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Dress and identity in Yorubaland, 1880-1980

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Chapter Five

Contemporary Yorùbá Dress

5.0. Introduction

This chapter examines contemporary Yorùbá dress. The chapter argues that change occasioned by contacts with Islam/Arabs and Christianity/Europeans, on the one hand, necessitated culture conflicts and that Yorùbá contemporary dress evolved from the embers of these sartorial conflicts, on the other hand. Contemporary Yorùbá dress, as the chapter argues, is therefore a product of (i) change in indigenous Yorùbá sartorial tradition, (ii) conflicts with Islamic and Christian sartorial traditions, and (iii) continuities arising from the blending of indigenous Yorùbá sartorial tradition with foreign (Islamic/Arab and Christian/European)sartorial traditions. As chapters three and four have shown, indigenous Yorùbá sartorial traditions witnessed a number of changes owing to these identified multi-dimensional developments. There is no gainsaying the fact that these changes, although not necessarily all, have long lasting impact on what could be described as contemporary Yorùbá dress; however, what can be called contemporary Yorùbá dress is an amalgam of different sartorial culture, which built, over the years, on indigenous Yorùbá sartorial tradition.

5.1. Contemporary Yorùbá Dress, 1960-2000

The qualification, ‘contemporary’, as used here imposes a serious challenge and therefore deserves a brief mentioning before considering contemporary Yorùbá dress. In order to ensure a neat chronology on sartorial development in Yorubaland, the term contemporary will be understood as commencing from independence in 1960 when foreign rule, which had, over the years, served as impetus for Christianity and colonialism, ceased. From this time to the present, narrowly determined as year 2000, the socio-cultural fate of Yorubaland as well as other parts of Nigeria was in the hands of Yorùbá and Nigerian peoples. Hence, by contemporary Yorùbá dress, this section means dress culture

that emanated from post-colonial Yorubaland and weaned through many years of military autocracy interspersed by few years of civil rule. This is what is discussed in this section.

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, Lagos, Abeokuta, Ibadan and other urban centers across Yorubaland, which had received a large number of labour migrants, became centers of attraction to many people within and outside Yorubaland. The interest in these urban centers, most especially Lagos, was the increasing wave of physical and infrastructural developments associated with the emergence of Lagos as the capital of the new nation. As more and more industries were set-up, needing more and more workers; rural-urban migrations followed. Although Lagos' rapid socio-economic and political developments were slowed down by the Nigerian Civil War, it could not truncate the spate of physical and infrastructural developments. Invariably, the cessation of the war brought more people from other parts of Nigeria to Lagos and to other major cities in Yorubaland that were untouched by the Civil War.

The resultant mixing of peoples that this development brought was unprecedented. The Igbos, Edos, Igalas, Tivs, Hausas, Fulanis, etc. migrated to Lagos to take part in the new economic opportunities. This mixing of peoples therefore meant mixing of different (dress) culture.

It must be added that from 1880 to 1959, the development of African church forced the various missions to jettison their obtuse fascination with sumptuary laws and imposition of Western sartorial culture on Yorùbá people and, invariably, the mixing of culture with religion. So, the post-independence period (1960 to date) witnessed increasing number of educated Yorùbá people taking interests in Yorùbá dress, as more and more people were educated. Wass, cited above, noted that family members in Lagos and in other cities and towns in Yorubaland maintained the patterns of education, occupation, and religion of the pre-independence period.

Much unlike the pre-colonial period, the use of indigenous dress, including African wax prints, was slightly greater than during the colonial period. Wass noted that in the colonial period, especially with the increasing agitation for cultural renaissance and independence, about a half of Yorùbá educated elite population

was using indigenous dress. The independence and post-independence periods however recorded marginal increases in the number of indigenous dress users, as more than half of Yorùbá population used Yorùbá indigenous dress. Although there was only marginal difference between users of Yorùbá indigenous dress from 1800 to 1880 and from 1880 to 1959; the number of users of hybrid dress, especially among youths, increased greatly.³⁸⁰

However, it must be asserted that the dramatic increase in male's indigenous dress use that was characteristic of the independence period was not maintained in post-independence period, as male indigenous dress-use dropped dramatically after independence. As Wass noted, this new development was as a result of the introduction of hybrid suit, the Conductor Suit, which became the most fashionable in post-independence period.³⁸¹ As Houlberg, cited by Wass, had noted, the post-independence period however witnessed a remarkable upsurge in the use of indigenous dress by the females. This can be as a result of an improved work condition for the females and as a result of women's increasing realization of their self-worth. While the use of indigenous hairstyles fell during the independence period, the post-independence period witnessed an increasing use of indigenous hairstyles, at least by the females.

Besides national pride, as argued by Wass, one important point to note in explaining this return to indigenous hairstyles by the females is changes in roles. From independence, Nigerian women became more financially independent, as more and more employment or wage-earning opportunities came their way. Those of them who were not in any employment could afford to trade or go into craft-making. Although not in any way a position of status, the inflow of cash rendered any status-related value untenable. As informants, photographs, and ethnographic data have shown, more women were combining traditional task of keeping homes with one gainful employment or the other. The import of this is that more women were becoming financially independent, which gave them chances to increase the sizes of their wardrobes. Invariably, women, from the independent period began to wear dress that was

³⁸⁰Ibid, 343.

³⁸¹Ibid, 345.

hitherto considered as children's dress as a means to enhance their self-worth and visibility. Increasingly, women adopted not just the use of trousers and suits like men, but also female *Agbada* became a part and parcel of most women's wardrobes.

The shock with which Yorùbá society received these and other developments during the period can be gleaned from the following lines from Alhaji Odolaye Aremu (of *Dadakuada* musical genre), one Yorùbá popular musicians:

*...Nigeria! E dakun o, mo be yin pupo
Ewo'gba ta ti mba kinni yi bo wa
Oba mewa, igba re mewa
E bi mi, e ni kinni mori ti mo e wi be
Baalu to de nko?
O ba wa mbeni, a ba daadaa
Ogun Ojuku to de nko?
O ba wa mb'eni, a o ba daadaa
Ogun ka ma a sun le, ogun abe 'le,
Ka ma asun 'le, ka maa sun ra eni,
O ba wa mbe ni, a o ba daadaa
Ogun ki okunrin o fi ile le f'obirin
O ba wa mbe ni, a o ba daadaa
Sokoto JB, to dide yagbuayagbua, to so, to daa,
Ti awon obinrin fi nwa oko ni Nigeria
O ba wa mbe ni, a o ba daadaa
Agbada ti o d' oke ti o de sale – oju yi la ju; be ni!
Agbada ti o d' oke ti o de sale a!
Ti awon obinrin nda nko, ti won nwo nko?
O ba wa mbe ni, a o ba daadaa
Ki obinrin o ko oko, ko tun d'ijo kefa
Ko tun ko'gba wale
O ba wa mbe ni, a o ba daadaa³⁸².*

(Nigeria! Please I enjoin you
Consider where we've been coming from

382. Alhaji Odolaye Aremu (Baba ni Kwara) and his Dadakuada Group, *Nigeria in Evolution*, Olatubosun Records Company Limited Production (ORCLP), 031, 1979.

For ten kings, there are ten eras
Ask me what I've seen that makes me speak
How about the coming of aeroplanes?
It met us here and we met it well³⁸³
How about Ojukwu's war?
It met us here, but we didn't meet it well
And arson during the civil war, during which
We set fire on properties and people?
It met us here, but we didn't meet it well
The issue of men leaving home for women?
It met us here, but we didn't meet it well
And the JB trouser, so straight and wide, also good;
That women wear when they're driving in Nigeria?
It met us here, but we didn't meet it well
The short *agbada*- what an opening of the eyes, yes!
That women are making and wearing?
It met us here, but we didn't meet it well
For a woman to divorce her husband and
Return on the sixth day; for her to return home with her
bric-a-brac?
It met us here but we didn't meet it well.)

As far as the children were concerned, it must be noted that the fascination with Western dress, which prevailed during the colonial period, dropped tremendously. However, the wearing of Western dress for children remained and the use of indigenous dress, even in children, was confined to special occasions.

As noted in Chapter One, details such as when the photographs below were taken, where they were taken, who took them and why, which could help in the task of historical reconstruction are lacking. However, this criticism does not remove the fact that these photos illustrate contemporary male Yorùbá dress.

³⁸³ The refrain "it met us here and we met it well" is a direct translation of Ilorin dialect of Yoruba language, which takes pleasure in playing on the common greeting: "Se aba ile daadaa?" Here "aa ba daadaa" simply translates to mean "it met us here".

On the whole, it can be argued that Yorùbá people, from independence in 1960 to date, either wore Yorùbá dress, which could be indigenous or traditional – African wax print, for instance – or Western dress.



A cross section of people in traditional/indigenous Yorùbá dress

(Sources: Personal collections)

Historically, Nigeria had shown potentials for a great and prosperous economy with abundant natural resources begging to be

harnessed as early as 1960. However, military incursion into politics, the civil war and the first oil boom of the 1973/1974 combined to spell disaster for the new nation, as military rule and civil war combined to slow down the progress made immediately after independence and served as harbingers of ethnic suspicions and mutual distrust between the various ethnic groups. The 1973/74 oil boom soon led to reckless spending. For the collapse of oil prices and downward review of Nigeria's oil production quotas by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) in the 1980s also led to a sharp decline in Nigeria's petroleum output, a development that brought the precarious nature of the country's economic and financial positions to the fore. The results of all these include economic recession, as manifested by fiscal crisis, foreign exchange shortages, balance of payments and debt crises, high rate of unemployment, and negative economic growth, to mention a few.

The inability to revamp the economy through ad-hoc economic measures taken by government between 1978 and 1985, therefore led the country into accepting the International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment facility, which included conditionalities such as free market programmes and policies, which include internal changes (most especially privatization and deregulation) and external ones, (especially the reduction of trade barriers).³⁸⁴ Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), as the policy is called, describes the policy changes implemented by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in developing countries. These policy changes are conditions or pre-conditions for getting new loans or for obtaining lower interest rates on existing loans. Hence, SAP is created with the goal of reducing a country's borrowing and fiscal imbalances. In other words, the policies are designed to promote economic growth, generate income, and pay off accumulated debt. The policies are insured by a variety of loan distribution programmes, and progress is monitored by the lending institutions.

³⁸⁴ Jeffrey Herbst and Charles Soludo, 'Aid and Reform in Africa', accessed 23December 2011, available at <http://www.worldbank.org/research/aid/africa/draftsum.pdf>.

Other conditions for these loans include cutting down on social expenditures, focusing economic output on direct export and resource extraction, devaluation of currencies, trade liberalization, lifting import and export restrictions, increasing the stability of investment (by supplementing foreign direct investment with the opening of domestic stock markets), balancing budgets, removing price controls and state subsidies, privatization, enhancing the rights of foreign investors vis-à-vis national laws, improving governance and fighting corruption.

