

**Textiles, Texts and Symbols: Women Dyers and Symbols in the
Indigo Textile Dyeing Production Process in Osogbo, Nigeria**

by

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Statement by Candidate

I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree D.Phil. (Anthropology) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university. Where secondary material is used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with University requirements. I am aware of University policy and implications regarding plagiarism.

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Dedication

To those who think breaking the norm is unachievable; with faith, persistence and perseverance, nothing is impossible

To those who say taking risk is unworthy; remember, living is taking risk

To those who struggle to finish a project; there is always an end and you will get there

To those experiencing more dark days and nights; always rise up and shine, for your light has come

And to the Almighty God, for silencing every voice of discouragements and doubts as well as strengthening my heart. I give all the glory

Abstract

Despite the emergence of narrative and humanistic anthropological perspectives on thriving indigenous textile technologies, indigo dyed textile products are often read as homogenous products, devoid of Yoruba women-dyers' symbolic narratives. This ethnographic research on indigo textile dyeing in Osogbo examines the relationship between textile production and ritual by focusing on how indigenous peoples are stimulated to create what they make and the textile makers' unit of expression. A key argument throughout the thesis is that the dyeing act is a ritual performance by women dyers in Osogbo – a re-enacted symbolic performance of the formation and evolution of human sociality and the socialization of human beings. It is also a symbolic representation of motherhood (parenthood when it comes to the societal level) – a process of inscribing the *kadara* (destiny) of a child and the development of *iwa* (character) and *ewa* (beauty) to be an *omoluabi* (good and cultured child) in Yoruba ontology. The thesis also explores alkaline water production processes as part of the indigenous indigo textile dyeing processes and the use of *adire* textile for communication in Osogbo – the notions of colour and colour symbolism and the use of texts, proverbs and images on dyed textiles as communicative tools – specifically to show the transformatory nature of rituals in indigo textile dyeing.

Key Words: Ethnography, Symbol, Texts, Textiles, Women dyers, Indigo, Adire, Osogbo, Yoruba, Symbolic Anthropology, Humanistic Anthropology, Narrative

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Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Statement by Candidate	ii
Dedication	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	ix
List of Tables	xiii
List of Figures	xiii
List of Maps	xv
Chapter One.....	1
1.1 <i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>1</i>
1.2 <i>Indigo Textile Dyeing Production Processes in Symbolic Perspectives: Theoretical Orientation and a contextualizing review.....</i>	<i>14</i>
1.3 <i>Area of Study.....</i>	<i>24</i>
1.4 <i>Research Methodology.....</i>	<i>28</i>
1.5 <i>Organization of the study.....</i>	<i>32</i>
1.6 <i>Ethical considerations.....</i>	<i>37</i>
Chapter Two.....	39
Historical Background of the Yoruba Women Dyers’ contributions to artistic enterprises within the Political Economy of Nigeria.....	39
2.1 <i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>39</i>
2.2 <i>Adire women during the Pre-Transatlantic and Transatlantic Slave Trade (Pre-15th Century).....</i>	<i>51</i>

2.3	<i>Colonial Political Economy in Nigeria and Yoruba Women Dyers Artistic Contributions (1851-1960)</i>	54
2.3.1	<i>Women Dyers' Protest/Revolt (1890s-1937)</i>	56
2.3.2	<i>The Exhibitions (1937-1945)</i>	58
2.3.3	<i>The Cotton Industry Project (1945-1949)</i>	63
2.3.4	<i>The Renaissance (1949-1960)</i>	66
2.4	<i>Independent and Post-Independent Political Economy in Nigeria and Yoruba Women Dyers Artistic Contributions (1960-Present)</i>	69
2.4.1	<i>The Adire Renaissance Continues: The Influence Ulli Beier on Osogbo Arts (1960-1967)</i>	71
2.4.2	<i>Nigerian Civil War (1967-1969)</i>	74
2.4.3	<i>The Adire Renaissance Continues: The Influence of Susanne Wenger on Osogbo Arts (1970 till her death in 2009)</i>	74
2.4.4	<i>The Factory Textiles (1970s-1990s)</i>	80
2.4.5	<i>Oil exploration and Oil Glut (1970s-Present)</i>	82
2.4.6	<i>Government Initiatives as part of Renaissance (1979-Present)</i>	84
2.5	<i>Conclusion</i>	88
Chapter Three		90
The symbolic nature of Indigo textile dyeing in the Myths of Osun-Osogbo and Iya-Mapo.....		90
3.1	<i>Introduction</i>	90
3.2	<i>Myth in Anthropology</i>	91
3.3	<i>The Myth of Osun-Osogbo</i>	101
3.4	<i>The Nature of the Symbols in Osun-Osogbo's and Iya Mapo's Personality as it relates to Indigo Textile Dyeing</i>	109
3.5	<i>The Nature of Symbol in the Indigo Textile Dyeing Production Processes in Osogbo</i>	116
3.6	<i>Conclusion</i>	123

Chapter Four.....	125
‘Child is a Cloth’: Symbolism and the Social Contexts of Indigo Textile Dyeing Production Processes among Women Dyers in Osogbo.....	125
4.1 <i>Introduction</i>	125
4.2 <i>Rituals in Anthropology</i>	126
4.3 <i>Aso: The Cloth-Child Symbolism in Adire Textile Dyeing</i>	130
4.4 <i>The Symbolism of Kadara (Destiny) in the Ona (Patterning) of the Adire Dyed Textile</i>	137
4.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	156
Chapter Five.....	158
<i>Ewa and Iwa: The symbolism of Beauty and Character in the Dyeing Process of Indigo Textile Dyeing</i>	158
5.1 <i>Introduction</i>	158
5.2 <i>The Symbolism of Iwa (Character) of Elu Leaves of Indigo Dye Water</i>	160
5.3 <i>The Symbolism of Ewa (Character) Omoluabi in the Dyeing of the Patterned Cloth</i>	184
5.4 <i>Conclusion</i>	193
Chapter Six.....	196
Sex, Water and Symbols: Reflections on Alkaline Water Production in Indigo Dyeing...	196
6.1 <i>Introduction</i>	196
6.2 <i>Gender and Performativity of Gender</i>	196
6.3 <i>Performativity of Gender in Omi Eru (Alkaline Water) Production in Osogbo...</i>	202
6.4 <i>Conclusion</i>	216
Chapter Seven.....	219
Colour, Texts and Images on Indigo Dyed Textiles among the Yoruba Women Dyers in Osogbo.....	216
7.1 <i>Introduction</i>	220
7.2 <i>Colour Symbolism, Texts and Images on Textile</i>	219

7.3	<i>Indigo Colour and its symbolism among the Yoruba women dyers</i>	224
7.4	<i>Texts and Images on Indigo Dyed Textiles among the Yoruba Women Dyers in Osogbo</i>	233
7.5	<i>Conclusion</i>	246
	Chapter Eight	248
	<i>Conclusion</i>	248
8.1	<i>An Ethnographic Account of the Politics among Producers during 2015 Osun-Osogbo Annual Festival</i>	252
8.2	<i>Re-examining Adire-Dyed Textiles in the Global World: A case of Decolonization of Knowledge</i>	264
	Appendix A: Yoruba myth of Osun amongst human beings	268
	Appendix B: Yoruba Myth about Osun at creation of the earth	269
	Bibliography	270

List of Tables

Table 1:	Chronological developments in Nigeria and impact on Adire Textile Production	45
Table 2:	Elements in the myth of Osun-Osogbo in binary opposites of Nature and Culture	106

List of Figures

Figure 1:	Aso-Oke.....	2
Figure 2:	Adire.....	2
Figure 3:	Adan Motif.....	4
Figure 4:	Dyeing shade in Aka's Dyeing family Compound in Osogbo.....	27
Figure 5:	A master weaver, Jamnat Ijake, weaving Kijipa on Yoruba traditional women broadloom.....	52
Figure 6:	Kijipa Fabric: a product of traditional Yoruba women broadloom.....	53
Figure 7:	The picture of Ulli Beier in his early life in Nigeria.....	68
Figure 8:	The picture of Susanne Wenger in her early life as Adunni Orisha.....	75
Figure 9:	The picture of Nike Okundaye-Davies.....	78
Figure 10:	Aka's Dyeing Shade – My Research Assistant chatting with Madam Rafatu.....	162
Figure 11:	Aka's Dyeing shade with dyeing iron drums and pots.....	163
Figure 12:	Aka's Dyeing shade with covered dyeing pots and broken dyeing Pots.....	163
Figure 13:	Elu leaves growing by the roadside at Ayekale.....	170
Figure 14:	Cultivated Elu (Indigo)Tree at Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery (NCACG) Workshop on Osogbo-Iwo Expressway during the rainy season.....	171
Figure 15:	Cultivated Elu tree at NCACG Workshop during the harmattan season.....	171

Figure 16:	Budding leaves in the mortar and a pestle on it ready to be pounded.....	173
Figure 17:	A picture showing me pounding the indigo leaves in the mortar with a pestle.....	174
Figure 18:	Mama Bilikis pounding the indigo leaves with a mortar and Pestle.....	175
Figure 19:	Mama Bilikis holding some pounded Indigo leaves sack.....	176
Figure 20:	Slimed indigo leaves packed in the rice.....	177
Figure 21:	Sun-dried Indigo leaves in Aka's family Compound.....	177
Figure 22:	Processed dried indigo leaves at NCACG sold between N1500 and N2000 per ball.....	178
Figure 23:	My Research Assistant putting the dyed cloth in the sun.....	186
Figure 24:	Madam Rafatu Scrapping the cassava paste off the patterned clothes	187
Figure 25:	The preparation of alkaline water in the pots.....	206
Figure 26:	Burning the Cocoa Pods to have the Ash.....	207
Figure 27:	Drawing showing the dissected kiln to explain how the ash is burnt.....	207
Figure 28:	The ash in a perforated pot.....	208
Figure 29:	The hole where the alkaline is scooped from the unperforated pot.....	209
Figure 30:	Indigo dyeing process.....	214
Figure 31:	Contemporary dyeing process.....	215
Figure 32:	2 inch folded part of the textile.....	234
Figure 33:	Folding the whole textile for patterning.....	234
Figure 34:	A folded textile for patterning.....	235
Figure 35:	Vertical lines on each fold on the textile.....	236
Figure 36:	A single design pattern called one Obotere.....	236
Figure 37:	A picture of two or more Obotere (separate designs in each square) in indigo textile patterning.....	238
Figure 38:	The full design on a textile called Ore Meji (Two-Patterns Dyed Textile)..	238

Figure 39:	The Patterned Aluminum Design of Mama Olugun.....	241
Figure 40:	Mama Olugun patterning with the aluminium style.....	241
Figure 41:	Supporting Mama Olugun during the use of aluminium patterning style.	242
Figure 42:	The outcome of the use of aluminum pattern style.....	242
Figure 43:	Wood patterned designs.....	243
Figure 44:	Aluminium pattern from Madam Rafatu of the Aka Family.....	244
Figure 45:	Aluminium pattern of Bartho at Ayekale area of Osogbo	244
Figure 46:	The pattern called “ <i>Onigbako</i> ” (Scooping Wood) by the Old women dyers and Coil by the contemporary dyers.....	246

List of Maps

Map 1:	Map of Nigeria in Africa.....	6
Map 2:	Map of Nigeria in Western Africa.....	7
Map 3:	Map showing the dyeing towns in Nigeria.....	11
Map 4:	Map showing the location of Osogbo in Nigeria.....	27
Map 5:	The movement of the Osun-Osogbo River from her source in Igede-Ekiti to Osogbo.....	111
Map 6:	The geographical arrangement of Faleke’s Vicinage.....	139
Map 7:	The geographical arrangement of the Aka’s Vicinage – Dyeing House...	166

Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores the symbolic process of communication through indigo textile technology by women dyers among Yoruba-speaking people of Osogbo, Southwestern Nigeria. This research is an ethnography of women dyers; it specifically examines the symbolic communication of dyers during the indigo dyeing production processes and sales of dyed textile products in Osogbo, Nigeria. The study commenced in 2013 and concluded in 2015, just after the annual celebration of the Osun-Osogbo festival. I set the study within the context of the interpretive approach of Victor Turner's symbolic anthropology in his work among the Ndembu (1967) – to understand how social processes and structures are symbolized, especially in a ritual context of transformation during “life crisis rituals”. I argued that the dyeing process is a ritual process in terms of Turner's definition of ritual, which is transformative and that indigo-dyed textiles during this transformative process take on symbolic properties with transformative potentials that women dyers use in their daily lives but not in a particularly “ritual” context. However, before I go into the details of my thesis, a prefatory narrative about the nature of indigo-dyed textile is necessary.

The indigo-dyed textile – popularly called *adire* textile – is one of the two prominent types of textiles common amongst the Yoruba-speaking people. The other style is *aso-oke* (woven ceremonial cloth) (Eicher 1976; Joseph 1978) (See Fig. 1 and 2). *Aso-oke* is perceived to be an ancient craft textile produced with the loom. Women are locally said to produce the vertical loom and men produce the horizontal loom. On the other hand, *adire* textile is a patterned textile inserted in a vat filled with a rich, deep blue water, whose materials are obtained from indigo plants, which belongs to the *indigofera* and *lonchocarpus cyanescens* specie (Eicher 1976; Joseph 1978; Owoeye 2010).



Fig. 1: Aso-Oke (Makinde, Ajiboye, Ajayi 2009)

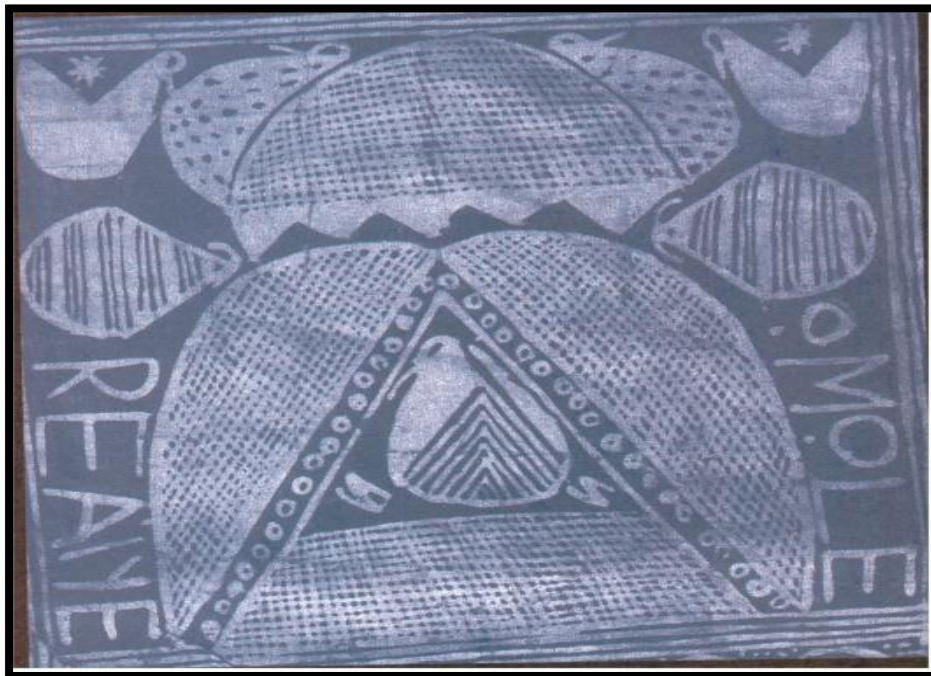


Fig. 2: Adire (Owoeye 2010)

My previous work (2010) on indigo textile dyeing shows that dyeing is the final act in the *adire* textile technology. It is a set of separate rigorous production processes involving the systematic production of the major raw material, indigo leaves (*Elu*). The indigo leaves are processed in a

mortar with a pestle until a blue-black extraction is produced; it is moulded and sun-dried. Other processes involve the production of alkaline water called *omi eru* (water from ashes), which culminates in the use of two pots to process alkaline water. One of these pots is perforated and the other has one single hole on its side. Other sub-processes are the production of ash called *eeru koko* (ash from cocoa pod), which is produced by burning of cocoa pods with wood in a kiln made of mud. The alkaline water is scooped into the dyeing pots, and the dried indigo leaves are added to it. The other production processes are the motifs applications, and the ultimate dyeing processes, which include the post-dyeing procedures. Some of the motifs represent the proverbs within the dyers' local language while some others represent political events in the society.

