in the construction of Yorùbá ethnic identity, especially in the face of different developments such as Islam, Christianity, colonialism, and Western education.

1880 is a convenient starting point for this study, as it marks the coalescing of the debates on dress and culture in Nigeria vis-à-vis Africa, the official celebration of the emancipation of slaves in Brazil, separation of Lagos from the Gold Coast, the silver wedding anniversary of Queen Victoria, the Queen of England in whose name Britain held Empires across Africa; and burial of King Dosumu of Lagos. All these events mark 1880 as a year of great events that involved all manners of dress – indigenous, traditional, and Western. 1980, which is the terminal period preferred for the study, marks the hundred years of the various events already mentioned above and therefore offers a *longe duree* perspective on the place of dress in the construction of personal/individual and group identities of Yorùbá people.

Besides this introductory chapter, which sets out the basic objectives of the research and other essential components, the study has six other chapters. Chapter Two examines Yorùbáness and the role of dress in Yorùbá essence and innateness. In Chapter Three, Four, and Five, the study examines Yorùbá dress from the pre-colonial, through colonial to contemporary period. The focus of these three chapters is change and continuity in Yorùbá dress and how these changes impact on Yorùbá identity as a group and in its relationship with other groups in Nigeria. Chapter Six examines the use of dress in expressing power and hegemony and how these have played out and what sort of responses have followed. The chapter illustrates the social content of dress, as expression of individual and group identity. Chapter Seven concludes the study by teasing together the various findings from the analysis in the different chapters.