SAP played multi-dimensional roles in the history of Nigeria. On the one hand, the cutting down on government spending, currency devaluation, etc. led to increasing poverty, as both public and private establishment began to lay-off staff. On the other hand, government institutions, multinational corporations, and privately owned firms began to outsource labour that was hitherto permanent through a myriad of small-scale informal operators. Aside from rendering many people jobless and creating general insecurity in the nation; the trend also made some private individuals wield more, unregulated financial and political powers due to their links in government and multinational corporations via contracts, tenders and auctions.³⁸⁵

The inability of SAP to revamp the economy, its attendant job losses and deepening economic problems invariably led to two important developments on dress and dressing tradition, not only in Yorubaland but also across the country. On the one hand, it led to the importation of fairly-used or dis-used clothing, as merchants and politicians with clouts in government and financial power turned to importation of different items into the country. On the other hand, it stimulated the use of locally-made cloths, most especially tie-and-dye (*Adire*) cloths in Yorubaland.

Although SAP's emphasis was on currency devaluation, economic deregulation, liberalization, and privatization of public enterprises, all of which served as harbingers of declining regulated wage labour, unemployment, and growing number of job-cuts, the programmes however stimulated unprecedented socio-economic and political changes among which was

³⁸⁵ Oyejide T. A., Soyode A., and Kayode M. O., *Nigeria and the IMF*, (Ibadan, 1985), 24.

importation, especially of cheap, oftentimes, low quality goods from Europe and the United States of America into Nigeria.³⁸⁶ Deepening impoverishment, especially of the middle and low classes, soon necessitated inability of these important segments of the nation to buy and use new items, including cloth. For this category of people, who of course were in the majority, the use of cheap, fairly-used imported cloth became prevalent.

Although many Yorùbá merchants and politicians participated in the importation business, however, foremost in the trade were the Chinese, Indians, as well as many other Nigerians. China Town, Katangua, Oshodi, and many other markets in Lagos, as well as in other urban centers in Yorubaland became major centers for selling and buying imported items. In these markets, both new and old clothes, among many other things, were on offer. Individuals, young and old, males and females, not only bought these cloths for use; many became middlemen retailing these items of clothing in different parts of Yorubaland and Nigeria as a whole. The relative cheapness, durability and availability of these clothes served as safety-nets for individuals and families who were unable to buy new clothes.

In China Town, originally located at Victoria Island, a high-brow location in Lagos, different items were on offer. Essentially, the new market was dominated by Chinese and other Asian traders, with Nigerians, mostly Igbos and Yorùbás, acting as middlemen. By serving as middlemen, the Igbo and Yorùbá traders soon moved into importation of cheap, dis-used and still serviceable clothing items, which were sold across the length and breadth of not just urban centers but rural areas in Nigeria. The development in China Town soon led to the establishment of another center, this time in Katangua, a local suburb near Agege. China Town was also later relocated to Ojota area.

The relocation of China Town from Victoria Island to Ojota was mainly as a result of the need for more space, as the trade in second-hand cloth became widely accepted within a short

³⁸⁶Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniya, 'Road Transport Workers' Union: The Paradox of Negotiating Socio-Economic and Political Space in Nigeria in Nigeria', StreetNet International Documents, 2007; accessed on August 21, 2009, available at www.streetnet.org.za/English/page10.htm

while. More importantly, other markets, most especially Alade, Tejuoso, Oke-Arin, Isolo, Yaba and other markets in Lagos depended on China Town for their supplies. The same is true of other marketing zones across Nigeria. The import of this is not just to underscore the importance of trade in second-hand cloth and the role China Town had come to play in the trade but also to show that the volume of traffic generated by the trade in and around Victoria Island soon became unbearable that government had to relocate the market to Ojota in order to reduce the traffic gridlock usually created by the need to bring large containers from the port at Apapa to China Town and the need for trucks and lorries to transport cloth from China Town to other parts of Lagos.

In addition to the relocation of China Town and establishment of Katangua and other markets, neighbouring nations like Togo and Benin Republic also served as important trade links to Nigeria's second-hand clothes trade. In Seme, Nigeria's border with Benin Republic, a booming irregular trade in assortment of goods, including second-hand clothes trade, became dominant from the 1990s to the present.

Initially, Yorùbá people denigrated second-hand clothes; describing them as *Aloku-Oyinbo*, *Tokunbo*, and the various markets where they were sold were derogatorily called as 'Bend-down Boutique', '*Bosi-Koro*'. The attitude was borne out of the general consideration that no one knows the original owners of such second-hand clothes, especially as the Yorùbá believe that there is spiritual attachment between clothes and their owners. Hence, since the spiritual state of the initial owners could not be ascertained, then the use of such clothes could bring calamity to its wearers. Despite this belief, imported clothes, which were originally sold in common markets, bus stops, and roadsides, soon found their ways into main markets and supermarkets, especially those clothes that were found to be of superior quality and/or possibly new cloths. The resultant acceptance that these cloths received in major city centers soon necessitated their being taken into the rural areas, as many Yorùbá people began to use them both for official and unofficial purposes. Major users in Yorubaland include teachers, both in the elementary and secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions; bank workers, unemployed school leavers, graduates, and others whose professions required the

wearing of some form of office dress or another. As their usage became widespread; shops, makeshift trading outlets in open markets and roadside developed in towns and cities as well as in rural Yorubaland.

It must however be added that the differences in the adoption of European dress between rural versus urban dwellers perhaps has much to do with class or economic prospects as it has to do with identification of the rural people with tradition. Children, in particular, tend nowadays to be clothed more in European dress styles, *Bosi-koro* or locally sewed. On the other hand, rural farmers who ordinarily would wear complete traditional Yorùbá dress during non-work situations, you will find wearing torn or worn-out *Bosi-koro* shirts and trousers to the farm.

Although there was a widespread use of second-hand clothes, locally-made cloths, most especially *Adire*, as well as imported *Ankara* are nevertheless used in private ceremonies including religious worships. The use of locally-made cloths was not limited to the rich and affluent, but also many who cannot afford new cloths and had taken to the use of second-hand clothes. As shall be shown in the sub-section on social dress in Yorubaland below, while second-hand clothes are used as office dress and during official ceremonies; locally-made cloths are used for both private and public ceremonies.

From the above, it can be argued that the failure of SAP served as impetus not only for the use of second-hand clothes in Yorubaland particularly Nigeria, but also for the revival and use of locally-made cloths. As the different governments attempted to stimulate self-reliance culture in Nigerians, provide employment and eradicate poverty, more and more people began to patronize indigenous cloth producers. For instance, the trade in tie and dye cloths, *Adire*, which had nose-dived since the colonial period, as Judith Byfield claimed, witnessed a turnaround as government began to deploy unemployed graduates to the various centers of productions for training sponsored by government through the different poverty alleviation programmes. Not only did this stimulate local production of *Adire* but also its use not just for occasions and festivities but also as office dress. The boom in local cloth production was so great that informal operators in the trade soon came together to form local and national unions, the Tie and

Dye Makers Association of Nigeria (TDMAN), which they used as platform for collective bargaining, especially in obtaining loans from banks through informal operators' cooperative societies. The cardinal objectives of TDMAN, the umbrella body of *Adire* manufacturers in Nigeria, include regulating and controlling entrance and exit into the cloth-making industry by ensuring that new entrants are trained and registered. The organization's mandates also include determining prices of *Adire*, so as to ensure uniformity and also to ensure that stakeholders in the industry are protected from negative effects of SAP.

Although unorganized at first, *Adire*-making, by the 1990s, had become so successful that markets of considerable sizes such as Itoku (in Abeokuta), Akerele (in Lagos), Gbagi and Oje (in Ibadan), Oja-Oba (in Ilorin), Powerline (in Osogbo), Erekesan (in Akure), etc. emerged all over Yorubaland. Today, TDMAN claimed to have not less than 34, 000 members across Nigeria.³⁸⁷ Owing to the successes recorded by the industry in terms of acceptance, most Fine Arts departments in secondary schools, colleges of education, and polytechnics have incorporated *Adire*-making into their curriculums. Besides, government began to pay attention to the industry like never before. For instance, Ogun, Lagos, Oyo and Osun states contingents to major sporting and cultural events since the 1997 have adopted *Adire* as states uniforms.³⁸⁸ In a recent trip to South Africa, the Minister of Culture and Tourism and his entourage adopted it as official uniform '*to showcase our rich cultural heritage*'.³⁸⁹ Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the Nigeria's former president, unofficially adopted *Adire* as his 'official' dress on foreign trips throughout his 8 year rule (1999-2007) as civilian president. Between 1976 and 1979, when Chief Obasanjo was a military head of state, he had worn Khaki uniform as his official dress whether on foreign or local trips. Other notable Nigerians that have taken to *Adire* include Professor Wole Soyinka, Ambassador Olusola Adeniyi, Professor Ade-Ajayi, etc. *Adire* has also taken the center-stage

³⁸⁷ Interview with Mrs. Stephen-Imala, Surulere, Lagos, 5 August, 2009.

³⁸⁸ Interview with Mrs. Stephen-Imala, Surulere, Lagos, 5 August, 2009.

³⁸⁹ Evelyn Osagie and Josephine Ojehumen, 'Is Kampala Endangered?', *The Nation*, vol. 3, No. 1111, 5 August, 2009, A2.

among party enthusiasts, teachers and fashion-buffs for important (official and unofficial) occasions.

As an industry, *Adire* provides employment for different kinds of people. Unlike in the pre-colonial times when the indigenous people produced threads and cloths, *Adire* is made with industry-produced cloths, which may be imported or made locally in Nigeria. Today, besides the end users, there are four classes of people in the trade – producers, artists-in-residence, fashion designers, and retailers. The producers are merchants who have enough money to buy materials – cloths, caustic soda, synthetic dyes, etc. in bulk for retail trading. At Itoku, as well as at Akerele *Adire* Market, the producers also have artists-in-residence who specialize in making patterns on print, and fashion-designers who specialize in creating new fashion styles with the designed materials. There are also the retailers who sell either materials or finished *Adire*. There are also tailors and seamstresses or fashion-designers who ply their trades independent of any producer. Besides the aforementioned, there are dyers who either dye materials brought to them by producers or end-users. Interestingly, from Abeokuta to Osogbo and Ilorin to Lagos; there is no industrial estate or park for the *Adire*-makers. For the most part, business-owners use shops in front of their houses or open spaces and sidewalks to ply their trades. Some house-owners also run the trade by converting part of their houses to business points. In Abeokuta, where many people regarded as the home of *Adire* in Nigeria, Itoku market is a beehive of activities, posing serious environmental and health hazard (in environmental waste and overcrowding) to both the traders and their customers.

As noted in Chapter One, details such as when the photographs below were taken, where they were taken, who took them and why, which could have helped in the task of historical reconstruction are lacking. However, this criticism does not remove the fact that these photos illustrate the use of tie and dye in contemporary Yorubaland.