For example, the motif '*adan*' (Fig. 3) represents the Yoruba proverb that says "*baa k'oba ri adan, a fi oobe sebo*". This literally means "if you can't find the *adan* (*large bat*), you can always use the *oobe* (*smaller-sized bat*)". The large bats symbolize big opportunities while the small bats represent small opportunities. Figuratively, it means "when you do not get what you want, you make do with what you have". Dyed textile products are also highly symbolic either as social or political image, communicating events and the social world of the dyers. For instance, Olusegun Obasanjo, a former Nigerian President, sometimes wore dyed textiles during his administration, perhaps to communicate messages concerning the mood of the social or political event at hand. This reveals the fact that indigo textile dyeing is "rooted within social contexts" and evident in the studies on sculpture and pottery production that (indigenous) technology exists within a symbolic and social framework (Reid & MacLean 1995).



Fig. 3: Adan motif (Owoeye 2010:134)

In textile production processes, which encompass the conversion of fabric/textiles into dyed or printed clothes, gender creates a major distinction. Gilman (2002) in her discussion of symbolism and clothing perceives gender as a modifying force in the textile production process in every society. So, with reference to the activities of women dyers during the dyeing process, the thesis investigates the processes of cultural production and communication through symbolic performances within a transforming socio-economic process in a particular society or within the context of a specific group. The study also argues that production without consumption is an incomplete process; hence, the study documents the ethnographic account of politics played by the dyed-textile producers during the annual Osun-Osogbo festival in order to sell their dyed-products and how these affect the production processes of dyed textiles and the dyers in Osogbo, southwest of Nigeria. The instructive question is: how does indigo textile dyeing as a production process with symbols communicate structures and cultural beliefs with symbols?

This question creates the platform for the discourse of indigo textile dyeing as a production process with symbols in the communication of cultural beliefs, meaning-making process, and socio-

economic processes. I conclude in the end that assigning meanings to symbols is context-specific, showing that meanings are context and culture-specific; that is, cultural contexts determine the meanings of symbols; that is, determined by a people to suit their own particular ends. So, the symbol utilized by Yoruba women dyers during dyeing production processes in Osogbo has a fixed meaning, which is specific to the Yoruba context. The symbol is linked with some phenomenon, ideas and behaviours, which have an end in view – an instrumental value, which communicates certain cultural beliefs and meanings; though not a static meaning as a result of transformations in the socio-economic processes and political situations in Nigeria.

Nigeria is located in West Africa (see Map 1); it has 35 states forming a federation and its capital city Abuja. Nigeria is bounded by the Republic of Benin on the West, Cameroon on the East, Niger at the North, Lake Chad at the North East and the Gulf of Guinea at the South (See Map 2). Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa – a population of 140 million according to the 2006 national census provisional result. In 2015, Nigeria’s population was estimated at 182,201,962 million people – an annual population growth of 2.62%. Most residents of Nigeria are rural dwellers because about 48.1% of the population of Nigeria are urban dwellers¹.

¹ <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=NIGERIA>



Map 1: Map of Nigeria in Africa²

² <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/455848793509242053/>



Map 2: Map of Nigeria in Western Africa³

As explained in detail in the next chapter, indigo textile dyeing technology has been in existence for many years (Eicher 1976; Eicher 1981). However, periods of “development” – much of it imposed from outside – have posed a threat to the dyeing technological processes. Specifically, the changing socio-economic and political situations in Nigeria – before and after the amalgamation of the three major ethnic groups – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba – and other minority groups in 1914 by the British colonial administration affected the work of Yoruba women dyers and their lives.

Pre-colonial Nigeria was composed of diverse self-governing traditional groups with their independent social structure, socio-economic and political contexts known as kingdoms, which

³ <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Nigeria/@8.9667189,-0.3674278,5z/data>

were, interdependent through trade. Raji and Abejide (2013) were of the view that during the pre-colonial period, Yoruba States had a strong economic base, which was driven by the guild systems and crafts such as indigo textile dyeing. During fieldwork, I gathered that the indigo dyeing craft was practiced by women as a family craft; a type of guild system, which made it compulsory for every woman that married into a dyeing family compound to become a textile dyer. Women dyers in the family endowed the newly-wed with the tools of dyeing and became an apprentice. Also, the females that birthed into the dyeing family compound and other families outside the dyeing family brought their females as apprentice under the auspices of women in these dyeing families.

However, the emergence of the transatlantic slave trade economy disrupted the established pre-colonial indigenous social structure and economy and also led to internecine wars (Johnson 1921). As a result of this slave economy, able-bodied men and women, especially craftsmen and women, were taken and sold as slaves, which also reduced the population of Yoruba dyers (Nwokeji 2001; Zeleza & Eyon 2002; Izuchukwu 2010). Special interest was on women as a result of their persistence and high work rate. With the end of the transatlantic slave trade, colonial economy by the British emerged in Nigeria.

With the advent of colonial administration, economic activities were concentrated on exporting raw materials from colonies like Nigeria to service established industries in Europe. The foreign capital created a male-dominated economy and introduced other policies that brought about taxes and cotton projects. All these events disrupted the indigenous apprenticeship system that supported continued existence of indigo dyeing, impoverished the patrons such as the nobles and chiefs that patronized women dyers' products until the independence struggle which encouraged the women dyers to produce anti-colonial dyed-products. Since Nigeria's independence to the present time, the country has had fluctuating socio-economic fortunes and political instability partly due to

military coup d'états and apparent conducive atmosphere created for neo-colonial interests to flourish, resulting in an import-driven economy in major areas such as textile manufacturing and technologies⁴. Specifically, the discovery and over-reliance of government on crude oil, which Nigeria produces about 2.7% of the world's oil supply, makes her an influential oil-producing nation in Africa and the world. However, crude oil exploration has been the source of much economic mal-structuring in Nigeria.

This economic mal-structuring became evident in the development of a stronger private sector. Foreign low-cost textile producers and the opening of the borders for second-hand clothing imported from the United States and Europe posed potential threats to the private sector (Soetan 2001; Slotterback 2007), but they also modernised the *adire* industries. The modernization of *adire* industries was characterized by the introduction of foreign materials such as synthetic dyes and caustic soda, and the transfer of production from rural settings to urban settings, which may have affected the gendered nature of *adire* production processes. The less than encouraging economic situation, especially among rural women, made the *adire* technology one of the indigenous technologies that inspired the conception of pet programmes by the Nigerian Government. Such pet programmes are Family Support Programme (FSP) and Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), and they are driven by the President's and State Governors' wives. These projects project the economic importance of the *adire* technology in Nigeria, as shown in my previous work (Owoeye 2010). Therefore, these aforementioned factors, which focus on the economic advantages of indigo textile dyeing craft have added to the neglect of the conception of symbols by women dyers and its academic analysis in the literature.

⁴ <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/nigeria-1914-to-date-the-chequered-journey-so-far/>

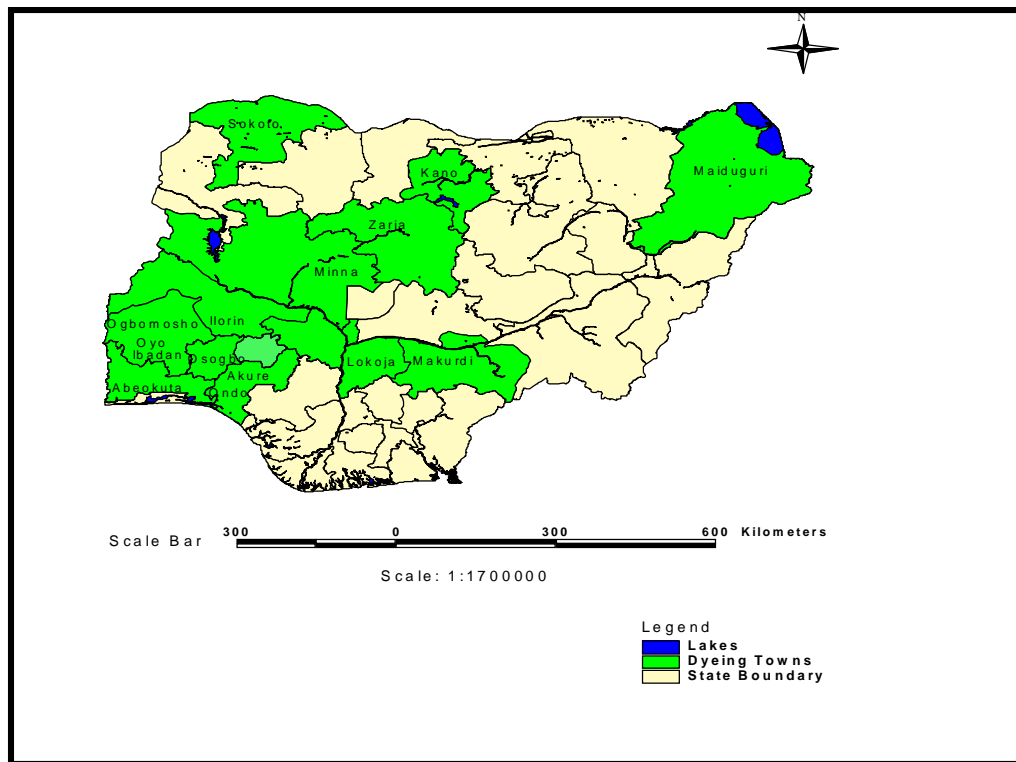
Aside the neglect effect the economic mal-structuring had on dyeing technology in Nigeria, the economy remained highly non-egalitarian in income distribution; with income and health expenditure increasing, and life expectancy remaining unsteady. The life expectancy between 1980 and 1989, averaged 45.8 years; between 1990 and 1999, it was 45.6 years; and from 2000 to 2010, it improved marginally to an average 58.6 years (Sede & Ohemeng 2015). However, in 2015, life expectancy was 53 and 56 years for males and females respectively. The non-egalitarian income distribution also reflects in the 2016 unemployment and underemployed rate, which increased in the 1st quarter of 2016 from 12.1% and 19.1% to 13.3% and 19.3% in the 2nd quarter 2016⁵. In addition, 15% and 10.8% are the urban-rural unemployment rates, indicating that unemployment is higher in the urban areas given the preference of graduates for formal white-collars jobs located mostly in the urban areas. Underemployment rate is higher in the rural areas (23.5%) than urban areas (9.5%) because most rural dwellers are farmers and due to the seasonal nature of the farmer's job in the rural areas⁶. This reveals that Nigerians, just as in many developing countries are working but not necessarily in formal sector jobs. Statistics showed that between 1.2 and 2.2 million Nigerians join the labour force every year, but more than two-thirds are in the informal sector like the indigo textile dyeing industry⁷. But, young women are not attracted to crafts like indigo textile dyeing as a result of preference for white-collar jobs – the reason for high unemployment and underemployment rate for women (14.% and 22.2%) than men (10.3% and 16.2%) in 2016. Old women are prominent in the indigo dyeing craft in Nigeria especially among the Yoruba people of Osogbo.

⁵ <http://www.who.int/countries/nga/en/>; <http://nigerianstat.gov.ng/>; <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/report/397>

⁶ Unemployment is a situation when a person seeking a job is unable to find one. Underemployment is a situation when a person is working but is not working at his full capability (<https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-difference-between-unemployment-and-underemployment>).

⁷ <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/factsheet-how-nigerias-unemployment-rate-is-calculated/>

The indigo textile dyeing technology is practiced in several towns and villages in Nigeria except in some parts (See Map 3). Politically, people in these areas may not associate with the symbolic communications as imagined in the dyeing areas. Yet, from the environmental viewpoint, Eicher (1976) and Owoeye (2010) argued that the vegetation and climatic condition in these non-dyeing regions do not allow the main raw material, indigo plants, to grow. Indigo plants grow in the wild but recently, they are being cultivated (Owoeye 2010:154).



Map 3: Map showing the dyeing towns in Nigeria (Owoeye 2010:29)

In the regions where indigo textile dyeing does exist, fluctuations in gendered social norms are salient, largely due to differing religious practices. For instance, men dominate textile-dyeing among Hausas in some northern regions of Nigeria (Soetan 2001; Oguntona 1986) because of the

“purdah system”⁸. This system forbids the public appearance of young and married women in the traditional and religious practices of the Northerners in Nigeria. As a result of this purdah system, “the exclusion of women from social activities means exclusion from economic and political ambition” (Onwuejeogwu 1992:24). So, dyeing is done in open spaces by men in large deep-pits (two or three metres deep) which are cemented from the bottom to the top (Eicher 1976; Oguntona 1986; Owoeye 2010). In central Nigeria, especially among the Nupe-speaking people, indigo textile dyeing is practiced by both genders. Men use indigo powder made from dried and decomposed indigo grasses with ashes in a sieve-like basket while women use leaves from an indigo tree and prepare their dye in pots (Eicher 1976), presumably the effect of Christianity in the region, which allows both gender accesses to the public space. However, in the southwestern region of Nigeria, where Christianity, Islam and Traditional religions co-exist, women are more prominent than men in textile production and these women dyers have developed the art of indigo dyeing to a state of excellence (Owoeye 2010).

Of the dyeing towns and villages in southwestern Nigeria, women are currently prominent as textile dyers (Owoeye 2010). I focused my research on Osogbo women for several reasons. Women in the Osogbo region practice indigenous indigo *adire* textile dyeing more than men in the Abeokuta region, which is characteristically associated with synthetic dyeing practices. Secondly, as explicated in Chapter 3, the oral history of Osogbo is very constitutive to the invention of the indigo textile dyeing craft. In addition, the indigenous *adire* dyeing technology and products are a tourist’s attraction during the Osun-Osogbo annual traditional festival – a major component of the oral history of Osogbo. This tourism flavor is absent in the oral history of Abeokuta, which

⁸ Purdah system is a system of seclusion of women practiced among Muslims. The word *purdah* also refers to a curtain or screen used to keep women separate from men and strangers; See also VerEecke (1993).

is linked to the *Olumo* Rock. Scholars seem to have neglected this uniqueness of Osogbo town as regards the subject of indigo textile dyeing.

In more recent literature, which is discussed in detail later in this chapter, calls from scholars of textile traditions have pushed for a paradigm shift from explanation of “how it is done” to explorations of the ways in which textile production is incorporated into the construction of meaning in order to bring out the indigenous conceptions of arts and technologies within Africa and beyond. Such literature has, however, focused on woven textiles which possess almost equal value as writing and mostly involve men (Ben-Amos 1989; Conklin 1997; Heckman 2003). These studies discuss textiles much like any other social phenomenon in that they cannot be analysed in isolation or in terms of only one set of social relations, because they are so intimately part of the wider status system (Kuper 1973; Eicher 1981). Despite this recent academic attention, the histories of indigo dyeing technology in Osogbo which is mostly dominated by women largely remain untold and unanalysed.

In the light of this lack of attention to indigo dyeing technology in Osogbo, I examined the women dyers practice of using indigo textile dyeing production processes as a medium that articulates social structure via symbolism through the following questions: what is the social, economic and political world these women live in?; how have these worldviews changed?; what are the symbols created by these women dyers – their nature, and the interpretive understanding of colour symbolism in the *adire* production processes?; how instructive are the gendered worldviews to meaning making in the indigo textile dyeing production processes?; how are the symbols created by women dyers represented in the production of textiles, and how has this changed over time?; how are these worldviews articulated with symbols and what are the meanings and principles attached to these symbols?; what are the ways these textiles are consumed – as commodities or

otherwise – and how the producers play politics during the sales of their dyed-products during the 2015 Osun-Osoybo festival; who are the consumers of these dyed-products and what patterns of consumption influence the production process?

1.2 Indigo Textile Dyeing Production Processes in Symbolic Perspectives: Theoretical orientation and a contextualizing review

*a symbol is a device which enables humans to make abstractions
but with some end in view, usually of an instrumental value* (Firth
1973, p.15)

In this section, I have two aims. Firstly, I will clarify the concept of symbolism as used in this thesis. I will briefly discuss the ambiguous use of symbols in anthropological discourse, how the ambiguity is resolved, and the theoretical orientation of this study. This discussion leads to an introduction of the concept of symbolic process and transformation in symbolic anthropology as a way of analyzing and understanding the communication of cultural beliefs and meaning-making processes through cultural symbols – in order to better understand a particular society or group. Secondly, I will show how literatures about symbolism have described and neglected the symbolic conceptualization of African textile arts, specifically, indigo textile dyeing production by women dyers among Yoruba-speaking people.

Symbolism is not a recent subject of study among scholars. The use of symbols is one of the most distinctive attributes of human communication. Symbolism enables humans to engage with aspects of nature and abstract entities in order to foster polysemic⁹ systems of meaning which reach beyond the boundaries of verbal discourse (Ellul 1978). Howe (2004) explicating the human engagement of symbols in myths, rituals, taboos, magic and cosmology states that scholars see symbols as

⁹ Polysemic and Multivocal are two related words to symbols but different in meaning. Polysemic means the capacity of a symbol to have multiple meanings usually related by contiguity – stimulus and response manner, which causes an association (privately and psychologically) within the mind. Multivocal is when a symbol is capable of more than one interpretation – of equal probability/validity among human beings. It becomes ambiguous and a possible source of conflict as different groups develop their standard of the symbol, thereby not easily understood or explained.

private and public. Within the anthropological discourse, symbols are mostly seen as public phenomena and shared meanings, rather than as private concern – a key to a person’s unconscious in psychology. Psychology also studies shared symbols but often as a kind of mass neurosis (a symptom of anxiety or stress) or psychosis (impaired relationship with reality where a person has lost contact with external reality).

Concerning symbols as private and public symbols, the anthropologist Raymond Firth, in his work *Symbols: Public and Private* (1973), noticed an ambiguity in the ways in which scholars analyze symbols – rooted in the initial writings on symbolism, which treated it in an abstract manner thereby becoming vague to conceptualise and lacking scope and meaning. The ambiguity has made the meaning of symbols problematic especially for anthropologists. In terms of definition, Firth (1973) defined a symbol as a device which enables humans to make abstractions but with some end in view, usually of an instrumental value. Against the background of the instrumental realities of symbolism, my research engages with the largely unexplored indigo textile dyeing production by women dyers among Yoruba-speaking people of Osogbo, southwestern Nigeria, and in so doing tries to embark on an in-depth ethnographic study of textile dyeing production activities as a symbolic process of communication.

Studies that use symbols as an instrumental value in anthropological discourse tend to focus more on two issues: symbolic interpretation (Geertz 1973) and the symbolic processes (Turner 1967) especially of myth and ritual, by which humans assign meanings to these symbols so as to address the issues of human social life (Spencer 1996:535). The symbolic processes of Victor Turner’s ethnographic sojourn are therefore an invaluable instrument for this research. Turner in his classic work, *Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Rituals* (1967), showed that he was interested in

understanding how social processes and structures are symbolized – a ritual context of transformation, particularly during “life crisis rituals”.

Victor Turner’s work recognized “symbols, ritual, and indeed religion as processes in which individuals and collectivities were wholly engaged”; it asserted that “symbols are not merely epiphenomena or disguises of deeper social and psychological processes, but have ontological value” (Graham 2008:1). So, Turner discussed symbolism and ritual works on two dimensional levels: exegesis of cultural meanings that is integral to the concept of key symbols and analysis of how the symbol operates during the ritual – a social transformation process that discourses conflict and social actions (Kratz 1994).

Turner wrote that “symbols are seen as instrumentalities of various forces” which can be “physical, moral, economic, and political”, with the ability to “operate in isolation” and maintain or “change fields of social relationships” (Turner 1975:145). He identified symbolic layers based on material properties and ceremonial uses (operational meaning), the foregrounding of the relevant symbolic sense (positional meaning) and the indigenous commentary on the symbol, (exegetical meaning), all these being the source of knowledge about many of the other meanings of a symbol (Turner 1967). Inspired by Victor Turner’s analysis of symbolic processes, I expressed the view that scholars focus more on the descriptive analysis of indigo-dyed textiles, neglecting the women dyers’ perspective. I argued that the indigo dyed-textile, a form of African textile art, acquires symbolic properties with transformative potentials that women dyers use in their daily lives during the dyeing production processes but not in a particularly “ritual” context. Women dyers project the nature of symbols associated with the production of indigo-dyed textile and the interpretive understanding of colour symbolism. This reflects how they use symbols to build a cohesive social

group, which transfers the meaning associated with textile production from one generation to another in a transforming society.

With this transformatory nature of ritual processes, I re-examined the nature of dyed-textiles in relation to how the women dyers operate in the global system within the decolonized knowledge paradigm. Specifically, the thesis at the concluding part re-examined the social actions of the women dyers' agency, practice and performance and the implication in the present "theoretical moment" (Escobar 2008:284 in Harrison 2016:160) – decolonization of knowledge project. The thesis concludes that indigenous crafts like textile dyeing and their narratives in the global world are involved in transformatory processes that show the power of human agency in cultural performance and the possibility of theorizing in ex-centric sites.

In the past, textiles in Africa were classified and treated as a minor art form in comparison to other artistic expressions such as sculpture (Beier, Abiodun & Pemberton 2004; Renne & Agbaje-Williams 2005) – focusing on a more describable aspect of the production processes and neglecting its sociality – the symbolism and the social contexts of the textile processes and products. Beier, Pemberton and Abiodun, prominent scholars in African arts, have followed Yoruba textile history since the mid-20th century and published the first extensive work that recognized the full artistry and cultural expressiveness of indigo textiles "as an important medium of artistic expression as sculpture". They cited as evidence their observation in the 1950s and 1960s of the Yoruba markets being "a sea of indigo" (Beier et al. 2004:19). They also confirmed that Yoruba women have developed the art of dyeing to a level of excellence. Besides providing information about the full artistry and cultural expressiveness of indigo textiles, they also treated indigo dyed textiles as homogenous products among the Yoruba-speaking people of Nigeria.

However, the emergence of narratives and the focus on human performances¹⁰ which reflect how past and contemporary anthropologists approached the subject of thriving indigenous textile technologies such as indigo textile dyeing have brought to the fore the sociality of the dyeing technology – and thus the contextual and symbolic meanings of production processes. In this framework, indigenous textile technologies are not perceived as static social phenomenon, but are now examined as a process (transformatory process) put in place through agency, practice, and performance (Heckman 2003). A comparative example in this era is the Andean textiles among the Quechua-speaking people of South America. Scholars discovered that the Quechua weavers through the structure and symbols on the woven textiles were able to have meaningful relationship with nature, animals and the environment (Conklin 1997; Heckman 2003). The present study aims to contribute to the anthropological study of symbolism, anthropological study of indigenous textile and decolonization of knowledge – a part of the decolonization of anthropology project that brings to the fore historically-peripheralized voices to participate in conversations that shape the directions of theoretical formulations, which eventually makes the production processes of indigo textile dyeing a way to construct a symbolic meaning that reveals the indigenous conceptions in the art of textile dyeing among Yoruba women dyers in Osogbo, Southwestern Nigeria, the primary subject of investigation.

The focus on textile arts in anthropological discourse began in the early part of the 20th century to the early mid-20th century. During this period, textile arts formed large collections for museums as a result of imperialistic activities and the discipline's tilt towards archaeological findings. For example in 1950, Jones Volney examined Lila O'Neale's series of archaeological textiles from

¹⁰ Examples of key writers are Benedict (1934), Evans-Pritchard (1940), Levi-Strauss (1955), Turner (Turner 1967; Turner 1975), Geertz (1973) and Heckman (2003) who specifically focused on the Andean textile – an indigenous textile of the Andean people in South America

Chihuahua. The study was described as “perhaps the most meticulous investigation of textiles” in the early mid-20th century. However, no living person of that period could witness or give information as regards the textile except for ‘two letters from the presumed collector’, and the ‘identity of the collector was not revealed’ (Jones 1950:84). This also became manifest in African textile arts which were perceived as collectibles displayed at exhibitions to elucidate the artistry, technology, and ideas behind their creation (Beier, Abiodun & Pemberton 2004). Such museum exhibitions in 1972 and 1974 on African Textiles and Decorative Arts, sponsored by the Museum of Modern Arts, and the African Arts in Motion, sponsored by UCLA and National Gallery, made the “general public outside of Africa become aware of the aesthetic appeal of these indigenous African fabrics”; even “Africans themselves have often taken these fabrics for granted and not as treasures” (Eicher 1976:1). This motivated Eicher Joanne in 1976 to draw the attention of the world to the variety of handcrafted fabrics though she claimed that “no one can claim in-depth knowledge of all the textiles arts and their variations” (ibid).

In the mid-20th century, scholars realized, according to Beier et al. (2004:1), that textile crafts “rarely receive any kind of serious indigenous conceptual and academic analysis like sculpture” and so became an accessory in symbolic, structural, or semiotic explanations. Consequently, the veil on textile arts activities as one of the minor arts was gradually taken off. Since this challenge in the late 1970s, there had been a gradual emergence of serious anthropological engagements in the 1980s when ritual analysis was taken off the group of religious activities and placed in the realm of the secular (technology and common aesthetics) as explained by scholars like Katz (1981) in the work, *Rituals in the Operation Room*. Two works were of specific merit among the several textile articles in this period – published in the West; Schneider and Weiner (1986); *Cloth and the Organization of Human Experience* and Schneider, *The Anthropology of Cloth* (1987).

Schneider & Weiner (1986:178) stated that the conference on ‘Cloth and the Organization of Human Experience’ held in 1983 documented “the significance of cloth traditions in the historical development of the world’s societies”, made “case that these traditions are central to social and evolutionary theory” and “set aside areas of inquiry in the social sciences that have grown apart”. The book raised a variety of issues around indigenous textiles and clothing ranging from meaning and hierarchy, exchange, mortuary exchange, indigenous and cosmopolitan traditions, gender, to commoditization. For instance, emerging from the conference is the belief that cloths are both material and spiritual as presented by Monni Adams’ in her work “Indonesian Textiles: Silent Symbols and the Structure of Costume in Indonesia.” She described how the continuous weaving in tubular and flat wrap skirts – the former for women and the latter for men – was believed to transmit a spiritual force. She explained that when these cloths were wrapped around the body, they evoked “a kind of restraint on the natural physical being” in the name of social order. In exchanging them, the givers bestowed not only something of appreciated beauty and stored labour but vitality, well-being, and fertility as well (Schneider & Weiner 1986:179-180). The works from the conference however, in general showed inadequacies of serious anthropological engagement with the producers and the social changes within the societies. But it opened the windows and explorations that lay ahead in textile art research.

The Anthropologist Jane Schneider (1987) published a review of the role of cloth consumption in some selected societies, claiming that cloth is a universal “need and want” of human beings, affirming that cloth is not only significant to cloth traditions, but also to the development of the world’s societies and a case for social and evolutionary theory. Schneider indicated that “cloth is relevant to power” due to the “stylistic change to political and economic shifts”, it “intensifies sociality” and “helped to consolidate many political systems” (1987:409). To accentuate the fact

of the sociality of cloth, she cited Kent's (1976) work among the Pueblos in Lele society, where men are the weavers. In this society, grooms receive processed corns, and give cloths that eventually accompany their wives to the grave. And discussing the crystallization of style to economic and political shifts, she focused on the European cloth factory. This showed the shifts that lay below the breakthrough to the capitalist production of textiles in Europe as nation-state makers, directly or through merchants, primed artisans to compete in new and wider domains especially in Africa during the colonial era. Her work was besides being revealing in a lot of ways evolutionary and historical in terms of consumption of these indigenous textile products as well as the contemporary ones. This is to analyse the effect of change in structure of power on textile tradition even in the contemporary societies where machines dominate. Prompted by Schneider's evolutionary analysis, this study examined the effects of changes in the society – technological, political, economic, and social – on the consumption of *adire* textiles in Osogbo.

One crucial element of the mid-20th century is that woven textiles became the center of attention for academic analysis, neglecting indigo textile dyeing technologies. In the Andes, woven textiles were another mode of conveying words and images that involved formal visual connections, used across cultures to “convey complex meanings” (Conklin 1997:109). However, like Conklin's contribution to the literature, this study on women dyers also assumes that symbols in indigo textile dyeing technology are culture-specific symbols and designs just like the motif in Fig 3. I examined the importance of indigo technology, the dyed-textile creation, symbolic values and the use of motifs to explicate meanings and transmit complex messages as earlier pointed out in this thesis, and this was accounted for within the social and cultural contexts of my research.