**Mr. Lateef Rasheed Olaitan in his Adire Agbada
(Sources: Personal collections).**



**Miss. Adeola Oyeyode and Prof. Femi John Kolapo in Adire
cloths
(Sources: Personal collections)**

Notwithstanding its uncoordinated operation systems, stakeholders in the industry attest to its potentials. Mrs. Grace Stephen-Imala, the National President of Adire-makers in Nigeria, claimed that

*...the trade has brought me a lot of luck and fame. With it, I was able to send all my children to school. Through it, I have sat with the high and mighty in Nigeria and abroad. Apart from the fact that people come to me from all around the globe for the material, I have also met many good people.*³⁹⁰

Mrs. Stephen-Imala recounted that she was one of the government delegates to welcome former American President, Bill Clinton, when he visited Nigeria in 2000. She recounted with gusto:

*The experience I cannot forget is when I met the former American president Bill Clinton face-to-face in 2000. I was one of the delegates in Abuja when he visited Nigerian in 2000. I think it was in the month of August. I was also one of those invited to exhibit Adire by the former Vice-President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, and the same year Clinton came.*³⁹¹

Mrs. Stephen-Imala however noted that the industry is currently suffering, as

*materials are now expensive. I used to buy a drum of Sulphate for 9,000 naira in 2008, in 2009, the same goes for 18,000 naira; in 2008, caustic soda was sold for 2,400 naira, in 2009, it is sold for 7,000 naira. It is the same with other materials that we use. Brocade, quality dye, etc. are now sold for twice the price. When we increase the price of Adire, customers just disappeared.*³⁹²

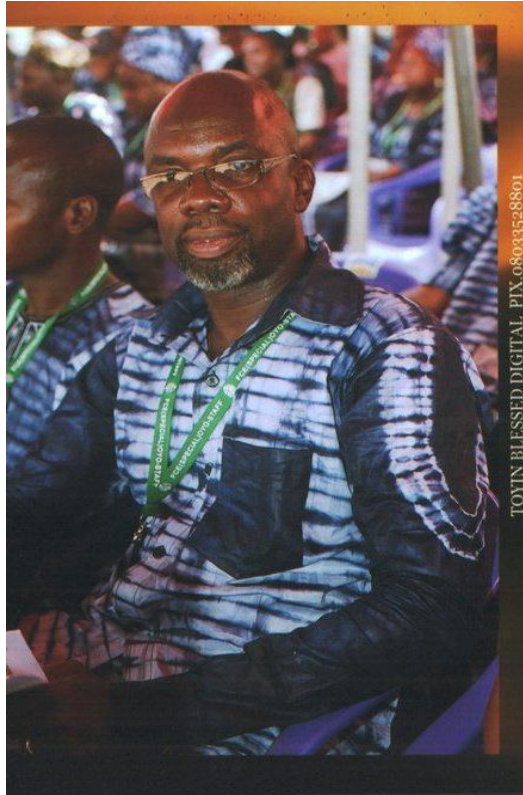
Mr. Tunji Adedayo, a specialist in designing *Adire* and director of Febat Enterprises, noted:

³⁹⁰ Interview with Mrs. Stephen-Imala, Surulere, Lagos, 5 August, 2009.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

*ten years ago, the Kampala (this is another name for Adire) business was booming. Then we had lots of designs and new innovations. The graph began to drop in 2003 and by last year, the situation became very worse (sic). People are now citing the financial meltdown as reason for the decline in patronage.*³⁹³



An Adire Wearer
(Sources: Toyin Blessed Digital Photo, Ibadan)

Mrs. Dupe Adeyemi, a customer at Akerele market noted that *“the situation of things in the country is affecting everybody. I used to buy materials in bulk, but these days, I just come here to count very few (sic) because people are no longer buying as they used to”*.³⁹⁴

³⁹³ Interview with Mr. Tunji Adedayo, Surulere, Lagos, 5 August, 2009.

³⁹⁴ Evelyn Osagie and Josephine Ojehumen, ‘Is Kampala Endangered?’, *The Nation*, vol. 3, No. 1111, 5 August, 2009, A2.

Given its wider acceptance, long antiquity and its centrality to Yorùbá culture, one wonders why the new decline in the *Adire* industry. Miss Mariam Sosan, a 38 years old Itoku tailor, claimed that:

*the problems we are facing are many: no credit facilities, there is the competition with imported clothes from China, and high cost of importing raw materials. Within the industry itself, there are whole lots of problems. There is the need to improve on designs. We cannot be doing it in the same way our parents did it. Time has changed. We need to modernize. We need to change Adire from local industry to a modern one. Yes, there are improvements here and there. In Lagos, you don't see people bending over coal-pots or stove to boil and mix dyes. They are now using electricity. But what about mixing the dye and the actual dying? We are still doing it the same way. That explains why our hands are like leather. Some of what we need to change cannot be done without the government.*³⁹⁵

Miss Sosan, like many others both in Abeokuta and Ibadan, claimed to have been assisted by the government agency, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), to learn the trade. She however decried a situation whereby such assistance was intermittent and limited to party faithful.

I benefited from NDE and NAPEP. When I completed my teacher training at Osiele, I roamed the streets for three years seeking for non-existing jobs. In 2005, I obtained NDE and NAPEP form and listed that I have a Teacher's Certificate, but would like to learn a trade. I went round to see the politicians who facilitated the process and I was shortlisted. I had wanted to learn Computer, but I was shortlisted for Adire-making. I accepted it and was sent to Madam Badmus Shogbesan at Itoku. I was there for three months and was paid three thousand naira every month. When we completed the training, we were given certificates

³⁹⁵ Interview with Mariam Sosan, Abeokuta, 15 August, 2009.

*and ten thousand naira each, as capital to start our trade.*³⁹⁶

Madam Badmus Shogbesan expressed worry about government's non-participation or non-involvement in the *Adire* industry. She decried a situation whereby governments talk about self-employment, self-reliance, but does not back it with commitment.

*When we started what became TDMAN today, we thought of using the organization to help seek the face of government so as to help us, especially with loans. We were told to partner with government's programme on employment and poverty alleviation. NDE was the first to approach us; later NAPEP and SMEDAN approached us. We were to provide training for youths and government promised to pay us 30, 000 naira per trainee. People were sent to us for three month training and everything went smoothly until it was time for paying us. We went to the offices of NDE and NAPEP on many occasions. Only those with connections with the politicians get paid. Others were not.*³⁹⁷

Mr. Tunji Adedayo, also a beneficiary of the government initiative, said:

*the trouble with Nigerian policy makers is that they see everything as politics and politics as everything. As a card-carrying member of the ruling PDP, I can tell you that none of those laudable objectives of NAPEP, SMEDAN, NDE etc. could be realized. They are politicized almost immediately they are formulated. Politicians use them to pay-back their cronies. I was trained in this trade during the NDE days. To get into the NDE, or NAPEP, you either pledged the three month allowances to the politicians or your name would not appear on the list.*³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Interview with Badmus Shogbesan, Abeokuta, 15 August, 2009.

³⁹⁸ Interview with Tunji Adedayo, Surulere, Lagos, 5 August, 2009.

Unarguably, the implementation of SAP in 1986 played multi-dimensional roles in dress-use in Yorubaland. It not only stimulated increasing use of second-hand clothes, but also the use of *Ankara* and locally-made cloths, especially *Adire*. From 1999 when Nigeria returned to civil rule to the present time, changes of all kinds have occurred, which served to shape people's lives in an unprecedented manner, not only in Yorubaland but across Nigeria. Deepening poverty and declining wage labour stimulated the use of imported, second-hand items, including cloths, as well as the use of locally-made cloths. While Yorùbá people are gradually dumping second-hand clothes for new ones, owing to the positive impact of liberalization and privatization policies of government between 1999 and 2007, the use of locally-made cloths still remains high.

5.3. Continuities in Contemporary Yorùbá Dress

From the above, it is incontrovertible that dress in contemporary Yorubaland has been characterized by change, conflicts, and continuities. As already shown, contemporary Yorùbá sartorial tradition received influences from different and sometimes overlapping sartorial cultures, first from Islam/Arabs, and later from Christianity/Europeans. Change, conflicts, and continuities therefore best explain contemporary Yorùbá dress and while change and conflicts have been discussed in the previous section, continuities, which underpins contemporary Yorùbá dress, is discussed in this section. In order to impose order on the discussion, the ensuing discourse is divided into three broad headings: political, social, and religious uses of dress. My contention, in this section, is that these three broad ways form the key ways through which dress is used in contemporary Yorubaland.

5.3.1. Political Dress in Contemporary Yorubaland

Perhaps, one of the best ways that the Yorùbá vis-à-vis other Nigerians has used cloths and dress from independence till the contemporary period is in relation to power and its associated metaphor. For instance, the Yorùbá, like other peoples in Nigeria, used clothes as metaphor of political power. Writing about this, Elisha P. Renne noted that the shift from colonial to independent

rule, as also demonstrated by the transition from military autocracy to civil rule in Nigeria, has been expressed in terms of transition from *Khaki* to *Agbada*. More aptly, the metaphor of dress is conceived as a change from colonial administrative uniform or in the case of military rule, the change from military uniform, simply referred to as *Khaki*, to civilian dress, often referred to among the Yorùbá as *Agbada*.³⁹⁹

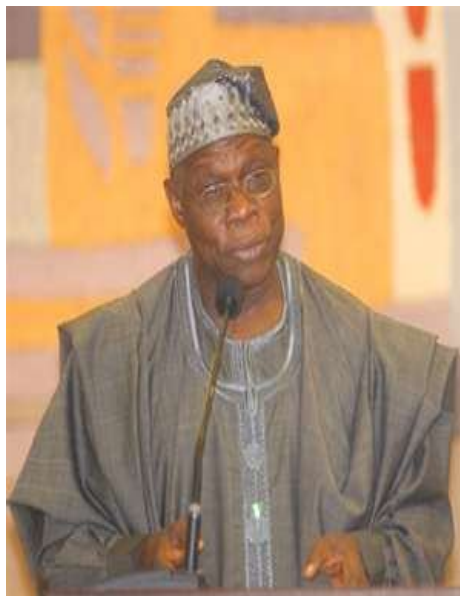
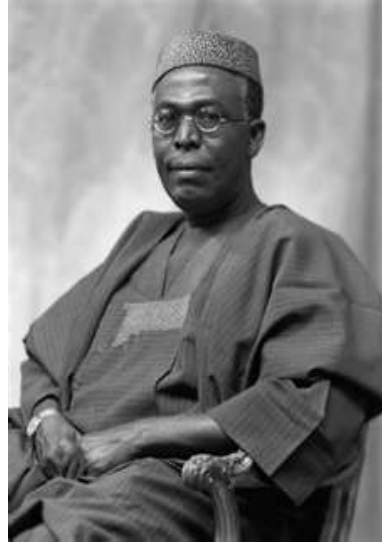
Agbada, as noted earlier, is the large gown made of locally hand-woven cloth and worn by traditional Yorùbá Obas, chiefs, noblemen. The equivalent among the Hausa-Fulani is the *Babban Riga*. *Khaki*, Urdu (India) word for ‘dusty’, on the other hand, is the brownish uniform material used as uniforms by native and colonial administrative staff, the police and armed forces during colonial rule. The historical association of *Khaki* with colonial and later Nigerian military rule signifies that the transition from colonial and military rule exemplified by *Khaki* to civilian administration, exemplified by *Agbada*, does not only represent a different form of political organization but also the historical events associated with colonialism, military rule, and post-independence civilian rule.

Among the Yorùbá people, the symbolical or metaphorical expressions of both a particular form of political order and of social distinctions are all subsumed in the expression ‘from *Khaki* to *Agbada*’. Political order, as used above, could be a colonial rule, military rule, traditional rule, and democratic rule; while a social distinction could include distinctions between royalty and commoners, military and civilians, an educated elite and non-literates, etc. In general, the expression focused primarily on the shifts in colonial, military, and civilian leadership and on the attendant changing fashions in political dress.

As noted in Chapter One, details such as when the photographs below were taken, where they were taken, who took them and why, which could help in the task of historical reconstruction are lacking. However, this criticism does not

³⁹⁹Elisha P. Renne, ‘From Khaki to Agbada: Dress and Political Transition in Nigeria’, in Allman J. (ed.), *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, (Indianapolis, 2004), 125.

remove the fact that these photos illustrate *Agbada* use in Nigerian politics.



Oba Lamidi Adeyemi, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief Olusegun Obasanjo wearing Agbada
(Sources: Oyo State Ministry of Information, Ibadan, Nigeria)

Underlying the expression is the desire to differentiate everyday dress from occasional dress as well as differentiating dress of the political class from those of the ordinary people. As Elisha P. Renne argued in respect of the Attah of Igala and *serikin-turawa*, these political leaders were described as ‘*arrayed in an ample tobe, fantastically brocaded with gold, beneath which was another of red velvet; and judging from his size, many other of various hues might have been his under-garments*’. And the principal courtiers in Attah’s palace were, for the most part, ‘*neatly dressed in white tobés and small caps, though some had them blue or checked, with a sort of embroidery round the opening for the neck*’. In addition, the *seriki* was described as ‘*showily and picturesquely dressed*’ being dressed “*in a green and white striped tobe, wider trowsers of speckled pattern color, like the plumage of the Guinea-fowl, with an embroidery of green silk in front of the legs. Over this, he wore a gaudy red bernus, while round his red cap a white turban was wound crosswise in a very neat and careful manner.*”⁴⁰⁰

When the above is contrasted with the native/colonial administrative officer’s uniform or the military uniform of the post-independence period, the picture the Yorùbá are presenting regarding the symbolism of dress and political power became clearer. Captain J.D. Falconer of the British colonial force, comparing the indigenous political class’ dress and power with those of the colonial and military class of the colonialists (a description that also applies to the military class of the post-colonial period), noted that the pre-colonial rulers’ “‘*medieval romance*’ and ‘*barbaric splendour*’ differs markedly from ‘*the incongruous khaki-clad Briton*’ who was, as noted, ‘*neither “the old or new regime” (i.e., neither traditional nor modern)*’.”⁴⁰¹

Among the Yorùbá, joining the army was perceived as worse than being a city dweller who has lost touch with Yorùbá culture, especially who has become Westernized or wrongly-civilized (*oju ala ju*), as against country bumpkins. Yorùbá people believed and were wont to say that “*omo buruku la ran lo s’ogun*”

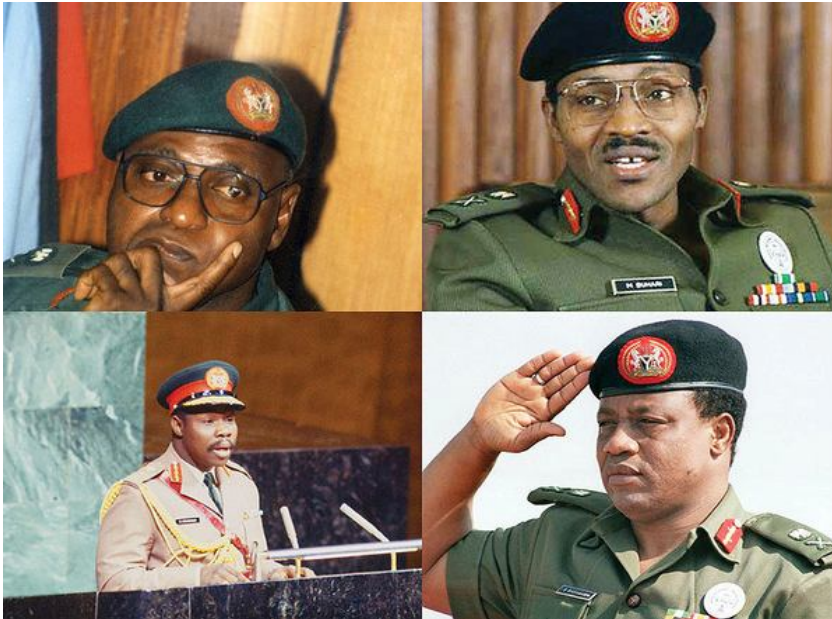
⁴⁰⁰Elisha P. Renne, ‘From Khaki to Agbada’, *ibid*, 126.

⁴⁰¹*Ibid*, 129.

or “*bi omo ba le laleju, e ran lo s’ogun*” – the most wayward child are usually sent to the army.

It must be emphasized that the dress of the political rulers in pre-colonial Nigeria were, as can be inferred from the previous analysis, either imported or locally-woven. Not only were the dress expensive and elaborately embroidered, they were also made from materials which distinguished them from the commoners’ dress.

As noted in Chapter One, details such as when the photographs below were taken, where they were taken, who took them and why, which could help in the task of historical reconstruction are lacking. However, this criticism does not remove the fact that these photos illustrate the use of *Khaki* uniform in Nigerian politics.



A cross-section of Nigeria Military Leaders in their Khaki Uniforms

(Sources: <http://www.onlinenigeria.com/Leaders.asp>).

Apart from the above, the practice of giving out gifts such as items of dress by the rulers to their subjects at occasions was commonplace. It was one way of ensuring and sustaining solidarity, patronage, and rewards. The type and quality of gifts in

this regard relates primarily to the socio-economic and political importance of both the givers and the receivers.

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With the advent of colonialism, a situation that can be effectively described as the first transition from *Agbada* to *Khaki*; British Imperialism, using small locally-recruited military units, such as the Royal Niger Company Constabulary, along with the British and West Indian troops, clad in their "*Zouave jacket over a shirt and trousers (or shorts) and a red fez cap with a blue silk tassel*",⁴⁰², subdued the different ethnic nationalities in what is known as Nigeria.

As noted earlier, the full dress and working uniforms of the West African Frontier Force, which, as described above by Renne, during the course of colonial rule, changed to British military *Khaki*, which were used during the Second World War, during the course of colonial rule. From *Zouave*, to a smaller uniform in 1914; the uniform was further changed to include '*puttees*' but not shoes in 1933; sandals were introduced in 1937 and the men were not issued shoes until the World War II. Evidence from different parts of Nigerian showed that the uniform had tremendous impact on Nigerians. Colonial administration realized this impact and took advantage of it by ensuring that not only soldiers (African and British) wore uniforms but also civil servants. British officers were, by their uniforms, distinct from the Nigerian Regiment. Ranks were also distinguished by types and placements of badges on the different uniforms. All these, as explained in the previous chapters, conveyed the different ranks.

⁴⁰²Ibid, 130.

With independence in 1960, the Royal Nigeria Military Forces changed its name to Royal Nigerian Army and later, in 1963, to Nigerian Army. With the change to Nigerian Army, the old brown *Khaki* uniform also gave way to a green '*khaki uniforms, consisting of long-sleeved shirts, trousers, boots, a peaked cap, and a new emblem*'. The old uniform was regarded as associated with '*the colonial army of occupation*' with its '*political license and lawlessness*'.⁴⁰³

The new, civilian leadership therefore adopted the civilian dress often the voluminous white *Agbada*. The alternation of *Khaki* and *Agbada*, following incessant military take-overs since independence in 1960, orchestrated the symbolism and the different variants of this symbolism over the years. For instance, '*a shirt, machine-embroidered in green, worn with a white robe and a tall embroidered cap*' came to be known as 'Shagari-style', which not only conformed with Alhaji Shehu Shagari's style of dressing while in office but also the corruption and fraud that characterized his less than five years civil rule. In the same vein, the wearing of dark goggles, over a tailored kaftan made of guinea brocade, with modest machine-made embroidery, a style of dress that was associated with General Sanni Abacha's attempt to perpetuate himself in office, is daubed as *tazarce*, which, in Hausa, literally means 'continue' or 'carry-on'.⁴⁰⁴

From the above, dress not only differentiates the ruled from the rulers, just as *Khaki* and other military insignia and epaulets denoting ranks and status, but also differentiate one officer from the other. In the same vein, *Khaki* also denotes government by compulsion, fiat, and decrees, while *Agbada* denotes government by popular consent, dialogue, and deliberation. Just as *Khaki* denotes ranks and status, especially in the uniformed services, *Agbada* on the other hands communicates political authority and government. Invariably, power and government is sustained in Yorùbá worldviews, first among British and Nigerian personnel, and later between the military and civilians by a hierarchy of uniforms. The above points underscore the importance of political dress, *Khaki* and *Agbada*, in constituting and maintaining political

⁴⁰³Ibid, 136.

⁴⁰⁴Ibid, 136.

regimes and as symbol of popular skepticism on the claims of national political leaders in Yorubaland vis-à-vis Nigeria.

5.3. 2. Social Dress in Contemporary Yorubaland

Social life in Yorubaland can be divided broadly into two: life transitions and religious ceremonies. Life transition describes socio-cultural changes such as birth and naming ceremonies, birthday celebrations, wedding ceremonies, death and rite of passage ceremonies. Common to all these is change from one state to another. Religious ceremonies, as used here, include all celebrations that are directly or indirectly tied to the worship of a particular deity. For the Yorùbá, as noted earlier, religion is bound-up with all aspects of life, so therefore, secular events usually have their religious dimensions.

In this sub-section, attention will be paid only to the use of dress for social – life transitions – purposes while discussions on religious-related dress-uses are taken up in the next sub-section on religious dress-use in Yorubaland. This sub-section depends on interviews, personal and participant observations as well as ethnographic data.

Depending on factors such as the social status, economic power, cultural relevance, and societal dictates; life transitions are occasions for one form of ceremony or another among the Yorùbá. Therefore, all occasions afford the Yorùbá opportunities to don one dress or the other. For analytical purposes, ceremonies can be classified based on whether they are driven by joy or sadness, although the Yorùbá classified some ceremonies as straddling between sadness and joy. Marriage, christening, birthday, house-warming, among many others are essentially driven by joy; hence, dress-use for such occasions must not only reflect the underlying joy in terms of volume but also colours. Phenomena such as burial, wake-keeping, inheritance-sharing, warfare, etc. are, undoubtedly, driven by sadness and losses; they therefore must be reflected in the dress of the concerned parties.