In the 21st century, the study of material culture, especially textile arts, around the world became a more common theme, with accent on aspects of language and the creation of persons via

products. This was facilitated by a wide ranging paradigm shift in anthropological reasoning from the stress on explanation and function to a concern with meaning and interpretation. Consequently, it led to a growing body of research on textile tradition, which viewed textile culture as processually created through agency, practice, and performance. Some non-African ethnographic works on textile traditions in this era are Silverman's *A Woven Book of Knowledge* (2008): *Textile Iconography of Cuzco, Peru*; and Gavin's *Iban Ritual Textiles* (2004). Some examples of ethnographic works on textile traditions conducted among African people are Rose Marie Beck's *Aesthetic of Communication: Texts on Textiles (Leso) from East Africa Coast (Swahili)* (2000) and *Texts on Textiles: proverbiality as characteristic of equivocal communication at the East African coast (Swahili)* (2005) and Renne & Agbaje-Williams's work on *Yoruba Religious Textiles* (2005). Rose Marie (2000; 2005), in her study of the *Leso* textiles among the Swahili people of East African coast, argued that cloth, an object of everyday use, serves as an avenue through which proverbial art is represented in writing. For her, the *leso* cloth "serves as a means of equivocal interpersonal communication, which is achieved by playing on processes of (communicative) representation – specifically, a means to transgress culturally-defined boundaries of power and powerlessness". Marie (2000:104) described the *Leso* as a "conventionalized form of communication that is designed to be used within a certain kind of situation as the best possibility for reaching one's goals". For Renne & Agbaje-Williams (2005), different forms of textiles among Yoruba people and the way these textiles are used in religious manner was their concern. An important point raised by Abiodun Rowland in that preface of Renne & Agbaje-Williams's publication of 2005, in addition to Rose Marie's 2000 and 2005 work, is that cloth as a communicative genre is the metaphoric representation of cloth as a child. These were the highlights of this thesis, which were not captured in both works – either by Rose Marie (2000; 2005) or the

contributors in Renne and Agbaje (2005). An ethnographic work which is a milestone for narratives, human agency and practice of textile researches in the 21st century is “*Woven Textiles: Andean Textiles and Rituals*” by Andrea Heckman (2003).

Heckman (2003) presented a link between the past and the present by providing contextual in-depth studies of Andean textiles through visual metaphors. She also presented the idea that foreign input into Quechua arts did not destroy but promoted traditional thought and behaviour. She gave specific accounts of the relationship between textiles and rituals by concentrating on how indigenous peoples are stimulated to create what they make and the textile makers’ unit of expression. She discovered that individuals in the textile production process work together to produce a unity of purpose and to give prominence to ancestral concepts of how the world they know survives through periods of chaos and order. This syndrome of connectivity enabled me to look at the connections between the dyed products and ritual behaviour. For example, a motif called “*olokun*” (goddess of the sea) is being consumed by the *Olokun* cult group among Osogbo people.

There have been distinctive lines of argument in respect of the conceptualization (or non-conceptualization) of the impact of gender on textile production in anthropological discourse. Two ethnographic works are noteworthy in this regard. They are Brumfiel’s *Cloth, Gender, Continuity, and Change: Fabricating Unity in Anthropology* (2006) and Stephen’s *Women’s Weaving Cooperatives in Oaxaca: An Indigenous Response to Neoliberalism* (2005). In defining the scope of contemporary anthropology and fostering unity in anthropology, Brumfiel (2006) examined the relationship between cloth, gender, continuity and change in Mesoamerica. She compared backstrap-loom weaving in three cultural contexts: the ancient Maya, the ancient Aztecs, and 20th century Mesoamerica. She discovered that continuities were present in the women’s weaving, but

important differences existed in the ways that weaving was situated historically. She was of the conviction that the Classic Maya weaving defined class, the Aztec Mexico weaving defined gender while the 20th-century Mesoamerica weaving defined ethnicity. Brumfiel revealed the contingency of culture and agency, and highlighted the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples in non-essentializing ways, which is essential in this thesis.

It is against this contextualizing background that the current study seeks to analyze *adire*. As should be clear now, the ways in which contemporary anthropologists approach the subject of thriving indigenous textile technologies with emphasis on “meaning-making” is an intrinsic issue in this study. I examined how the producers use the production processes to communicate via symbols. I also sought to understand historical changes and the responses of women dyers in the region. These identified issues of who the women dyers are as stated earlier in this chapter, what they dye, why they dye, what they communicate with their activities and dyed-products, how they feel about their dyed-products, who are their patrons/consumers and how the consumption patterns influence the production process in *adire* textile dyeing technology in Osogbo during the Osun-Osogbo annual festival are also integral aspects of the study.

1.3 Area of Study

Osogbo is the capital city of Osun state, southwestern Nigeria (Map 4). The southwest of Nigeria is composed of Yoruba-speaking people and Osogbo is a sub-ethnic group under the umbrella term Yoruba-speaking people. It is a city bounded by towns such as Ikirun, Ede, Iwo and Ilobu and several surrounding satellite villages. It is mostly populated by Yoruba-speaking people with sub-ethnic groups such as Ife, Ijesha, Oyo, Ibolu, and Igbomina. Osogbo is a cosmopolitan city, with many people from other parts of Nigeria. Based on the 2006 provisional census result, Osogbo city had a population of 287,157 people (Makama 2010).

In Osogbo, many people are formally employed but they also engage in informal activities such as farming, trading and artisanship. Osogbo has several industrial companies such as the Osogbo Iron and Steel-rolling Company (now Dangote Iron and Steel-rolling Company), Nigerian Machine Tools, printing presses and garment industries among others. However, the available National Bureau of Statistics stated that the poverty indicator of the city in 2012 stood at 37.9% and unemployment in 2012 was 3% while that for Nigeria was 6.4%¹¹. The reason for Osun state's unemployment rate was half the national average is as a result of its numerous programmes such as Osun Youth Empowerment Scheme (O'Yes), Osun Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Programme (O'Reap), Osun Youth Empowerment Scheme-Technology (O'YesTech), Osun Elementary School and Feeding Programme (O'Meals), Osun School Infrastructure Revamp (O'Schools), Osun Beefs (O'Beefs) and Osun Broilers Out-Growers Production Scheme (O'BOPS) among other programmes. These programmes were implemented by the Osun State Government to create self-reliant job opportunities for the people of the state especially youths¹². The life expectancy of the average Osogbo person was not directly indicated in the available literature but for Nigeria in 2011, it was estimated to lie between 46.8 and 48.4 years old (National Bureau of Statistics 2012; Worldstat Info 2011); however, in 2016 it was 54 years¹³.

Residents and scholars reference Osogbo town as the “Home of dyeing” (Balogun n.d.; Owoeye 2010). The oral histories collected from Osogbo residents during my previous research trips (Owoeye 2010) make it evident that the establishment of the town seems to have had an indirect connection to indigo dyeing. There are various versions of this oral history. However, there is a general consensus that the ancestors of Osogbo migrated from Ipole Omu in Ijesaland due to water

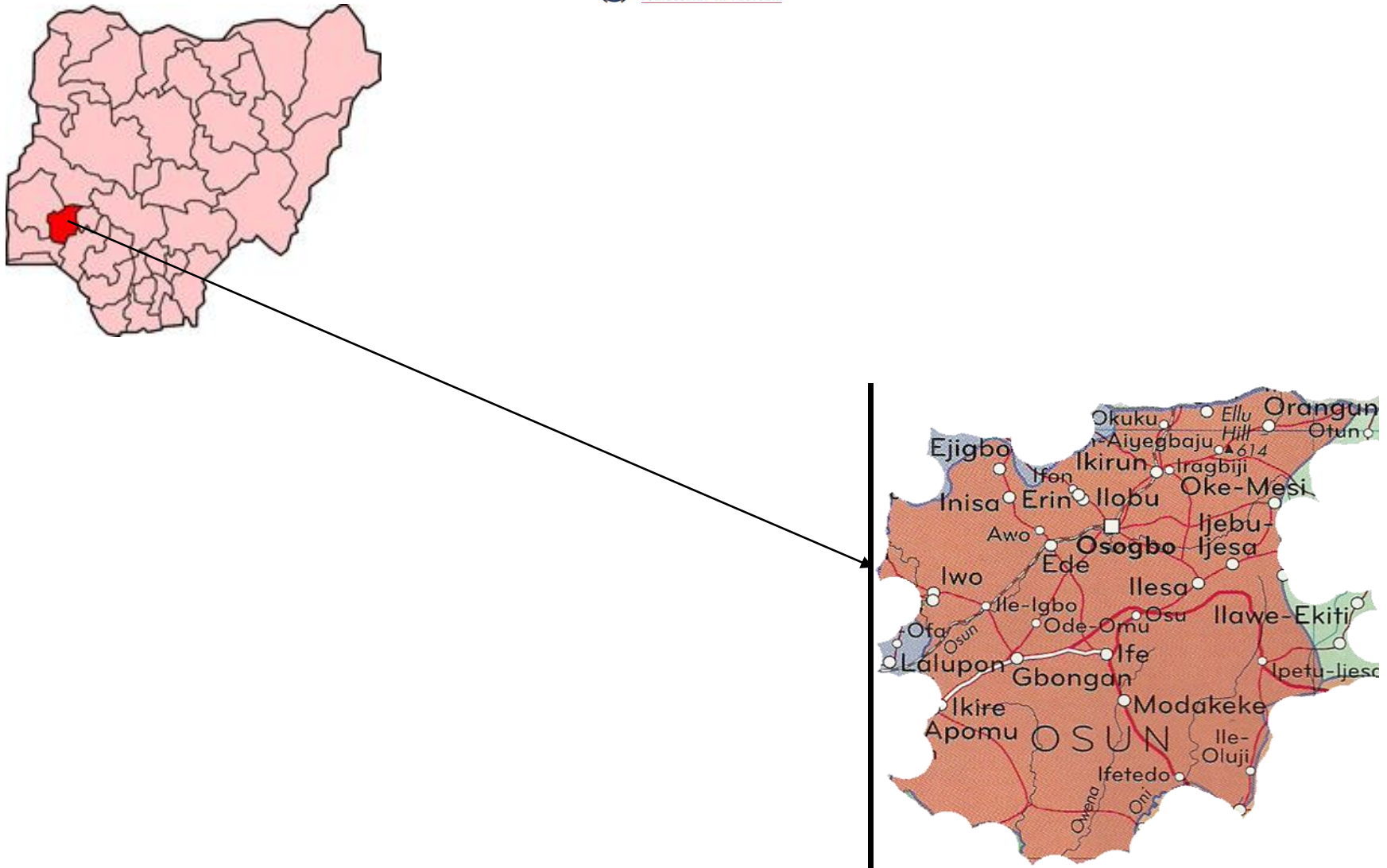
¹¹ <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/unemployment-rate>; <http://osun.gov.ng/2016/01/28/tackling-unemployment-osun-example/>

¹² <http://thenationonline.net/osuns-strategy-against-unemployment-3/>

¹³ <http://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/nigeria-life-expectancy>

scarcity and settled on the bank of the Osun River. In their bid to clear the bush around their new settlement, a tree fell on the river and the water surface turned blue immediately. It is said that a voice came from the river saying ‘*oso-igbo o, ikoko aro mi ni iwo ti fo tan yi*’, meaning ‘wizard of the forest, you have broken all my dyeing pots’. The name Osogbo is derived from the word ‘*Oso-igbo*’ which translates into English as wizard of the forest (Balogun n.d.:192). Probably as a symbolic representation of this oral history’s connection to the establishment of Osogbo and indigo textile dyeing craft, women dyers sing and dance in the presence of the King of Osogbo town, *Ataoja of Osogbo* while he proceeds from his palace to the *Osun-Osogbo* sacred grove to perform his rituals during the *Osun-Osogbo* annual cultural festival (Owoeye 2010; Balogun n.d.).

In Osogbo and most dyeing centres in Yoruba towns, indigo textile dyers are predominantly aged women, who are mostly widows and uneducated – evident in the earlier stated high employment and underemployment for females in Nigeria. These aged women reside in their husband’s family compounds – a dyeing family compound where indigo dyeing is the craft of every woman married into the family – a specialized activity and custom that enables female family members in the dyeing family to endow “every woman married into a dyeing family with all instruments and raw materials utilized in indigo textile dyeing” (Owoeye, 2010).



Map 4: Map showing the location of Osogbo in Nigeria (Google Maps¹⁴)

¹⁴ http://www.ngex.com/nigeria/state_image/map/osun.png; <http://www.nigerianeye.com/2016/03/see-reaction-of-nigerians-as-osun-gets.html>

As a result of these women dyers' old age and deteriorating health, most of the dyeing families have since stopped indigo dyeing production except for few dyeing centres. For example, the Akoda dyeing family still operates in Ede and the Aka dyeing family in Osogbo (my ethnographic study area). Evidently, these aging process on the dyeing women also reflected in the nature of the dyeing space and shade. The dyeing spaces are limited as a result of buildings constructed around the dyeing space while the dyeing shade is made of bamboo woods and rusty corrugated roofs. However, younger women in the dyeing industry are attracted to contemporary dyeing – a chemical dyeing technique, which enables speeding mass production than indigo textile dyeing.

In this research, I conducted an anthropological study of the ways in which dyers communicate and express their humanity through symbols in order to understand what they are trying to communicate and how the worldviews represented in the production of dyed textiles have changed overtime due to changes in the social, economic and political restructuring of Osogbo society.

1.4 Research Methodology

The present ethnographic writing on the indigo textile dyeing technology is an extension of my Master's dissertation. This present study is also stimulated by the hunch that there is more to the Yoruba indigenous craft and the products than a mere description of its production processes. This is so because Yoruba indigenous craft evokes symbolic analogy; that is, it has ideational nexus with Yoruba worldviews. After an in-depth reading of the discourse on indigo textile dyeing and indigenous craft system, I had several discussions with my supervisor, which culminated in the research problem, theoretical framework, research methodology and ethnographic research, conducted between November 2013 and August, 2015 in Osogbo, southwestern Nigeria – two years of intensive fieldwork.

My research at the dyeing sites in Osogbo commenced in November 2013; although this followed an earlier journey in June and July 2013 to re-connect with my earlier networks. During this period, I also made new contacts in order to acquaint myself with new dyeing sites as well as re-examine the old dyeing sites I already had in my network. Ethnography commenced in November 2013 because the rainy season spanned June to October 2013 and the dyers suggested that the dry season was the best time to examine their dyeing process.