Although the volume of cloths used are, for the most part, tied to status; it also has a bearing on the circumstances of whether the ceremony is driven by sadness or joy. Depending on age and status, adult males and females must wear the full complement of dress for any occasion whether driven by joy or sadness. While the

kings and chiefs could afford to wear whatever they like in private and outside the public glare; they must not only wear full complement of Yorùbá dress in their public engagements but also wear such dresses with matching accoutrements and insignia of their respective offices.

A full complement of dress for adult males, nobles, chiefs and kings include *Agbada*, *Buba*, *Sokoto*, *Ileke*, *Bata*, *Fila*, and *Opa* (walking stick). Priests, priestesses, chiefs and kings have different insignia of office, which must be worn to complement the above dress. For adult females, married women, priestesses and newly married young women, a full complement of Yorùbá contemporary dress include *Iro*, *Buba*, *Gele*, *Ipele*, *Iborun*, *Buba*, *Apamo'wo*, *Ileke*, *Egba-Owo*, *Egba-Ese*, *Egba-Orun*, and *Yeri-Eti*.

Although there are no hard and fast rules guiding colour selections, bright colours, for the most part, are used in joy-driven occasions while dull colours are used for sadness-driven occasions. It must however be noted that for reason of economy, dress used for a particular occasion could be used for another one. The use of dull-colours is often limited to the most affected people in any sadness-driven occasion.

Depending on status and wealth, most occasions in Yorubaland involve the use of between one or three or more cloths. Using a traditional Yorùbá marriage ceremony as an example, couples are expected to have as many as three different cloths for the wedding ceremony. The first being exclusive to the couples, and the second, called *Aso Ebi*, is limited to the immediate family members of the couples; and the third, *Aso Egbe Jo'Da*, is used by the generality of well-wishers: friends, co-workers, religious groups, etc. The couples' wealth and social status would play fundamental roles in the choice of the first type of cloth.⁴⁰⁵ For the most part, in any ceremony, this is the most costly cloth and aims primarily to showcase the couples' status, (real, aspired, or imagined) wealth, and family connections.

For most people, cloths like guinea brocade, lace, locally woven *Aso-Oke* (*Ofi*, *Sanyan*, *Alari*, *Etu*, etc.) are used. Emphasis is usually placed on quality, and as such its use in a marriage ceremony is limited to the couples alone. In some cases, children

⁴⁰⁵Interview with Raof Olutokun Adebayo, Oyo, Nigeria, 13 January 2011.

of the affluent, royals and politicians could also use these high quality cloths alongside their parents.

As noted in Chapter One, details such as when the photographs below were taken, where they were taken, who took them and why, which could help in the task of historical reconstruction are lacking. This criticism however does not remove the fact that they illustrate contemporary Yorùbá social dress.







A cross section of social dress in contemporary Yorubaland
(Sources: Personal collections)

The second type, depending on family wealth and status, could be as costly as the first, but consideration is usually given to the less privileged members of the family before making the choice of what *Aso Ebi* to choose for any occasion. While it is not

compulsory for all members of the family to buy and use this cloth, it is regarded as lack of unity in a family when all members of the family do not wear the selected *Aso Ebi*. As earlier noted, family wealth and status play important roles in deciding what choice of cloth to use, so guinea brocade, lace, or *Ankara* could be used.

The choice of *Aso Egbe Jo'Da*, like the previous two, is also predicated upon status and wealth. The wealthy and noble may choose as many type and quality of cloth as they like as *Aso Egbe Jo'Da* for a single ceremony. In most cases, different social clubs, societies, religious organizations, etc. that the couples belong may decide to choose different cloths as against a general *Aso Egbe Jo'Da*. An alternative to the above is for the couple to choose a general *Aso Egbe Jo'Da*, which friends and other well-wishers would wear at the ceremony.

The use of *Aso Egbe Jo 'Da* is not limited to family-related ceremonies, as schools, religious institutions as well as political parties also use it. For example, *West African Pilot*, one of Nigeria's foremost newspapers of the colonial period, noted a particular use of *Aso Egbe Jo 'Da* during the 1952 elections in colonial Nigeria where:

Market women supporters of the Action Group were furious on Thursday night, and several of them yesterday refused to cook for their Action Group husbands.

Why?

As one put (sic) it to a representative of the West African Pilot yesterday, the women had been erroneously led to believe that the Action Group would win and had donned...their best attire to dance to the tunes of Sakara, Sekere, and Aro and Gbedu music only to be disappointed in the end.⁴⁰⁶

As noted in Chapter One, details such as when the photographs below were taken, where they were taken, who took them and why, which could help in the task of historical reconstruction are lacking. This criticism however does not remove the fact that they illustrate *Aso Ebi* in contemporary Yorubaland.

⁴⁰⁶ 'Action Group Hired Drummers & Women Returned Dismayed – Election Result Shatters Plans', *West African Pilot*, (Lagos, November 28, 1952), 1.







A cross section of couples wearing Aso Ebi
(Sources: Personal collections)

The above analysis is not limited to marriage ceremony or any other joy-driven ceremony alone, in any sadness-driven ceremony; the same conditions apply, except where the departed is a young man or woman. Where the departed is a young person, no elaborate ceremony is involved after the interment. But where the departed is aged and is regarded as a person of great accomplishments, the family usually considered such burial ceremony as *Oku-Eko*, a grief driven but intermingling of sadness and joy: sadness in the death of a loved one, and joy in the glorious exit or a celebration of life of a person of means and great accomplishment.⁴⁰⁷

Whether driven by sadness, joy or the intermingling of sadness and joy; any occasion that warranted a ceremony of whatever sort is usually fete with elaborate dressing not so much to demonstrate sadness or joy, but to establish or reinforce a particular identity. Identity in this context could be understood in both its mundane meaning and its specialized meaning. While the first cloth demonstrates the riches and status of the celebrants, it

⁴⁰⁷ Interview with AmosunOgunnaike, Oyo State, Nigeria, 13 January 2011.

also needs no telling who the celebrants in any Yorùbá ceremony are, as they are usually distinguished by the richness and uniqueness of their dress. *Aso Ebi*, the second dress, aims to identify the family (ies) of the celebrant(s) and also to show other values such as the extent of unity and cohesion in the family as well as family wealth. The third dress, *Aso Egbe Jo'Da*, unlike the second dress, aims mainly to identify the friends and well-wishers of the celebrant(s). It has little or nothing to do with their respective individual's wealth or status.

As noted in Chapter One, details such as when the photographs below were taken, where they were taken, who took them and why, which could help in the task of historical reconstruction are lacking. This criticism however does not remove the fact that they illustrate *Aso Egbe 'Joda* in contemporary Yorubaland.



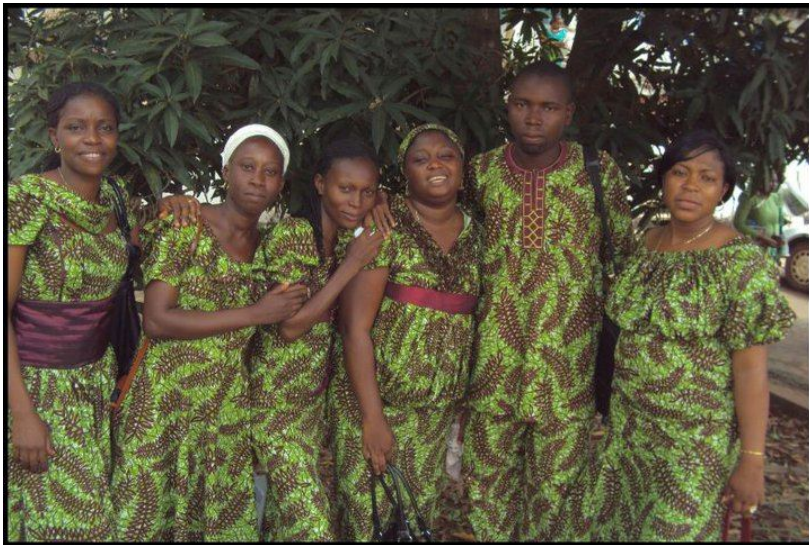
















A cross section of people in Aso Egbe 'Joda
(Sources: Personal collections)

In addition to reinforcing the identity of well-wishers, *Aso Egbe Jo'Da*, in contemporary Yorubaland, has assumed another importance, as celebrants used such cloths to raise funds for their ceremonies. The general practice all over Yorubaland is for the celebrants to select a number of cloths as *Aso Egbe Jo'Da* and since he or she is to supply his friends and well-wishers with these cloths, the practice is to add extra costs to advantage the celebrant. In some communities in Yorubaland, most especially among the Ijebus, Egbas, and Ibadans; it is commonplace to deny friends and well-wishers any form of entertainment at ceremonies because of their failure to buy and wear the *Aso Egbe Jo'Da*. In these areas of Yorubaland, '*Kora Ankara, ko je Semo*' (any well-wisher or friend who failed to buy the celebrant's *Aso Egbe Jo'Da* (*Ankara*) would not be entertained with Semolina/Semovita), is a common saying.⁴⁰⁸

The saying above not only underscores the economic components of *Aso Egbe Jo'Da* phenomena among the Yorùbá, but also shows the transformation that the practice has witnessed

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Oluwakemi Onisile, Ibadan, Nigeria, 23 January 2011.

due to economic recession of the 1980s and how the practice has been turned around to serve as a veritable means of getting friends and well-wishers to contribute their quotas, if not towards the celebration, but to their own entertainments. It must be noted, however, that many friends and well-wishers decried the practice, claiming, among other things, that most celebrants, especially females, placed so much emphasis and importance on the gains accruable to them through the use of *Aso Egbe Jo'Da* that the quality of most cloths are not commensurate with the amount paid. For some cross-section of friends and well-wishers, they consider it incumbent on them not only to attend the celebration, but also to ensure that they treated themselves to the best of entertainment the celebrants could offer. In this way, it is believed, they would have covered the cost of the *Aso Egbe Jo'Da*.

Mrs. Oluwakemi Onisile, an elementary school teacher at Eleyele, Ibadan, however noted that the *Aso Egbe Jo'Da* practice helps celebrants to defray costs of entertainment and sundry expenses and that the essence is not to ensure that friends and well-wishers added another quality dress to their wardrobes or treated to any lavish entertainment, but to serve as an avenue for friends and well-wishers to demonstrate their love and friendship with the celebrants. While some out rightly condemn the practice, many regarded it as part and parcel of what gives ceremonies colour and respect in Yorubaland.⁴⁰⁹

In most ceremonies, except for the celebrant(s) who is expected to don a full complement of Yorùbá dress, others could as well dress partially. Partial dress, for the males, may mean the wearing of *Buba* and *Sokoto*; while for the females, it could mean the wearing of *Iro* and *Buba*. For the most part, the practice of wearing partial Yorùbá dress by both male and female followed economic recession, discussed above, and change in fashion. For instance, many young males and females have imbibed the culture of using indigenous Yorùbá cloths to sew English shirts, trousers, and even suits. It would amount to being uncultured to combine this hybrid dress with either a *Fila* (for the males) and *Gele* or *Iborun* (for the females).

⁴⁰⁹Interview with Oluwakemi Onisile, Ibadan, Nigeria, 23 January 2011.