The research reached its peak in August 2015 at the annual Osun-Osogbo festival and a re-visit to the dyeing sites later in the year was used to consolidate it. However, I need to state that my research in Osogbo was disrupted by a health injury – back pains I had during the fieldwork and the minatory outbreak of Ebola virus in the West African countries – all in 2014. With the Ebola crisis, there was restriction of human movements in Osun state, which affected the celebration of the annual Osun-Osogbo festival that held in the month of August – it was a low-key celebration without the usual pomp and fanfare. Therefore, the next opportune time was in August 2015, when I collected the data.

The primary sources of data for this research were selected dyeing sites in Osogbo. A multi-site sampling technique was adopted in selecting three research sites in Osogbo as against a single dyeing site. This technique allowed for the comparison of the dyeing sites, which revealed new cultural forms as a result of changes at the sites over the years (See Marcus 1995). It also showed the gendered-nature and socio-economic level of the chief dyers in each of the sites. I also reflected on my personal experience as a textile dyer (due to my past projects) – specifically, on the contextual use of the symbols in the *adire* production processes.

Methodologically, I relied on informants' voices as well as first-hand knowledge garnered in practice during the production processes. This provided fresh insights into textile dyeing

production processes as obtained from the women dyers' perspective rather than trying to impose the outsiders' reality. And, as a dyer myself, I followed the assumption that most indigenous technological production processes have strict genderization, which is often taken further to conceptualise the procreative act (Reid & MacLean 1995). Therefore, being a dyer myself, I had the benefit to reflexively consider how the worldviews in the production processes are articulated into sexual symbols in terms of procreative acts and methods of socialization (See chapter 6). This gave voice to the historical silences in the humanities such as the gendered positions which provided rich materials to understand the women dyers' construction of the social world via the production processes

Like most anthropologists, my principal strategy in the gathering of data for my ethnography is participant observation. I conducted unstructured, open ended interviews; that is, very close to a “naturally occurring” conversation (See also Davies 1999). This made a fixed set of questions for my interviews almost impossible to construct before the time for the ethnographic fieldwork. The interviews were open-ended but I explored the topics relevant to the research. Interviews were conducted with dyers, experts on *Ifa* oracle¹⁵ (a form of religion and medium of divination) and the consumers while purchasing dyed products during the annual Osun-Osogbo festival.

The interview technique, especially with regard to dyers, allowed me conduct a comparative analysis of the dyeing sites in relation to their information on the background, history, and

¹⁵ The *Ifa* oracle is a body of knowledge that is indigenous to the Yoruba culture. It is a divination system made up of 256 *odus* (*these are verses or stories that make up the Ifa literary corpus*), which are memorized by the *Ifa* priest known as *Babalawo* – who is an oracle consultant. In the practice of *Ifa*, divination and revelations are subject to the dynamics of the *odus*, which are built around divinity and human existence. It enhances the priest's ability to draw on deeper information from the world of spirits and the practitioners within the system require a high level of perception (W. Abimbola 1975; Jegede 2010; Agunbiade n.d.). This is for an in-depth and indigenous construction of some of the contents and expression of the motifs applied on the *adire* textiles.

mythology of *adire* technology as well as the process of performance of production processes. The technique further answered questions on how the textile dyeing technology had changed over the years, factors that had affected the craft and the consumption dynamics of the dyed textiles. The interview mode also made it possible to examine colour symbolism, harmonization of philosophical principles for perceived effective living and development in Osogbo among the dyers; in other words, I looked at the ways in which dyeing technologies are connected to processes of social reproduction. Experts on *Ifa* oracle and Yoruba cultural knowledge were interviewed to expound the symbols properly. The consumers were observed and interviewed as their purchases were being carried out during the dyers' assumed period of high sales – the annual Osun-Osogbo festival. I also observed the patrons in the process of choice-making *adire* products at the dyers' gallery/shop.

It was not possible to conduct focus group interviews as earlier planned because the women dyers were busy with their production processes. Moreover, there was in some case a subtle attempt to be evasive by the dyers probably to commercially protect the secret of their expertise . I was, however, able to investigate the gender-marked discourse and social world in the production process among the women dyers.

During the ethnography, I used a digital camcorder to record the ethnographic sessions as they took place. The recorded materials were used to further analyse and enrich my field-notes. Also, a digital camera was used to take snapshots of the events and the motifs created on the dyed textiles – it served as basis for an analysis of the data gathered.

Data were gathered from the field and, recorded on tape; field notes or video recordings were transcribed and analysed with the aid of Atlas Ti, a qualitative software package, before being

organized as a discussion of respondents' views and activities, and presented in descriptive form where everyday activities at the sites were formed on the basis of discussion.

1.5 **Organization of this study**

This thesis is essentially about the symbolic process of communication through textile production processes. It is both about history and ethnography. The thesis is a critical narrative on how textiles acquire symbolic properties with transformative potentials that the women use in their daily lives but not in a particularly 'ritual' context. This study discovered a gap within the scholarship which neglected the symbolic inscription of most indigenous craft controlled by women and created a conversation for the indigo textile dyeing craft. The thesis is organized around the concept of texts, textiles and symbolism: the symbolic communication by women dyers in the production processes of the *adire* textile dyeing craft.

In chapter two, I undertook an analysis of the historical context of the contribution of Yoruba indigo textile women dyers – the status of women in the Yoruba context, national and international contexts - the Nigerian textile industries, and a general discourse of political economy concerning women over the years. Starting from the precolonial era, I illustrated how the pre-colonial origin of the Yoruba *adire* textile tradition shared a common characteristic with the history of Yoruba people – an obscure and complicated history. The chapter is about how colonial policies intentionally neglected the *adire* products and market through taxation, emergence of untrained women entering the indigo-dyed textile market with foreign chemical materials and the colonial administration's exhibitions to fund World War II – which made craftsmen and women abstain from the exhibitions for the fear of taxation and others to produce their works in the context of the colonial project depending on the colonial officers for livelihood. In the same era, the *adire* market was also negatively affected by the cotton industry project, which built a consumer economy in

Nigeria – relying heavily on imported textiles from Europe, undermining the *adire* market until the struggle for independence inspired artists and crafts people to create anti-colonial messages through their arts and crafts – leading to the different eras of renaissance in *adire* textile history as influenced by government initiatives and Yoruba culturalists led by Ulli Beier and Susanne Wenger. The aim of the discussion is not only to construct an historical context for the comprehension of the succeeding chapters, but also to demonstrate how women dyers in the indigo textile dyeing manoeuvre through the challenges and negotiate their position within the Yoruba cultural system and the Nigerian politico-economic system as the society changes so much so that production and consumption of dyed-products increase as tourists consume more during the Osun-Osogbo festival.

In chapter three, I explore the oral history of Osogbo town, which is very constitutive to the invention of indigo textile dyeing. This chapter provides an understanding of the nature of symbols in relation to indigo textile dyeing in Osogbo through the narration of myths that are related to the vocation. I argue that there are conflicting myths which involve in particular the goddesses of Osun-Osogbo and Iya Mapo over the creation of indigo textile dyeing in the town of Osogbo. This argument shows the contentious nature of the mythical paradigm because two different myths linked the two goddesses to the creation of indigo textile dyeing in Osogbo – the political development that was the separation of Osun State from Oyo State. I further expounded the notion that myth is a symbolic communication for humans to understand the world in which they live and a model for human activity. This chapter through myth-historical viewpoints of Levi-Strauss (who perceived myth through structuralism as a “paradox – fantastic and unpredictable” – having seemingly arbitrary content but similar thought patterns in different myths in different cultures) and Ortner (who proposed that social beings in myths and rituals should be studied as having

diverse motives and intentions, which transforms the world in which they live in – specifically to examine female subordination), Leach (who perceived myth as an applied history and a cultural product that communicates certain aspects of a culture in a symbolic and metaphoric way and Bloch (a poststructuralist, who gave a new direction to the tension between the universalists and particularists by recognizing a historical approach in explicating his views of rituals) reveals essentially that mythic study is still relevant in Africa, for it has a history of unrecorded histories and has to rely on myths to reconstruct the present. In relation to the study, it also reveals that symbolism in the art of indigo textile dyeing as regards the characteristics of Osun-Osogbo and Iya Mapo indicated both of them as a gentle and caring personality, which could best be described as that of Motherhood.

In chapter four, I analyzed the relevance of the mythical symbol of motherhood during the indigo textile dyeing production processes from the women dyers' perspectives. I considered how the symbols of motherhood are incorporated into the artistic quality of the indigo-dyed textile production processes, supported by comments and exegesis of values of symbolism from the Yoruba traditional thought system. The chapter illustrated the concept of *omoluwabi* as a child or a person that has been socialized and educated in the culture and beliefs of the Yoruba society through the symbolic representation of cloth as a child from the cloth merchant and the *ise ona* (pattern making) in indigo dyeing. In this chapter, pattern making was used to demonstrate the symbolic performance of *ona* (pattern making), which represents the patterning of an unborn child in the mother's womb – the destiny of a child. However, I endeavored to explain that the destiny of a child cannot be realised in the physical realm, until the new born baby is socialized in the Yoruba culture – as imaginatively constructed through the dye solution.

In the fifth chapter, the symbolism in the dyeing process of the indigenous indigo textile attracted further exegesis. I threw some light on the creative logic that the dyers' activities of pounding the indigo leaves, creation and making dye solution and the subsequent dyeing of the earlier described patterned cloth in chapter four symbolically represent the formation of human society and the socialization of an individual in the society. This argument is centered around the explication of concepts of *Iwa* (character) and *Ewa* (beauty) through their manifest portrayal of the concept of *omoluabi* (a good and cultured person) in the Yoruba thought perspective – when the patterned cloth, which represents the destiny of a child is dyed in the dye solution.

In chapter six, I considered the alkaline water production processes as part of the indigenous indigo textile dyeing processes. In this chapter, I enunciated the opinion that the transformatory nature of rituals in indigo textile dyeing reflects the transformations in the human society; that the repetitiveness in indigo textile reflects the symbolic demonstration of gender consciousness. This symbolic gender demonstration is communicated through the production of the indigo dye water and the symbolic effects of comparing the alkaline water with modern dyeing techniques. I also discussed the mutual dependence between husband and wife in the Yoruba cultural system as expatiated upon through gender symbolism in the production of alkaline water among the Yoruba indigo women dyers in Osogbo. Besides the fact that the symbolic projection of gender sentiments is pronounced in the alkaline water production processes, I also focused on previous publications to point to the transformatory nature of rituals in indigo dyeing when I compared its two dyeing techniques – indigo dyeing technique, which involves the use of alkaline water production processes, and the contemporary dyeing technique, a metaphor for evolving democratic values in Nigeria. I stress the point that the indigenous indigo dyeing technique considers human development while the contemporary dyeing technique takes into account individual popularity in

terms of an electable candidate and quick means to wealth, all of which are expressed in the discourse of colour symbolism in chapter seven.

The seventh chapter – penultimate chapter, is an exploration of the use of *adire* textile for communication in Osogbo – notions of colour and colour symbolism and the use of texts, proverbs and images on dyed textiles as a communicative tool among Yoruba women dyers in Osogbo. I maintain in this chapter that though indigo dyeing has a colour – indigo or blue-black colour - the transformatory processes in textile dyeing, as evident in the transformations that occur in the human society, show the presence of multiple colours in contemporary dyeing. I elucidated this claim when I illustrated that a comparative analysis of colour symbolism, texts and images in indigo and contemporary dyed textiles highlighted the latter as a metaphoric representation of the transformatory meaning of *omoluabi* from the community-based value-driven person to an individually value-driven personality.

In the concluding chapter, I summarized the events and processes that had led to the construction of symbols in indigo textile dyeing; I discussed the key findings of the research. I gave an ethnographic account of the politics played by producers during the 2015 annual Osun-Osogbo festival. I explained how the political economy of Osun State, especially during the Osun-Osogbo annual festival in 2015, affected the way patrons consumed the women dyers' *adire*-dyed textiles. Based on this ethnography, I discussed the challenges that I observed dyers and sellers of dyed-products face during the Osun-Osogbo festival in 2015. I discovered that the assumed period of high sales by the women dyers, the annual Osun-Osogbo festival period, actually became a period of low sales. The period was affected by the State Government's policy on the location of the venue that was provided to sell some particular products such as the dyed products and art products during the celebration as well as the economic downturn in the state and Nigeria generally. The

dyers and sellers of dyed products had low sales during this period because the economy of Osun State especially the city of Osogbo is mainly driven by the civil servants, who are being owed several months of unpaid wages.

In the concluding chapter, I also re-examined the place of indigo *adire* dyed textiles in the contemporary global world when I ruminated analytically on the concept of decolonized knowledge. With decolonized knowledge paradigm, I had a space within anthropology to give Yoruba women dyers opportunity to speak for themselves – using the processes of indigo textile dyeing as a means of theorizing rather than for the Western scholars to speak on their behalf. I affirm that the indigo textile dyeing production processes are a transformatory phenomenon dictated by the changing political and socio-economic processes in society. Due to this transformatory process, the women dyers use persistently the power of *adire* dyed textile to negotiate different eras in the history of the world’s political economy – decolonizing knowledge in order to bring to the fore their historically-silenced and neglected voices – not exactly as a means of resistance but in an empowering, communicative and historical way to reflect the changing nature of their society.

1.6 Ethical considerations

Research of this nature requires ethical considerations because it deals with human beings. An ethical permit was obtained from the necessary authorities to assess the research instruments used for the data collection and analysis. Enabled by my position as a textile dyer and my previous research in Osogbo, I had already created some familiarity with the research sites and subjects. Nonetheless, in order to ensure the ethical stand of this research, I ensured some controls were in place. Prior to any of the interviews and observation, an informed consent form in the local language was read and explained to the women dyers and the consumers of the dyed products

informing them of the research objectives. I need to point out, however, that the reading of the information on the ethical consent during the ethnographic fieldwork soon bored the field respondents and participants that they made fun of me as an “*alakowe*” (an officious or academic person). Most of the respondents and participants were not bothered with the issue of anonymity – they claimed that they “*need to get the world to know that they are doing good things in Nigeria and they are proud of it*”. Notably, since most of the dyers and pattern makers had no formal school training and could not completely comprehend the written language, I only obtained verbal consent.

Chapter Two

Historical Background of the Yoruba Women Dyers' contributions to artistic enterprise within the Political Economy of Nigeria

2.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, indigo-dyed textile products are mostly produced in West Africa; Beier, Abiodun & Pemberton (2004:19) observed in the 1950s and 1960s that Yoruba markets were “a sea of indigo”. The Yoruba indigo-dyed product was initially a locally consumed product and it then became a global market commodity during imperialist times via international museum exhibitions. Currently, it is a global commodity at the *adire* international markets in Itoku, Abeokuta, as well as *adire* textile exhibitions and markets during internationally recognised festivals such as Osun-Osogbo annual festival (held at the UN World Heritage Centre – Osun Osogbo Groove) as well as several online selling outlets¹⁶. The history of indigo dyeing among the Yoruba people reflects the complexity of the Yoruba peoples' history. The production and consumption process of indigo-dyed products also reflect this complex nature because this production process involves a complex series of relationships in the local and global politico-economic system, which is mediated by the forces of demand and supply within Nigeria's political economy.