From the 1980s, there has been prevalence of cross-sex dressing in Yorubaland. Cross-sex dressing describes the adoption of dress culture culturally believed to be for a particular sex by the opposite sex. In the case of cross-sex dressing in Yorubaland, most, if not all, male dress is today being worn by females. The practice, which was initially an offshoot of Islamic influence on Hausa dress, has become widespread in Yorubaland vis-à-vis Nigeria so much so that variants of different male Yorùbá dress can now be found in the wardrobe of most females in Yorubaland. Just as males have *Agbada*, *Buba*, *Sokoto* and *Fila*; so also contemporary Yorùbá females.

A common trend in most parts of Yorubaland is the general tendency for most people to wear Western dress between Mondays and Thursdays while wearing Yorùbá indigenous dress on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. In order to ascertain the prevalence of this trend in different parts of Yorubaland, state secretariats of Osun, Oyo, Lagos, Ondo, and Kwara states were visited. In addition, local government secretariats of four local councils in Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta, Akure, Ilorin, Oyo and Oshogbo were also visited. In these states, various banks and schools were also visited. The primary purpose for these visits was to observe the dress mode of staff in these institutions. It must be emphasized that the findings from these visits are limited exclusively to Yorùbá people in the formal sector and not necessarily reflective of the general practice among the populace.

It was observed that more than two-third of workers in these various but different institutions wear Western dress, popularly called 'formal dress' or 'office dress' between Monday and Wednesdays. The wearing of Yorùbá indigenous dress actually began from Thursdays and peaked on Fridays, with more than two third of workers wearing Yorùbá indigenous dress or what majority called 'native dress'. Although the data for this analysis relates mainly to the formal sector staff in Yorubaland, it must be noted that the practice is nonetheless popular among informal sector operators.

Despite the widespread nature of the practice, there is however an exemption: politicians in the state and local government secretariats, more often than not, wear Yorùbá indigenous dress more for the fact that the nations is under a

civilian governance; hence, the symbolism of using native dress to represent civil rule and Western dress for military rule remains commonplace.

The wearing of Yorùbá indigenous dress on Fridays and Sundays, days set aside for religious worships by both the Muslims and Christians, can be said to have emanated from the nationalists' agitations for cultural renaissance in dress and language that characterized the second period considered above. Except for marriage ceremonies conducted at the local government registry on Thursdays, marriage and other ceremonies are slated for Saturdays all over Nigeria. Invariably, it is common these days to see a rise in the number of Yorùbá people wearing indigenous dress on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

5.2.3. Religious Dress in Contemporary Yorubaland

Religious dress in contemporary Yorubaland has been driven by two overarching principles. On the one hand is the general perception that religion is a limited set of personal beliefs about God and worship, which can be isolated from a person's general culture and can be changed without necessarily upsetting the person's culture or worldview. On the other hand is the other belief that religion is an affair of a community that is so intimately bound up with the community's way of life that a change in religion inexorably leads to a change of culture and the development of new identity, conscience, etc. Christianity in Yorubaland is underlined by the former, while Yorùbá traditional religion and Islam are underlined by the latter. These two views played significant roles in Yorùbá dress culture in general. This subsection focuses primarily on religious dress and dress-use for religious ceremonies. While religious dress relates to dress as a part of the ethos of a particular religion, dress-use for religious ceremonies, on the other hand, relates to the use of dress by religious adherents in religious celebrations. While the first is inexorably tied or related to the worship of a particular God or deity, the second straddles both religious and secular use of dress.

For analytical reasons, the discussion shall focus on indigenous Yorùbá religion, Islam and Christianity. Given the large number of deities, goddesses, and gods being worshipped in Yorubaland, the discussion on Yorùbá religion shall focus on dress

generally used in the worship of deities, goddesses, and gods in general rather than treating the individual deities, goddesses, and gods, in specifics. It must be emphasized that sects of different kinds abound in both Islam and Christianity, however, for space and coherence reasons, the discussions on the two religions shall be streamlined to cater for dress-use in both religions in general as against how the different sects have used dress for religious purposes. Notwithstanding the above, specific examples shall be treated where such need arises.

Specifically, dress, whether defined broadly to include variety of things or narrowly as cloths, are used in a range of spiritual settings in Yorùbá Traditional Religions (YTR). As Elisha Renne had noted, cloths, among the YTR worshippers have been used in '*demarcating sacred space, in marking a spiritual presence, in representing specific religious identities, and indicating particular forms of dedication to God or other deities*'.⁴¹⁰ This, as other studies have shown, could include dress use as insignia by indigenous secret cults, as a critical part of masquerade's costumes, ensigns on trees, shrines, etc. to show what deity a particular tree or shrine is dedicated to.⁴¹¹ Whatever the circumstances of its use, dress formed a critical part of religious experience of the Yorùbá people.

Different deities have different dress associated with them. While the use of white cloth is common to almost all deities in Yorubaland, each of the deities also has specific dress that is regarded as sacred to them. Red cloth or any red item is associated with *Sango*, for instance. The use of white cloth, including water, is synonymous with *Ifa*, *Obatala*, *Orisa* and *Imole* religious worships.

Besides associating different cloths and colours of cloths with particular deities; in most part of Yorubaland, the use of white, red, and black cloths to demarcate shrines, spiritual centers,

⁴¹⁰Elisha P. Renne, "“Let your garments always be white...”Expression of Past and Present in Yorùbá Religious Textiles', in Toyin Falola (ed.), *Christianity and Social Change in Africa: Essays in Honour of J.D.Y. Peel*, (Durham, 2005), 140.

⁴¹¹Elisha P. Renne and Babatunde Agbaje-Williams (eds.), *Yorùbá Religious Textiles: Essays in Honour of Cornelius Oyeleke Adepegba*, (Ibadan, 2005). See in particular chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

and personages is prevalent. In Osogbo, Ondo, Ikole-Ekiti, Ile-Ife, among many other places across Yorubaland, it is commonplace to find trees, shrines, and other totems of different deities clothed with white or red cloths or camwood. Renne and Adepegba noted the ritual wrapping of white cloths ‘around a large trio of *Ose trees next to Elekole’s palace*’ at Ikole-Ekiti. Emmanuel Olakunle Filani and Babasehinde Ademuleya noted the religious and royal use of white cloths in shrines and palaces in Lagos, a practice that many identified so much with the Awori, Ilaje, and Ijebu in Ikorodu. Babatunde-Agabje Williams also noted the ritual clothing of trees, as a precursor to Yorùbá religious thoughts.⁴¹² All these illustrate the use of cloths in religious worship.

Apart from the use of cloths, irrespective of colour, mentioned above, cloths are of especial significance in rituals and other forms of worships in YTR. Votaries, priests and priestesses of deities, as part of their symbols of office, have particular dress, which speak of their position, status, and devotion to these deities. Another dimension recognized by Aderonke Adesanya is the use of cloth as insignia of office, especially among indigenous secret societies.⁴¹³ In this particular instance, dress does not only communicate membership of a particular society, but also ranks within the society. The *Osugbo’s Itagbe* not only marks members of this cult from other cults, for instance the *Ogboni*, in Yorubaland, but insignias or motifs inscribed on the various *Itagbe* such as crocodile, lizard, toad, wall gecko, chameleon, crab and fish marked the various members’ ranks and importance as members of the *Osugbo* cult.⁴¹⁴

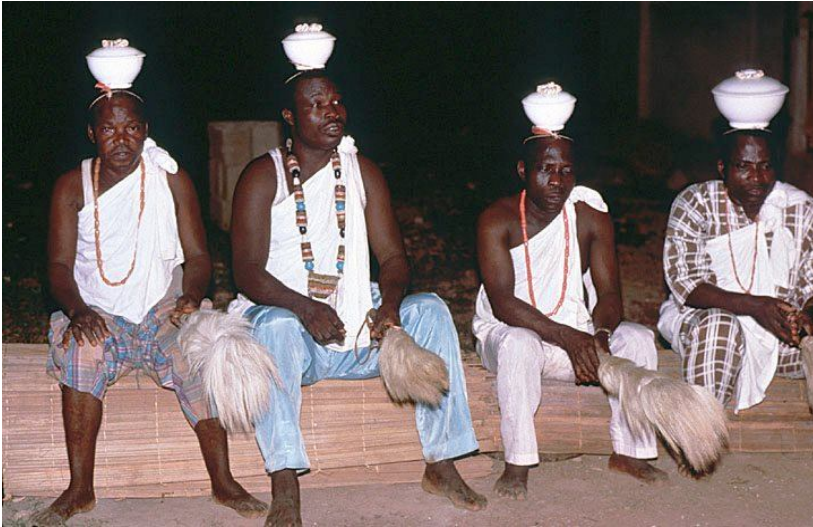
Although the two photographs below were taken at different locations and for different purposes, it must however be noted that details such as when they were taken, where they were

⁴¹²Elisha P. Renne and Babatunde Agbaje-Williams (eds.), *Yorùbá Religious Textiles: Essays in Honour of Cornelius Oyeleke Adepegba*, (Ibadan, 2005). See in particular chapters 7, and 8. See also, Elisha P. Renne, “‘Let your garments’, 143.

⁴¹³Aderonke Adesola Adesanya, ‘A Semiotic of Clothing Insignia of Indigenous Secret Societies among the Ijebu Yorùbá’, in Elisha P. Renne and Babatunde Agbaje-Williams (eds.), *Yorùbá Religious Textiles: Essays in Honour of Cornelius Oyeleke Adepegba*, (Ibadan, 2005), 23-48.

⁴¹⁴Ibid, 36.

taken, who took them and why, which could help in the task of historical reconstruction are lacking. This criticism however does not remove the fact that they illustrate religious use of dress in contemporary Yorubaland.



Itefa Ceremony, Ile-Ife, 1975

(Sources: Hezekiah Akinsanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife)

In spite of its modern and urban nature, Lagos is replete with different deities, to whom annual worship, even if for their touristic values, is being held. Notable among these deities are *Adamuorisa (Eyo)*, *Egungun*, *Igunnuko*, *Olokun*, *OsiGelede*, and *Osun Iya-Alaro*. Annual worship and celebration, actively supported by the government, is held annually for *Adamuorisa (Eyo)*, like the *Osun Osogbo*. It is not only commonplace to find people, not only the devotees and worshippers, to wear white dress of varying designs, but also common people and invited dignitaries to wear white dress in honour of the annual worship and its attendant festivals, which last for one week. It must be noted that the king and chiefs of Lagos derived their indigenous official dress and insignia of office from this deity; hence, the high chiefs are called the White Cap Chiefs.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁵Interview with Lasisi Apalara, Lagos, 30 January 2011.



Eyo Festival, 1970

(Sources: Lagos State Ministry of Information)

From Samuel Johnson, we gathered that *Olodumare*, *Orisha Nla*, and *Ifa* are also clad in white cloths in the celestial plain. In the earthly plain, it must be emphasized that votaries of these two deities not only mark their various religious items in white but also wear white cloths. *Olodumare* is synonymous with whiteness and is often represented with white cloth, water, or anything that is white in colour.⁴¹⁶

Ogun, the Yorùbá god of iron, is symbolized by red cloth almost in the same way as *Sango*, the god of thunder. Black colour and iron are also used to represent or mark the spiritual essence and presence of *Ogun*. Hence, a cursory visit to Ondo, Igboho, and Oyo during the annual *Ogun* worship would not only show the use of these two cloths and colour, but would also demonstrate how widespread the practice of using symbols, in addition to cloths, to mark spiritual essence and presence of the deities.

Mention must be made of *Orisagamu Ewa*, the national god of Sagamu, one of the Ijebu towns, where hundreds of hand-woven baby tie (*Oja*) of different colours could be found in the shrine.

⁴¹⁶Elisha P. Renne, “‘Let your garments’, 146.

These baby ties are placed at the shrine by women seeking to cure barrenness and hoping that should the deity answer their prayers, the resultant babies would be carried with the consecrated and fortified baby ties.⁴¹⁷

While the various dress used in the services of particular deities, gods, and goddesses are purpose-built, dress that are used in, for example, annual and periodic worships could also be used for secular things. It is a common practice for worshippers of different deities, gods, and goddesses to wear uniform-dress during annual celebrations. Such uniform-dress may have been sewn for commemorating a particular religious worship; they could however be used for other social engagements.⁴¹⁸

From the foregoing, it can be argued that dress, in indigenous Yorùbá religion, is used for protection, as medicine, and as a representation of spiritual connections. Instances abound among the Yorùbá where devotees and worshippers of the various deities, gods, and goddesses were asked to wear certain cloths or use certain religious items or icons for healing purposes. Spirit children, *Abiku*, were often given charmed iron bangles, which they either wore on the legs or wrists. As already noted, charmed iron bangles are used by the *Osun*, *Orisa Nla*, etc. The use of charmed iron bangles is for protection against evil spirits. More often than not, diviners have asked many barren women to offer white cloths or cloths of whatever colour to *Osun*, *Yemoja*, or any other gods, goddesses and deities to cure barrenness. Annually during the *Osun Osogbo* festival in *Osun State*, thousands of women are led to the *Osun* groove by the *Arugba* where supplications of all kinds are made to obtain *Osun's* favour.

Religion, as *Arinze* had noted, manifests in cults and worship.⁴¹⁹ The fascination with *Egungun* clearly illustrates the prevalence of religious cults in Yorubaland. Yorùbá traditional religion recognizes the power of the departed ancestors and these ancestors are worshipped as *Egungun*. As already noted, besides the various costumes, the inner cloth or underwear – *Jepe* - is synonymous with secrecy, occultist knowledge and the sacred. The

⁴¹⁷Interview with Awodiya Olatubosun, Sagamu, 12 January 2011.

⁴¹⁸Interview with Awodiya Olatubosun, Sagamu, 12 January 2011.

⁴¹⁹F.A. Arinze, *Sacrifice in Ibo Religion*, (Ibadan, 1970), 63.

Egungun costume consists of varied colours and types of cloths. These cloths and other attachments are regarded as embodiments of the gods.

During annual celebrations, some *Egungun* may come out in new costume, while others may come in their old, dreadful costumes. Whether new or old costume is used or not depends essentially on result of rituals determine whether the *Egungun* would require a new or old costume. Perhaps the *Egungun* remain the most decorated deities in Yorùbá cosmogony.

Although traditional worship is fast shrinking in Yorubaland, the use of cloths and beliefs in dress' spiritual association with the deities, gods and goddesses are nevertheless widespread and on-going. Cloths are use in shrines and on thrones to mark spiritual presence of the deities, gods, and goddesses. Votaries and worshippers also have official dress, which sometimes served for identification, but oftentimes as medicine, as protection against evil forces, and to signify purity of character as seen in the practice of differentiating evil from good as separating black from white. Dress forms a critical mass in Yorùbá traditional religion.



Raffia-costumed Egungun in Yorubaland, 1985
(Sources: Personal collections)



Damask-costumed Egungun in Yorubaland, 1985
(Sources: Personal collections)



Ankara-costumed Egungun in Yorubaland, 1985
(Sources: Personal collections)

As noted in the section on Islamic influence on Yorùbá dress, most loose Yorùbá dress of today derived from Islamic impact on Yorùbá dress culture. Perhaps one of the most enduring the impact of Islam on contemporary Yorùbá dress is the use of

caps, *Fila*. While *Abeti-Aja*, one of the most popular Yorùbá cap, was of Hausa-Fulani origin, other caps have featured in Yorùbá dress culture that also derived their provenance from outside Yorubaland. Today, a typical Yorùbá Muslim would not wear traditional Yorùbá dress without a cap. Some of the devoted Yorùbá Muslims would rather wear Western dress, even a suit, with a matching Arab-styled skull cap, than wear anything that would reveal any part of their body. For the male, especially those that have performed the holy pilgrimage to Mecca, as demanded of Muslims by the Koran; the wearing of long robe of white and black colour with fringes of gold is commonplace. Such Yorùbá Muslim is not deemed to have completely dressed unless with a matching “*Makawiya*” (Mecca-wear) on his head.⁴²⁰ As the name itself suggests, *Makawiya*, a four-sided gated cap, must have been imported into Yorubaland by Yorùbá Muslims who must have visited Mecca, the Holy land. Generally, the dress ensemble includes a long, flowing white gown, underneath which men also wear a long trouser or a three-quarter, an embroidered black tunic, loosely worn over the flowing white gown, a turban, or a *Makawiya* or a skull cap.

Islam frowns at the wearing of body-revealing cloths and jewelry, especially for the females, irrespective of age and status. The use of ankle-long trousers is regarded as the height of filthiness; as such trousers stand as capable of transmitting disease from the ground to the body. Body-revealing dress is regarded as unholy; as body-revealing cloths could lead others to sinning. Hence, it is customary for Yorùbá Muslims in, for instance, Ilorin, Iwo, Ijebu-Ode, Ibadan, Oyo and other places to wear trousers that do not go beyond the ankle and to wear leggings, stockings, or socks in addition to a goatee as part of males’ atypical dress. For the females, the use of ankle-long flowing gowns, usually black gowns, are commonplace. When there is a need to wear Yorùbá dress, a Yorùbá Muslim, most especially married female, is usually seen in her *Iro* and *Buba*, with a matching head-tie, a shawl and, if a devoted or what is popularly called a ‘practicing’ Muslim, a *hijab*.⁴²¹

⁴²⁰Interview with Raof Olutokun Adebayo, Oyo, Nigeria, 13 January 2011.

⁴²¹Interview with Raof Olutokun Adebayo, Oyo, Nigeria, 13 January 2011.

Consequently, atypical Yorùbá Muslim's Yorùbá dress is not only voluminous such that the entire human body is covered, but also devoid of jewelry of all kinds, unlike the secular or Christian woman who can afford the use of *Egba-Owo*, *Egba-Orun* or *Egba-Ese*. It must be asserted that the volume of atypical Muslim Yorùbá dress, as described above, made it difficult to see if the wearer uses jewelry or not. A young Muslim girl, at the threshold of marriage, must not only dress to reflect the traditions and piety of Islam, but also individual's family dignity, which is considered as integral to individual and corporate ethnic identity.



A young Muslim Girl
(Sources: Personal collections)

Other than for devoted Muslims, the influence of Islam on contemporary Yorùbá dress is not different from what had already been stated in the previous sub-sections. It must however be stated that Yorùbá Muslims, unless because of office requirements, are wont to wear indigenous dress than Western dress in both the private and public spheres.

The influence of Christianity on Yorùbá dress is by far the most profound. In the preceding periods, civilization was regarded as being a Christian and the wearing of Western dress. Notwithstanding the post-1880 agitation mounted by the various political and nationalistic groups cross Yorubaland vis-à-vis what later became known as Nigeria, the use of Western dress or the combination of Western and Yorùbá indigenous dress is common

to Yorùbá Christians of today. Although beggars and alms-seekers are more likely to address anybody in Western dress as a Christian, Yorùbá indigenous dress continues to be used by Christians as much as it is used by Muslims.

Notwithstanding denominational differences; the clergymen, nuns, monks, and laities of the different churches in Yorubaland and what later became known as Nigeria have their respective (official and non-official) uniforms, which are differentiated by different insignias, epaulets and signs. Besides serving as identity tags differentiating between the different officials and churches or denomination, these uniforms are not only regarded as critical to worshipping and serving God, but also as forms or levels of identities.

For instance, among the Yorùbá Christian churches, white materials, which could range from water to cloth, are used in a number of spiritual settings: as uniforms worn by both the clergy, the laity and congregation – vide Celestial Church of Christ, Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Church of the Lord, Aladura, etc.; as marker of sacred spaces – altars, church drapes, sacred spaces, etc.; as representation of spiritual or religious identities; and as ‘sacrifices’ to God. These various uses derive from two sources: on the one hand is the religious injunction in Ecclesiastes 9 verse 8, which admonishes Christians to always let their garments be white, and on the other hand are claims of spiritual revelations through dreams and visions by the different church leaders.⁴²²

For the most parts, these garments and cloths, whether tailored or untailored, convey messages that relate qualities and colour of the textiles to specific moral states. Virtues such as purity, goodness, light as against darkness, etc. are all implied or subsumed in the use of white garments by churches. It must be noted that, even in churches that use white garments, white is not the only colour in use. Other colours are purple, blue, black, red,

⁴²²See for instance W.F. Sosan, one of the founders of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, claimed to have received visions on the use of white garment in the Church. Her special collection is available at the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Similar claims were made by founders of Celestial Church of Christ, Church of the Lord, Aladura, etc.

etc. Purple, for instance, is used by the Bishop in the Anglican Church, black by others in the laity; while white or blue garments (cassocks) are used by many of the churches as uniforms for their priests, monks, nuns, priests, fathers, sisters, etc.

Moses Orimolade, after a week-long fasting and praying session, claimed to have received directives from God through a vision to sew and wear white garments in much the same way as the attire worn by angels described as being “in a white robe and feather”.⁴²³ Unlike traditional religious worshippers who used untailored and stitch-less wrappers, the Christians use tailored garments and Western dress.

The use of white garments among Christians was orchestrated in Yorubaland by the Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Lagos in 1926. Major A.B. Lawrence was accredited with this development. He was noted to have received a vision from God where “*the pattern of the dress was revealed to him*”. As Omoyajowo had noted, these were cassocks with different but specially designed adornments to signify ranks and statuses within the congregation. While it was claimed that the white garment was revealed through vision, nothing is known about the provenance of the different but specially designed adornments signifying statuses and ranks.

In the book of Revelation 7:9, 13-14, it was written:

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on the earth or sea or against any tree... After this I looked and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?” “I said to him, “Sir, you know. “And he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

⁴²³ Omoyajowo J.A., *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church*, (New York, 1982), 45.