This chapter deals with the contributions of Yoruba indigo textile women dyers – who are mostly women of age in rural areas within the political economy of Nigeria from the pre-colonial period to the present century (See Table 1). As described in chapter 1, these aged indigo women dyers are mostly widows and uneducated, residing in their husband's family compound; a dyeing family

¹⁶Some of the online selling outlets are <https://www.jumia.com.ng/fabrics/temi-s-adire/>,
<http://bellafricana.com/shop/adire-lounge/>

compound where indigo dyeing is the craft of every woman married into the family. Notably in Osogbo – my field site, most of the dyeing family compounds’ have erected buildings to replace the women’s dyeing spaces except few operational dyeing families with a dyeing shade made of bamboo woods and brown corrugated roofs (See Figure 4) such as the Aka’s dyeing family compound. The existence of the Aka’s dyeing family in Osogbo may be due to several factors but not limited to the perseverance and tenacity of the remaining women dyers in the compound, ease of access, the extensive dyeing space – now restricted by buildings, the proximity to the Osogbo king’s palace – the hub of traditional activities as well as the King’s market.



Fig. 4: Dyeing shade in Aka’s Dyeing Family Compound in Osogbo

Prior to the extinction of some of these dyeing families, they have “a custom that every woman married into the family must be endowed with all the instruments and raw materials utilized in indigo dyeing” (Owoeye 2010) – a means of apprenticeship, economic independence and

socialization into the family and society. Though dyeing was the craft of every Yoruba woman, Ojo (1966) documented that due to the intricate processes there were specialists – not necessarily from the extended family of the dyeing compound but may come from another dyeing family or within the town. For example, during the fieldwork, the supply of *elu* (indigo) leaves and patterning of clothes were done by different women indirectly related to the Aka dyeing family in Osogbo. And due to specialization, there was rapid development of the economy of dyeing from a domestic family economy to an internal exchange economy among the Yoruba women dyers. One of the effects of the rapid exchange economy and political structures in Nigeria was the change in the custom of endowing newly married women in the dyeing family with dyeing utensils; as a result of formal education and the pursuit of individual career for a more lucrative and high paying jobs and the introduction of the contemporary dyeing techniques, which the younger ladies/women prefer due to faster rate of dyeing textiles. Nevertheless, these women dyers have contributed immensely to the artistic enterprise in Nigeria, yet their contributions are largely unrecognized in the history of Nigeria.

Therefore, this chapter specifically explores the gendered context of Yoruba women dyers' contributions to the artistic enterprise in Nigeria, and the comprehension of indigo dyed textile as a commodity through the activities of the colonialists – during which the economic exploitation of the colony's raw materials and indigenous (commodity) products for European industries and gains were the major aim of the colonial administrators. It also considers the post-colonial and post-independent periods¹⁷ that see the colonial states become independent states and later

¹⁷ After Nigeria gained independence in 1960, she was not totally independent because the British Administrators were still involved in the Nigerians' Government activities between 1960-1963 - I termed this period 'Post-Colonial Period'). However, Nigeria became totally independent from Britain in 1963 when she signed 'The Declaration of Independence' to become a Republic. A type of government where the British Monarch ceases to be the chief of the Nigerian state; the supreme power resides in the body of citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by elected representative responsible to them and governing according to law' and to relate to other states and countries without

interdependent states in a global world. During these periods, scholarly commentaries and researches on the women's art of dyeing and its artistic contributions were only descriptive (See Areo & Kalilu, 2013; Areo & Kalilu, 2013; Areo, 2013; Owoeye, 2009; Owoeye, 2010; Oyelola, 1981; Oyelola, 1981 as examples); it lacked theoretical inscriptions, dissociated from political economy and with few or no direct references in the archives. These developments suggest that there is a historical background to the ways in which Yoruba women dyers and their artistic contributions have been neglected by academic analysis (Sudarkasa 1986:91-95). Despite this apparent neglect, the art of indigo textile dyeing continues to exist – with women bringing out different motifs and designs to make the dyeing industry lucrative, valuable and to showcase their traditional knowledge and technology.

Specifically in this chapter I will examine the historical background of the women dyers within the context of the Nigerian political economy through archival¹⁸ documents. I highlight the artistic activities and contributions of the women dyers during the pre-colonial period. I then examine the activities of the slave trade merchants, which affected the art of dyeing and Yoruba dyers – with uncountable numbers of productive artists and craftspeople lost during the transatlantic slave trade and art products were also carted away; the Europeans' preference for women slaves may have depleted the women's productive force especially the women artists and craftswomen.

Following this era, I examine the political economy during colonialism. I examine the effects of colonialism on the dyers' apprenticeship system, which was disrupted (but it remained because the

any legal attachments to Britain (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/republic>, retrieved in 6th of June, 2015). This is the period I termed Post-Independence period.

¹⁸ Most of the archival documents used in this chapter (and this thesis) were from the National Archives Ibadan (NAI). Most of the archival documents were letters, extracts of annual reports and correspondences from one district to another with no particular author(s) during the colonial era. So, the documents with no author are cited as NAI documents while the archival documents with authors are cited with the author's name and the NAI reference location number.

practice of the indigenous religion *aide*, it remained in a secretive initiation ceremony) and the colonial obsession with sculpture not only as a way of making money but also as essentialisation of ‘Africanness’ resulted in the main stream sidelining of the indigo textile production. This era was affected by several incidents such as the Exhibition of Art and Craft Products in Museums (local and international); the Women (Dyers’) Revolt and Protest as a result of the introduction of imported dye stuffs, the activities of inexperienced dyers and the colonialists’ drive for revenue through taxation reduced the activities of women dyers and caused some disruptions in Yoruba society. Aside from these imperial activities, the cultivation of cotton and the drive to establish textile factories further led to the decline of the indigo dyeing trade. Notably, the correspondence by the Textile Expert in Ado-Ekiti (a town in the current Ekiti State, Southwest Nigeria) showed the existence of the indigenous indigo dyeing industry and tried to encourage the production. But, the Director of Commerce and Industries and Commerce in Lagos (also in Southwest Nigeria) discouraged the Textile Expert in Ado-Ekiti and informed him to focus on the task assigned to him by the Directorate. However, the responses of the women dyers during this period were also creative; they adjusted to the political economy in society by shifting to the demands of the new patrons of their products, which leads to the Renaissance Periods during the Colonial era.

After the Colonial era, Nigeria gained independence. Nigeria’s independence and post-independence periods were mostly driven by the oil economy and textile factories. These periods saw the continuation of the renaissance subtheme under the aegis of Ulli Beier in Ibadan with Mbari Art Club and later in Osogbo with Mbari-Mbayo Art Club – where local uneducated artists were trained to be independent artists and the scholars’ recognition of dyed textiles as an art. The renaissance subtheme is entwined with the Nigeria’s civil war and liberalization and globalization policies subthemes.

The Nigerian civil war and liberalization and globalization policies, mitigated against women dyers via the unstable economy then, the integration of the Nigerian economy with the global economy. However, these factors also encouraged the women dyers to produce more *adire* dyed-products and the renaissance period witnessed an increased artistic impulse and contributions from women dyers – especially with the influence of the artistic contribution of Suzanne Wenger (an apprentice of *Obatala*¹⁹ priest and Yoruba indigo dyeing in Osogbo) in the indigo dyeing in Osogbo. She led the movement to create motifs of Yoruba everyday activities and communicate cultural values (events, proverbs and folktales) on imported textiles and synthetic dyestuffs.

Wenger's works were not limited to *adire* dyed textiles, she was also involved in sculpting. Most of her sculpted arts pervades the Osun-Osogbo groove. Wenger's artistic contribution to the annual Osun-Osogbo festival may be one of the factors that influenced the United Nations to recognize Osun-Osogbo groove as a World Heritage site in 2005 (See Chapter 9). With the United Nations (UN) recognition of the Osun-Osogbo Grove and Annual festival as World Cultural Centre, production and consumption of dyed-products increase as tourists consume more during the festival seasons (See Chapter 8). Aside the periods of Osun-Osogbo festival, more of the dyed-products are exported abroad – mostly via textile art exhibitions by institutes of cultural studies and art galleries (from Nigeria and Foreigners) in Western countries. These exhibitions repositions Nigeria's (and Africa's) rich cultural heritage and economy in the world.

¹⁹*Obatala*: In the Yoruba traditional religion, *Obatala* is an *Orisha* (god). According to Idowu, E. Bolaji; *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, London (1962), he is the representative of *Olorun* (God) on earth and the creator of human bodies, which are brought to life by *Olorun's* (God) breath. He is the father of all *orishas* and the owner of *Ori* (The human head and thoughts). Therefore, any *Orisha* may claim an individual, but until that individual is initiated into the priesthood of that *Orisha*, *Obatala* still owns that head. *Obatala* likes everything clean, white and pure.

Table 1: Chronological developments in Nigeria and Impact on Adire Textile Production

S/No.	Theme	Sub-theme	Period	Impact on Adire Textile Production
1.	Pre-Colonial	Pre-transatlantic	Obscure and complicated Yoruba history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to the nomenclature <i>adire</i> – <i>kijipa</i> existed as the basic cloth used on a daily basis among the Yoruba women • <i>Adire</i> is practiced solely by women in several towns and villages in Southwestern Nigeria
		Transatlantic	Pre-15 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transatlantic slave trade economy led to the Yoruba internecine wars and taking away of Nigeria arts and productive craftsmen and women. • Preference for women slaves because they had high work rate reduced the population of women textile dyers
		Post-Transatlantic	Pre-colonial (Pre-1851)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profit from the trading during the transatlantic slave economy were used to established industries in Europe but for lack of raw materials Nigeria became a colony.
		Colonialism	1851-1914	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign private capital created a male-dominated economic activities • Disruption of traditional apprenticeship that was crucial for the training of artists, weavers and dyers. • Impoverishment of traditional class of patrons of arts and crafts, thereby astute master-artists and craft people recognized the new colonial economy and produced

				commissioned arts for the merging class of patrons for livelihood.
2.	Colonial (1851-1960)	Women Dyers’ Protest/Revolt	1851-1937	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the beginning, indigo-dyed cloth was a major regional commodity – it also reached outside the borders of Nigeria • Introduction of taxation as the colonial administration funds of World War I • Indigo women dyers complained about the emergence of untrained women entering the indigo-dyed textile market with foreign chemical materials – synthetic dyes. This led to the ban of the synthetic women dyers and subsequent protest by <i>Egba Dyers’ Union</i>. The protest led to the lifting of the ban and compulsory taxation of all Yoruba arts and crafts.
		Exhibition	1937-1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the World War II, colonial administration planned exhibitions to fund the war but craftsmen and women abstained from the exhibitions for the fear of taxation. • Artists who produced their works in the context of colonial project depended on the colonial officers for livelihood
		Cotton Industry Project	1945-1949	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonial policies intentionally neglected art of the indigenous indigo textile dyeing and built a consumer economy in Nigeria, which relied heavily on imported textiles from Europe – declining the adire market.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nationalists and Liberation struggle and women's tax revolt increased the appreciation for adire products
		The Renaissance: Arrival of Ulli Beier	1949-1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic restrictions, high inflations and shortages during World War II affected the economic contributions of indigo dyeing industry. • The struggle for independence inspired artists and craftspeople to create anti-colonial messages through their arts and crafts. • Introduction of foreign religion and system of education attracted young apprentices – the bedrock of the traditional craft apprenticeship system, destroying the apprenticeship system in indigo textile dyeing until the arrival of Ulli Beier in the 1950s who interacted with indigenous artists to bring their work to the global level. • From archival sources, no significant artistic contributions by women dyers during the colonial period – they were turned into a <i>homo economicus</i>
3.	Independent and Post- Independent	Adire Renaissance continues: Ulli Beier	1960-1967	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the classification of Yoruba visual arts into superior and minor arts forms subsiding among scholars, indigo dyeing became one of the classified Yoruba visual arts

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The arrival of Ulli Beier and Susanne Wenger transformed indigo dyeing industry in Osogbo with the formation of Mbari-Mbayo with Duro Ladipo to train young artists outside the walls of formal education. This led to the establishment of an art movement called Osogbo Art Movement.
		Nigerian Civil War	1967-1969	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ban on the importation of printed textiles boosted the indigo dyeing industry. • Emergence of the contemporary dyeing via candle wax in indigo dyeing called Kampala fabrics at the twilight of the Nigeria Civil War – a result of the Peace Talks held in Kampala, Uganda. • Both the ban on importation of printed textiles and emergence of candle wax dyeing during the Nigeria Civil War created jobs for in the adire industry and a momentum of the <i>adire</i> renaissance. • After the Civil War in 1970, concurrent events such as the Adire Renaissance by Susanne Wenger, the Factory Textiles and the Government initiatives to continue the adire renaissance. These events either continued the renaissance of adire or negatively affected the productivity of the women dyers

		Adire Renaissance continues: Susanne Wenger	1970 till her death in 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susanne Wenger continued with the <i>Adire</i> renaissance after Ulli Beier left Nigeria in 1967 by concentrating on cassava starch – painting interpretation of Yoruba mythology on pieces of adire textiles as well as the constant reconstruction, renovation and conservation of the shrines in the Osun Osogbo groves until her death in 2009.
		The Factory Textiles	1970-1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Adire</i> industry share a symbiotic relationship with the factory-made textiles as the textile factory’s product is the dyers’ raw product. <p>With the full operation of the textile factories and invasion of Nigerian textile market with cheap smuggled textiles from China and other European countries, adire textile sales declined as more labour is needed in the textile factory as a result of its little mechanization and the love of Nigerians for foreign textiles.</p>
		Oil Exploration	1970s-Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The exploration of oil pulled more human resources out of the non-oil sectors such as indigo textile dyeing industry until the crash of oil prices in 1986 and recent crash in 2015 – still remains unstable and volatile, which has resulted in the diversification of the economy to the non-oil sectors.

		<p>Renaissance: Government Initiatives</p>	<p>1979-present</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals, Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality, NEPAD in Africa encourage Nigerian Governments to start pet projects like Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW), Family Support Programme (FSP) and Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) to focus on women economic activities such as indigo textile dyeing. • The Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) also encouraged diversification of the Nigeria economy to reduce over-reliance on oil sector and imports economy to non-oil productive sectors, which adire industry benefitted immensely. • In the 21st century, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) programme by the democratic government sustained the activities of indigo textile dyeing industry as newer motifs emerged from events in the social and political realm in Nigeria.
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2.2 Adire Women during the Pre-Transatlantic and Transatlantic Slave Trade (Pre-15th Century)

The account of the pre-colonial origin of the Yoruba *adire* textile tradition shares a common characteristic with the history of Yoruba people; it is filled with obscurity and it has been a subject of controversy among scholars – therefore, the pre-colonial origin of Yoruba *adire* textile tradition is unknown – hence the paucity of written records (personal discovery during my archival search indicated inadequate archival records and documents on *adire* tradition in Yorubaland). This has led to the emergence of various theories of accidental discoveries (mostly archaeological) – with arguments of superiority and inferiority concerning the locations where dyeing was and is practiced (Owoeye 2010). Some scholars argued that the origin of *adire* tradition must be sought in the context of indigo dyeing and the world of Yoruba women in Southwestern Nigeria because its history is an integral part of the history of the Yoruba (Areo & Kalilu 2013; Aronson 2004; Beier et al. 2004). I noticed in previous research that the composition of these women dyers changes with the changing political economy existing in the country. Over the years, despite the changing political economic environment, these indigo women dyers have achieved excellence in the art of *adire* dyeing and transformed the activity into a sort of cooperative venture in which every female member of the family participates (Owoeye 2014).

Prior to the nomenclature *adire*, women and men engaged in trading and weaving of textiles; while the men stretched their warp²⁰ 20 yards or more, the women wove cloth in broad pieces called *Kijipa*²¹ – two or three breadth forming a covering (Johnson 1921). This suggests that the Yoruba

²⁰ The threads on a loom over and under which other threads (the weft) are passed to make cloth.

²¹ *Kijipa* is a fabric produced on the broad loom by women. It is a fixed vertical frame upon which the warp of the thread is held under tension to weave cloth of predetermined length of about 30-90cm width to allow two or three pieces to be stitched together to make a wrap known as “*Iro*” for women (Adegbite, Ilori & Aderemi 2011:245).

women were the first to create indigo-dyed cloths in Nigeria over a century ago on ‘*kijipa*’ – a handwoven cloth on the women’s upright loom (Areo & Kalilu 2013; Wolff 2014) – a source of income for many families (Negri 1976). It could be assumed that *Kijipa* was the only material the Yoruba women dyers perceived fit for dyeing in the pre-colonial periods. Aside the *kijipa* clothes, indigo dye was also used to re-dye fading clothes.



Fig. 5: A master weaver, Jamnat Ijake, weaving *Kijipa* on Yoruba traditional women broadloom. (Makinde et al. 2009:68)



Fig. 6: Kijipa Fabric: a product of traditional Yoruba women broadloom (Makinde et al. 2009:68)

Kijipa is one of the basic cloths used on a daily basis amongst the Yoruba women as cover clothes, casual wrappers worn to the markets and baby ties. Abimbola (1997) reiterated the view that long before jeans were invented, the Yoruba had invented the thick cloth known as *Kijipa*, dyed in indigo, which Yoruba people wore to their place of work. Much more than a work cloth, it was also made to prevent miscarriages, served as cure for barrenness, agency of blessings, protection, prosperity, victory and health; all these are possible once it is soaked in herbal and medicinal concoctions to strengthen and protect the wearer through connection with sweat (Aremu 1982 in Asakitikpi 2007:110; Omatseye & Emeriewen 2012:64; Adegbite et al. 2011:245) This indicates that women dyers were not only producing the dyed textiles as cover clothes but provided a platform for medical and social solutions for the *Ifa* priest and citizens prior to any form of interactions with the Europeans (See Chapter 1).

The interactions, which were part of a wider historical process between the Europeans and pre-colonial Yoruba was instigated by the shortage of labour in newly claimed European colonies. Rodney (1972), discussing the effect of European incursions into West Africa, stated that the Portuguese arrived in West Africa, shortly before the middle of the fifteenth century, and they started seizing Africans and taking them to work as slaves in Europe – due to the shortage of labour. Subsequently, this led to the Yoruba internecine war, taking away Nigerian arts and productive craftsmen and women. Though the Yoruba craft industry, especially the dyeing craft, was affected, the creative industry of *adire* arts remained in existence.

The Yoruba internecine wars, instigated by the slave trade, created an avenue for dispersal and migration of different Yoruba groups and transatlantic slave trade. Nwokeji (2012) expressed the transatlantic European slave traders' preference for women slaves because they discovered women had a high work rate. This depleted the local population, especially the local artisans, craftsmen and craftswomen such as the women dyers disrupting the traditional apprenticeship system (Zezeza & Eyon 2002; Izuchukwu 2010:35). These events stunted the growth of the *adire* dyeing tradition as well as the artistic contributions of the Yoruba women dyers, which could have spread to other groups in Nigeria.

2.3 Colonial Political Economy in Nigeria and Yoruba Women Dyers Artistic Contributions (1851-1960)

However, after the transatlantic slave trade was abolished, profits from the trades were used to establish industries in Europe. But the lack of raw materials for the new industries turned the gaze of the Europeans' to Africa once again.

During this period, African states became colonial states – a major target of exploitation to provide cheap and steady raw materials and labour (Izuchukwu 2010; Rojas 1990b). It created male-dominated economic activities such as the cultivation of cash crops and raw materials like cotton, rubber, groundnut and palm oil, all being needed for international market. The production of other commodities was discouraged or neglected (Rojas 1990a). Specifically, women dyers during this period became housewives that occasionally helped their husbands on the farm or market the farm produce for sales and at other times, they reside at home to dye textiles and to tend poultry, goats and sheep for markets to complement the household incomes. Therefore, the colonial economy, which was driven by foreign private capital, discouraged and pulled the colonial subjects from their subsistence economy toward the cash-crop driven economy of the colonial state.

Zeleza & Eyon (2002) were quick to point out that this colonial economic system disrupted the traditional apprenticeship system that was crucial for the training of artists, weavers and dyers; the impoverishment of the traditional class of patrons of arts and crafts, which led to a drop in art commissions due to their limited financial resources, affected the production of arts of aesthetic relevance, but astute master-artists and craft people recognized the potential of the new colonial economy and restructured their operations to produce ‘arts’ for indiscriminating foreigners or commissioned works for an emerging class of patrons (missionaries and colonial officials, educated Africans and affluent local merchants). Despite all these events there were either indirect reference or no documented records of the artistic contributions and activities of women dyers. Therefore, this section highlighted the chronological activities of the women dyers especially the women dyers’ protest in Abeokuta (1890s-1937), the colonial administrators’ exhibition of art products for income (1937-1945), the cotton project (1945-1949) and the *adire* renaissance of Ulli Beier (1949-1960).

2.3.1 Women (Dyers') Protest/Revolt (1890s-1937)

In Yorubaland, the British assumed administrative control in a piecemeal fashion. In 1851, Lagos was seized and the colonialists' influence gradually spread throughout the Yoruba states amidst the Yoruba internecine wars and stiff resistance to colonial rule. It was not until the 1890s that successful colonial rule was imposed through series of treaties with warring Yoruba factions along with strategic military expedition (Johnson 1921; Denzer 1994).

Among the Yoruba people, the Abeokuta people were quick to adapt to the new colonial system: because as the British colonial government began to extend its control beyond Lagos, Abeokuta became one of the leading political and economic centres in Yorubaland as well as centre of missionary activity. In 1899, the construction of railway to Abeokuta boosted commercial activities and attracted droves of European merchants. Abeokuta became a producer of several major export items, and indigo-dyed cloth was a major regional commodity (Byfield 2003).

The textile dyeing trade encouraged the growth of pottery and cotton cultivation and weaving industries, especially in Abeokuta. The textile dyeing trade extended as far as Gusau in Northern Nigeria, Onitsha in Eastern Nigeria and outside the borders of Nigeria, such as Senegal, Cameroun, Congo and Ghana (Odebisi 1985).

Prior to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, which had considerable effect on Nigeria, the colonial subjects in Nigeria experienced rising incomes (Olorunfemi 1984:238, 241 in Byfield 2003:254). Colonial subjects, both men and women, were taxed but with complex implications for women's economic enterprises, especially for women dyers with no other means of income; taxation made the indigo dyed cloth industry decline. Despite the decline in the subjects' incomes

during the internecine war period, the colonial officials tried not to allow it to influence the discussion on tax collection (Byfield 2003:260-262)

Prior to its decline, Odebiyi (1985) cited an Intelligence Report by the District Officer Major J. H. Blair Ed in 1937 that the indigo textile dyeing industry in Abeokuta was valued at about £250,000. It was recorded that over 2,200 *adire* traders in Abeokuta were liable for taxation while the value of the materials dyed each year was estimated at ₦400,000. At the height of the trade, half of the population of the town was involved in the industry, with ₦7,260 realized by the colonial government as duty on 812,490 metres of *Adire* cloth exported from Abeokuta. The textile dyeing industry provided financial benefits and employment opportunities for Abeokuta people as well as Lagos people who acted as interpreters, agents and trade assistants for foreigners.

But by the end of the 1920s, the Yoruba people and the whole of Nigeria was effectively under colonial rule; the "value of indigo textile dyeing industry had fallen by half and continued to fall throughout the 1930s as a result of the colonial expenses on World War I" (Byfield 2003:262). It became a concerned issue to women dyers (mostly rural women with no western education) and European merchants who wanted the state to intervene; specifically, the dyers wanted assistance, especially with untrained women (probably those with some form of western education) entering the industry and influencing changes in the credit structure while the European merchants wanted to ensure that women stopped using caustic soda and synthetic dye because of quality control problems (Byfield 2003:262). Consequently, due to the outcry against the inimical effects of imported caustic soda and synthetic dyes, the imported dyes were banned and prohibited, and the Police was empowered to enforce the law by searching the homes of dyers day and night (Odebiyi 1985). Although, the only recorded reason for the state's intervention was to control the quality of

adire products; it seems underlying this intervention were the ease to collect taxes from the majority of the “(*adire*) women [who] contributed heavily to the colonial treasury” without any complaint as long as “they were able to derive profits from their various enterprises” (Byfield 2002:261-262) (emphasis mine). Aside this quality control, the ban was necessitated in order to stop capital flight in the way of discouraging the use of imported dyes.

The ban led to protests by the Egba Dyers Union, formed in 1924, with the support of other worried members of the community. A Commission of Enquiry into the *adire* industry in 1936 ensued, which recommended the lifting of the ban (Renne 2002; Byfield (2002) in Byfield 2003; Odebiyi 1985). On the other hand, the lifting of ban on synthetic dyestuffs made taxes compulsory and turned the colonial administrators’ focus on Yoruba arts and crafts as a means of income generation for the state and not for their artistic contributions. These events affected the women dyers’ activities and contribution to the society – the lifting of the ban on synthetic dyestuffs reduced the patrons of the women indigo dyers, it further led to the decline and loss of the women dyers’ apprentice to synthetic dyeing system and most especially the compulsory taxes impoverished the women dyers and their families because they could not contribute any additional household income.

2.3.2 The Exhibitions (1937-1945)

As the colonial state imposed taxes on Yoruba arts and crafts producers in Abeokuta, it spread to other Yoruba states, especially Ibadan with exhibition strategies to draw the artists (including women dyers) closer to the colonial administration for effective tax collection. In 1937 (12th October), the Superintendent, Education Department, Ibadan, sent a telegram to the Residents in Oyo Province, Ibadan, requesting the District Officers to make an appeal through the Chiefs to the

Heads of crafts guild in Ibadan to exhibit their products (African arts and crafts) as Christmas and New Year's present Exhibition. The exhibition by the Education Department in Lagos was to be held between Nov 26th and 27th with the aim of helping art and crafts workers to sell their work and become known to possible buyers – priced and sold or price and order taken basis. The articles to be secured for the exhibition include: Carving, Cabinetmaking, Leatherwork, Pottery, Pictures, Photographs, Gold, Silver, Brass and Iron work, Dyeing, Weaving, Embroidery and African dresses (NAI 1937)²².

The exhibition was planned to remove false impressions and to bring possible buyers in contact with genuine artists because of some accusations made by the colonial administrators. The colonial administrators discovered that the best Yoruba 'craftsmen' (neglecting the craftswomen); did not usually make articles for sale at the markets, but only produce for patrons on order, and thus the only objects that came to the general market were inferior work that had been refused by a customer. The reason for the neglect of the craftswomen and especially the women dyers was as a result of the "increasingly structured and organized" international economic market for newly carved objects (Steiner 1994:6-7) and probably because of the male-dominated economic activities. He also observed that from this exhibition period onward, some of the sculpted objects were being commissioned for the colonialists' collections or as gifts for their friends and family in the metropole, which were auctioned during economic recession (Ibid). And the acquaintance of most Europeans with the Yoruba craft work was limited to the inferior articles hawked by the Hausa traders or mass produced by inferior craftsmen – this brought Yoruba art and craft works

²² National Archives Ibadan

into disrepute. However, the exhibition was cancelled on the 20th of October, 1937, as a result of difficulties in making satisfactory arrangements at a short notice.

In 1938, Messrs Murray and Hunt-Cooke, focusing on career structure in arts of *Gelede* and *Egungun* masks, stated that “it can for instance be said with almost absolute certainty that a commercial motive will not produce a good art” (Murray & Hunt-Cooke 1938). Although the motive of the colonial administrators may have been to help the arts and crafts industries but the subjects may have also discovered from the colonial policies in Abeokuta its drive to generate income due to the dwindling revenue of the colonial state. Therefore, artists and crafts people may have decided to abstain from the exhibition because the colonial state neglected their artistic contributions but focused on the colonial state’s opportunity for revenue generation and economic advantage for the Colonial state.

Both the cancellation of the arts and crafts exhibition and the concerns of Murray and Hunt-Cooke caught the attention of Ooni of Ife, Oba Aderemi²³, and he expressed to the District Office (Ife) in 1938 that: “I do not see how African arts as a ‘trade’ can live without the Government’s liberal support”. However, the Ooni of Ife could only notice the artistic contribution of the African carvers or artists who pursue other trades seeing no means of livelihood in their trade (Aderemi 1938).

It was the focus on sculpture as an African art that led to the emergence of the scholarly study of variety of African arts, which manifest artistic impulses and draws inspiration from patterns of religion and philosophy reinforcing and enriching beliefs (Ben-Amos 1989 and Hull 1972 in Owoye 2013). But the focus on sculpture was influenced by the classical tradition, which was

²³Ooni of Ife, Oba Adesoji Aderemi was a Nigerian political figure and Yoruba traditional ruler as *Ooni* - King of Ile-Ife between 1930 and 1980. He served as the Governor of Western Region, Nigeria between 1960 and 1967.

driven by Western aesthetics, historical, cultural and political biases already built into the conception and development of Anthropology and African studies (Abiodun 2001 in Owoeye 2013). Much more than the developments in Anthropology, the classical tradition placed emphasis on sculpture as a result of the “exceptionally high monetary value placed on traditional Nigerian arts, and indeed African arts by foreign collectors and desire to authenticate traditional carvings and enhance their investment value – not recognizing the fact that other categories of Nigerian arts may be equally, or even more important in the cultures which produced them” (Oyelola 1981:vi). Other factors may be the perception that sculpture was the oldest of the arts – displaying permanence, often of naturalistic forms, and has economic advantages with production motivated and influenced by the international market (Hull 1972 in Owoeye 2013).