Cherubim and Seraphim and many other white garment churches in Yorubaland have claimed that the use of white garments relates to those standing before Jesus Christ in the biblical passage above, whom Jesus had “*washed their robes and made them white*”. The specific description of the angels manning the ‘four corners of the earth’ as being four also relates to the four-sided caps of the prophets of white garment churches across Yorubaland vis-à-vis what later became known as Nigeria. The un-seamed sleeves, usually draping down over the hands of these prophets relates to the wings of the Cherubs. The beauty of the Cherubs is also replicated in the prophets’ garments by adding shinning materials or covered with sequins.

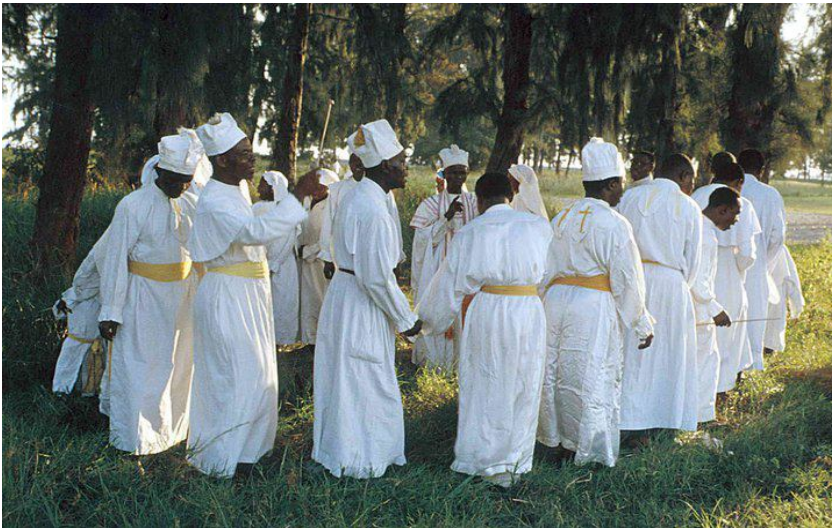
To show statuses, cadre, and hierarchy; different materials, including sashes, colour, and insignias, are added to these garments. In some churches, prayer-warrior group has specially designed oftentimes red sashes. More often than not, flaming swords, like that of Angel Michael, are woven into the sashes. In some cases, biblical passages are woven into either the caps or sashes. All these attachments made possible the identification of different church members by their groups, cadres, and statuses.

As distinct from other white garment churches in Yorubaland, the Celestial Church of Christ is a sect that is very finicky about its choice of colours. The colour white to them is of supreme importance, as it symbolizes the purity of God to which they jointly aspire. Although other shades of colours are used in worship by this sect, as markers of holy spaces and as insignia that differentiate one sub-group from others within the larger community of worshippers, the colours black and red are decidedly rejected and rebuffed. The colour blue is also important in the church as it marks out the prophets and prophetesses, and the colour is exclusively used by them. Their loin girdle is entirely of blue colour. No other sub-group is allowed to use it.⁴²⁴

Material distinctions also exist in some churches where white garments are not used, especially in Pentecostal churches. In most of these churches, the clergy and, for the most part, the

⁴²⁴ Interview with Mr. Adegoke Oluwasegun Sameul, Ibadan, Oyo State, 29 December 2011.

congregation make use of what Schneider described as “dress for success” business suits. While this may convey a different message when compared with the white garments of say the Cherubim and Seraphim churches, it must be noted that the use of dress to signify holiness and other existential values is also common with Pentecostal churches despite the pretension that these churches are different from the white garment churches. For instance, while the white garment churches communicate the church’s concern with spiritual and secular holiness in their dress, Pentecostal churches with their business suits and holy handkerchiefs, which are most times ‘anointed’, ‘blessed’, or infused with ‘holy oil’, are also concerned with prosperity and modern global connections.⁴²⁵



⁴²⁵Elisha P. Renne, “Let Your Garment”, 141.







**A cross section of Cherubim & Seraphim worshippers.
(Sources: Personal collections)**

(The caps and sashes denote ranks and statuses in the church)



**Miss Seyi Adegoke, a Celestial Church of Christ worshipper in
her white garment (Sources: Personal collections)**



A Cherubim & Seraphim worshipper with glittering objects fixed to her dress
(Sources: Personal collections)

In both the orthodox (Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, etc.), Pentecostal and white garment churches; choristers have distinct robes, which differs markedly from other cloths used by the congregation. While in orthodox churches, the use of long, flowing robe is commonplace; in Pentecostal churches, the use of business suits, shirt and trousers, skirt and blouse as well as vests are commonplace. Whether in orthodox, white garment or Pentecostal churches; the primary aim of using specific uniform is to differentiate the choir from other functionaries of the church. As a religious dress, choristers' robes are mainly for worship and differ markedly from individual's dress.

In contemporary Yorubaland, it is common to see groups and societies within churches using specially selected dress for important church occasions. For instance, the youth group may decide to use a vest with the crest of the association to celebrate

Easter or Harvest or a Youth Week. Similarly, choirs in most Pentecostal churches today are de-emphasizing the use of robes for either Western or hybrid dress. As Marshal and Fratani had argued, the predilection of one group or the other within a church to dress either in Western mode or Yorùbá indigenous dress mode depends on the individual church founders. Owing to the fact that most, if not all, Pentecostal churches in Yorubaland vis-à-vis Nigeria are founded and administered by individuals, it is more likely that the dress sense of such individuals would direct what forms of dress would be considered as appropriate in such churches. For example, Pastor Chris Oyakhilome, the founder of Christ Embassy Church and Believers' Love World Ministry, usually dress in Western dress, comprising almost entirely of a three-piece business suit. His pastors and congregations have not only turned the use of Western dress to a kind of a culture in the church but also the wearing of jerry-curly, even by males just like Pastor Chris. Similarly, the conservative nature of Christ Apostolic Church founder, Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola, can be seen in the mode of dress of pastors and members of the church worldwide today. They take pride in dressing simply, without jewelry, braiding of hairs by the females, etc.

It must be noted that while conservatively dressed churches are daily losing the youths to Pentecostal and business suit-pastored churches; more and more older people, driven by one problem or the other, are flocking daily to white garment churches, even if they also feature in Pentecostal churches periodic programmes.



Pastor E. A. Adeboye, (General Overseer, Redeemed Church)



Pastor Chris Okotie, (General Overseer, House of God Church)



Pastor W.F. Kumuyi
(General Overseer, Deeper Life Bible Church)



Bishop David Oyedepo (General Overseer, Winner's Chapel)



Pastor Chris Oyakhilome,
(General Overseer, Christ Embassy Church)



Pastor Tunde Bakare, (General Overseer, Latter Rain Assembly)

Sources: <http://www.latterrainassembly.org/> ;
<http://www.christembassy.org/site/home>;
<http://www.davidoyedepoministries.org/#>; <http://www.dclm.org/>;
<http://www.householdofgodchurch.com/rev.html>; <http://rccg.org/>

It must be emphasized that Pentecostal church leaders and pastors' obtuse fascination with European dress completely negates the contentions of their forebears who, as demonstrated in Chapter Six, fought with the earliest missionaries who tried to impose European dress on them. As the above photographs showed, most Pentecostal church leaders and pastors regaled in European dress and so also their congregations. In addition to this is the tendency by these church leaders and pastors to project Yorùbá dress in bad light, giving it negative connotations, which, with their use of European dress, serves to push Yorùbá dress to the background.

From the foregoing, it can be argued that although Christianity witnessed a robust display of nationalism during the second period, this nationalistic fervor could not however displace the use of Western dress, especially among the Yorùbá Christians in Nigeria. While the youths have found a judicious use of Western and hybrid dress modes in the Christian faith, the adults still regard and therefore use Yorùbá indigenous dress not just at important church programmes but also on daily basis for Sundays and mid-week church programmes. This accommodation between Western, hybrid, and Yorùbá dress constitute a layer of identity for the Yorùbá people, which is not replicated in Northern Nigeria where Islam is the predominant religion or in Eastern Nigeria, where Christianity is the predominant religion.

5.3. Conclusion: Omoluabi in Yorùbá Contemporary Dress Culture

From facial marks to clothes, body arts to other additions and/or supplements to the human body; every item of contemporary Yorùbá dress evinces the individual and group social requirement of being an *Omoluabi*. Despite social, political, and economic changes, which were first occasioned by Islam, and later by the

duo of Christianity and colonialism; contemporary Yorùbá sartorial tradition still reflects the existential values of being urbane, gentle, wise, intelligent, and being well brought up as well as being highly cultured. As far as Yorùbá people are concerned, indigenous and traditional Yorùbá dress speaks about being good, being morally upright and being affirmative of Yorùbá culture.

Diametrically opposed to the above view to Yorùbá sartorial tradition is also the view that converts should dress the way they want to be addressed. This view, made popular by contemporary suit-wearing, Pentecostal Christians, made all other sartorial traditions also capable of reflecting the value of being an *Omoluabi*. As a result, contemporary Christians, especially the youths, have come to regard Islamic and European sartorial traditions as also capable of evincing the internal value of being an *Omoluabi* in the same manner as Yorùbá sartorial tradition does.

As a result of this, contemporary Yorùbá sartorial tradition has become not just a blend of indigenous Yorùbá culture and an agglomeration of Islamic/Arabic, Asian and European cultures, but also a blend of Yorùbá, Islamic, and European values.

As seen in this and the previous chapters; most of what today could be described as indigenous Yorùbá dress has given way to different dress cultures, all of which have become traditional to Yorubaland. Whether for religious or secular use, Yorùbá dress not only covers human nakedness, but also plays existential roles in connoting, establishing and reinforcing individual and group multi-layered identities.

The various changes orchestrated by contacts with outsiders not only produced changes in fashion and materials used in dress tradition, but also allowed individuals and groups in Yorubaland to use dress to search for new meanings and languages through which they repudiate preceding generations while distinguishing theirs.⁴²⁶ The adaptation and incorporation of Arab and European dress cultures into the fabric of Yorùbá dress culture and the long usage of this multi-layered dress cultures by the Yorùbá not only allowed for intergenerational dialogue, but also

⁴²⁶Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800*, (trans. Miriam Kochan; New York, 1967), 236.

assured a revolution that changes indigenous dress to traditional dress in Yorubaland.

As the analysis in this chapter has shown, contacts with other peoples, the imposition and or adoption of their sartorial traditions, and globalization of labour, culture, etc. have altered Yorùbá sartorial culture tremendously. However, change from Yorùbá 'indigenous' dress and the evolution of 'traditional' Yorùbá dress can be described as attempts by indigenous Yorùbá sartorial culture to re-assert its cherished and underlying values in the face of a hegemonic culture, whose impact Yorùbá culture finds very strong. By blending its esteemed values, most especially those related to possessing a moral, cultural, social, and intellectual refinement, high sense of responsibility, social integrity, being lofty in speech and respectful to others, being good minded and truthful, having good taste in socio-political manners, speech, and dress, being brave and intelligent, etc. with what is considered valuable from other sartorial traditions; Yorùbá sartorial culture seeks to assert that dress, far from its biological uses, makes enduring statements about character, social, religious, and political identity either of individuals or groups.