For example, another planned exhibition in 1941 confirmed the focus on sculpture during the initial experiment of Nigerian Crafts Show Room in Lagos; it was held for 2 weeks with over 800 fee paying participants. The exhibition proceeds were given to the World War II Troops' comforts. The exhibits mainly included Benin wood carving, Ivory work, ebony work, Basket work, weaving and drawings. Dyeing was exempted from the list of exhibits (NAI 1941a). But weaving came to light during the planning for the Nigerian Crafts Show Room in 1941. This was a result of the encounter the District Officer had with some men who dyed cloths and cotton threads with locally-produced khaki dye. He also interviewed some women weavers whom he had the opportunity to interview. However, prices were of concern to the colonialists (NAI 1941b). During the World War II, the colonial administrators' insatiable search for avenues to raise revenues continued with different strategies. For example, in 1944, the Chief Commissioners were directed by the Honourable Senior Resident in Oyo Province regarding the development of arts and crafts and the localities in which these arts and crafts were attempted. They were to make brief notes of any

encouragement or development in villages where particular arts and crafts existed on an appreciable scale in their province (NAI 1944c).

There were several reports from the provinces on the development of arts and crafts around Yorubaland. Specifically, there were some encouragements and developments noticed in broad weaving looms in Oyo division. Other arts and crafts that had general encouragements were local silversmiths, blacksmiths, leatherworks and calabash carvers. All these were as a result of the Agricultural Handcrafts Exhibition in Oyo division, held in Oyo November, 1944. It was reported that “there is practically nothing in the way of the arts and crafts in the Ibadan Northern District.” It was assumed that the enquiry did not cover the dyeing and weaving industries, where there was considerable scope for improved methods of design (NAI 1944a).

However, there was some disturbing information gathered by the District Officer in Ibadan that he “can obtain no evidence of any development of village arts and crafts on an appreciable scale in this Division” (NAI 1944b). This may have led the Secretary, Western Province of Ibadan, to give order for the reference collection of the products of local crafts and industries. The Secretary specifically stated that “it was the intention that the collection be confined to products likely to be saleable in export markets or in local markets at a distance from their source of supply. This rules out bulky articles like bricks, tiles and heavy implements produced by local blacksmiths.” He furthered declared that “specimen should not be purchased without sending in preliminary lists of articles proposed for collection”(NAI 1944d).

Zezeza & Eyon (2002) referring to the general state of Africa arts stated that this kind of attitude significantly influenced a generation of modern African artists who produced their works in the context of the colonial project. They were forced to deal with the arrogance and racism of the

colonial officers; as a result, those who depended on their works for a livelihood had to be strategic for their European audience but they also produced arts that were centred on their sense of humanity. In all of these exhibition period, the indigo women dyers could neither openly practice indigo dyeing craft for fear of compulsory taxes that was compounded by the exemption policy on dyeing craft nor have their clients who have been impoverished by the colonial economy patronize their dyed products. The cumulative effects of these events on the women dyers is the apparent silencing of the women dyers by the colonial administrators and/or the silence of the women dyers within the society to produce indigo dyed textiles in secrets – solely for immediate family members rather than for the clients in the society.

2.3.3 The Cotton Industry Project (1945-1949)

Previous activities within the Nigerian polity such as the untrained women entering the dyeing industry, the dwindling value of the *adire* industry as a result of the introduction of synthetic dyestuffs and compulsory taxation and the unsuccessful exhibitions arranged by various District Officers could have led the colonial administrators to seek alternative revenue generation in cotton cultivation in the mid-1940s. The collection of taxes from the women dyers (and other artists) has either lowered the production of *adire* or made the artists practice their craft in the secrets; ultimately, there was no recognition of the women dyers artistic contribution in Nigeria. The colonial policies and programme for cotton cultivation seemed more plausible and economically viable since the colonial subjects now preferred to dye imported factory textiles rather than *Kijipa*. Oyelola in an interview in 2014 confirmed that the drive for cotton cultivation with the establishment of the Moore plantation along Ibadan-Abeokuta road. The plantation started but it did not work: may be the cotton did not grow well as they had hoped. Therefore, the Moore plantation became a general government-owned plantation.

After World War II, the colonial administrators focused their attention on the cotton industry – specifically establishing textile centres in areas cotton was cultivated. During the period 1946 to 1949, textile development progress reports showed the rigorous colonial project of establishing textile centres in Nigeria. The colonial administrators embarked on building and equipping of the colonial government’s textile centres. Trainings on textile productions were conducted for subjects but the recruitments and apprenticeship system were vague.

The recruitments of trainees shifted to the ex-servicemen – they were given dormitories in which to reside in order to make their work production effective. Oyelola commented in an interview that in this era, most of the Europeans who were sent to direct affairs in Nigeria then were "Army Demobbed" (people who were demobilized after the war). However, it was specifically reported in Ondo and Ekiti States that ex-service men trainees left the comfort of the dormitory after getting fixed up to weave individually from their homes and not as a cooperative, which the women dyers structured the indigo dyeing industry in the family dyeing compounds. The colonial administration revealed that the actions of the ex-servicemen were beneficial in several ways: the ex-servicemen will be able to know what products are suitable for their local market, the extra labour costs will not be calculated as all members of the family will weave and instead of using native yarn they insisted on using imported warp and native weft. In all, the Textile Officer concluded that this cloth produced was far lighter in weight and much more pleasing in appearance (Oyelola 2014).

Of all these events and colonial policies during the cotton industry project, one particular correspondence showed the colonial administration’s bias and intentional neglect of indigo textile dyeing among the Yoruba people. In 1946, a memo was sent by a Textile Expert in Ado-Ekiti town noticing the indigo dyeing industry in the area and desired to make it an important item of general

research during the financial year. He desired to find out the present condition of the art of indigo dyeing and how the operations of synthetic dyestuffs may affect the local indigo dyeing industry. Although the Director stated that investigations into the Indigo Textile Dyeing were of great importance, he felt that the Textile Expert in Ado-Ekiti would be fully preoccupied for the remainder of the financial year in establishing the textile centres – he indented for a Dye Chemist to investigate dyes synthetic and natural and dyeing processes best suited for the common local fibres and for leather (NAI 1946).

This particular communication from the Director of the Department of Commerce and Industries in Lagos indicates that the colonial policies intentionally neglected the art of indigenous indigo textile dyeing and built a consumer economy in Nigeria, which relied heavily on imported textiles from Europe. This was a result of the availability of cotton (agricultural products) in Nigeria, which the colonial regimes ensured was constantly supplied to the European market whilst being a selling ground for fully processed consumer goods. Aside this factor, the importation of European manufactured textiles was encouraged probably because of the high population of Nigerians and increasing number of colonial subjects, which seems attracted to the imported European manufactured textiles (Traub-merz & Jauch 2006:12-13). And this may have further led to the decline of the industry, the women dyers' textile market share and the artistic contributions of women dyers in Yoruba land, who rely solely on their textile dyeing craft to generate income and to complement their husbands' income from the farm. However, the declining trend of Yoruba arts and crafts was short-lived as locals appreciated the products of indigenous arts and crafts due to the emergence of women protests and the nationalist liberation struggle (Zezeza & Eyon 2002).

One of these significant protests held in Abeokuta called ‘Women’s tax revolt’ of 1947²⁴. There was no clear indication of the women dyers’ participation in the protest because “the degree to which taxation felt like a burden was informed by the overall strength of the economy. As long as producers and traders were able to derive profits from their various enterprises, collection was largely uneventful” (Byfield 2003:262). However, the only recorded protest by the *adire* women was against the ban of caustic soda and synthetic dyes; which makes their production process faster but some other women dyers supported the ban because the synthetic dyed textile lacks quality. Such tensions seem to exist between indigo and synthetic dyers – albeit in a subtle manner in Osogbo between the aged women dyers and younger women in indigo dyeing, who are perceived as their children and daughters. All these dynamics and protests neglected the artistic contributions of the Yoruba women dyers (who) sustained economic lives of families with extra incomes from dyed textiles as well as Nigerian artists and craftspeople because most of the protests’ focal points were turned by social activists on gaining independence from the colonial regime.

2.3.4 The Renaissance (1949-1960)

The events of the cotton industry projects and ‘Women’s tax revolt’ in the early and late 1940s cumulated into what was known as the struggle for independence; during this period the nationalist leaders engaged the colonial state and the artists and craftspeople were inspired to create anti-colonial messages and critiques through their arts and crafts. They specifically quoted a Nigerian artist, Benedict Enwonwo, who expressed that “if we painted any picture, it was about this

²⁴The women protest in Abeokuta in 1947 highlighted ‘fairness of the tax structure’, nature of colonial rule, gender relations and the role of the state (Mba 1982:138 in Byfield 2003:269). The protest further highlighted the declining marginalization of women in the political structure since colonialism – ‘since women pay taxes, they should have representation in the local political structure and the investment in services such as health care and education that would have direct impact on women’s lives’ (Byfield 2003:269). Although, the women’s revolt was not exclusively about taxation: ‘it was an effort to force the colonial state to recognize women’s economic and social condition as well as their contribution to the state’ (Byfield 2003:270)

freedom. If we sang a song, it was about freedom. If like Senghor we made or recited poems, we philosophized.” The engagement with the colonial state and the urge for national independence laid a foundation for the continued existence and subsisting power of Yoruba arts and crafts (Zeleza & Eyon 2002).

Even though artists and craftspeople joined in the struggle for independence during the twilight of colonialism, the economic contributions of the indigo dyeing industry plunged further. Byfield (2003:262) observed that this market shrink of women dyers’ dyed products was an upshot of the economic restrictions, high inflations, and shortages during the World War II, which followed the economic burdens of the internecine war years, consequently leading to the ban of traders from the French colonies. Although, the colonial regimes stated that these economic actions were taken in order to meet the increasing demand for foodstuffs by the armed forces but there was no mention of the consequences of the ban of the dyers' clients and patrons from the French colonies. According to Areo (2013), other contributory factors to the economic decline of women dyers – mostly rural dwellers are the introduction of foreign religion and system of education that attracted young apprentices – who were the bedrock of the apprenticeship system; the “tedious nature of indigo dye preparation, the low financial returns and the flooding of the Nigerian market with the cheaper, more accessible and wider yardage textile materials that were colourful than the traditional indigo coloured adire” cumulated to the destruction of the apprenticeship system in indigo textile dyeing. All these factors changed the perception of the educated-urban dwellers towards the indigo-dyed textile as the cloth for the old, poor and rural dwellers – until the arrival

of Ulli Beier²⁵ (see Fig. 7) in the early 1950s onward to independence and post-independence period when there was a renaissance of *adire* arts among the Yoruba.



Fig. 7: Ulli Beier in his early life in Nigeria

²⁵Horst Ulrich Beier popularly called Ulli Beier was born in 1922 in Glowitz, Germany. He was a German born scholar who brought a profound new understanding and appreciation of Nigerian art in particular and African art as a whole. He founded the Nigerian literary periodical *Black Orpheus*, which provided a previously unavailable outlet for creative writing by Africans and West Indians. After his studies at the University of London in 1948, he was appointed in 1950 as an Associate Professor of Extramural Study at Nigeria's University College, Ibadan (now University of Ibadan). Prior to leaving London, he married Susanne Wenger in 1949. In 1961, he started a nonprofit group called MbariMbayo to help a group of young writers in Ibadan (Mbari club) and Osogbo (MbariMbayo). He briefly left Nigeria to accept a teaching position in Papua New Guinea in the late 1960s but later returned to Nigeria in 1971 to become the First Director of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ife. In 1974, he went back to Papua New Guinea to become the First Director (1974-1978) of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies in Port Moresby. He was also founding Director of the Iwalewa House of Bayreuth, Germany African centre. He died in 2011 at the age of 89 years old. UlliBeier. 2015. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Retrieved 04 June, 2015, from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/58810/Ulli-Beier>

From available archival records and literature, there were no significant artistic contributions by women dyers during the colonial period – as the indigo-dyed products never fared better artistically than the pre-colonial period when the *Kijipa* was dyed with the indigo dyes. This showed the negative effects of the imperialists’ political economy on the women dyers, which neglected the artistic spirit of the Yoruba artists and craftspeople and turned them into a *homo economicus*.

Okundaye-Davies (2006) stated that there were other sources of dyes in the pre-colonial and colonial period such as kolanuts, pounded to get yellow colour as well as other materials for other colour derivatives. However, in the archival records and articles that I could find, these colours were not mentioned probably because they were not as pronounced and prominent as indigo colour. Importantly, there were neither any artistic designs nor motifs on any indigo dyed-textile. All these have resulted from the impact of the transatlantic slave trade and the imperial activities that lasted until the renaissance period in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

2.4 Independent and Post-Independent Political Economy in Nigeria and Yoruba Women Dyers Artistic Contributions (1960-present)

In 1960, Nigeria gained political independence but economic power remained in the hands of the Europeans. The need for so called “development” caused the Nigerian government to open doors to foreign investments in the way of protective tariffs, tariff rebates on imported machinery, tax holidays and the provision of services and industrial estates. This granted the Europeans the opportunity to reinvest the profits garnered during the colonial rule in order to enhance further accumulation of profits. However, the independence also had its own internal challenges; the struggle for power in the state as a result of the desire to control the state’s allocation of profitable opportunities, which created protected riches for its clients and enabled the Nigerian bourgeoisie

to share in the spoils of the economy, and accumulate capital. All these characterized the political economy at independence; but the effect was the instability in the Nigerian government, which was occasioned by several years of military rule through incessant coup d'états (Izuchukwu 2010:46).

At the time of independence, the Nigerian economy depended on non-oil tradable goods, especially agricultural products and indigenous textile manufacturing. However, two great economic events occurred simultaneously in the twilight of colonial rule, specifically in 1956: the discovery of crude oil after several years of exploration (NNPCGROUP 2014) and the introduction of modern textile manufacturing industry, which started with the establishment of Kaduna Textile Mills. Significantly, the discovery and exploration of oil led to the steady erosion of competitiveness of non-oil products and sectors and increase in private companies as well as the factory textile industry. This erosion further acted as a pull factor of human resources from the rural to urban areas in search of white collar jobs and subsequent neglect of non-oil products, such as the indigenous indigo textile dyeing industry.

Aside from political and economic activities, which seemed to overshadow artistic events, several artistic events also occurred. It is important to note that prior to independence, focus was on sculpture and was perceived as the oldest of the arts, probably because it displayed a permanency, often of naturalistic forms, and had economic advantages in that had been produced with an “outside market” in mind (Hull 1972 in Owoeye 2013).

2.4.1 The *Adire* Renaissance Continues: The Influence Ulli Beier on Osogbo Arts (1960-1967)

The classification of Yoruba visual arts into superior and minor art forms seems to subside as scholars classified among the Yoruba visual arts bodily decoration, weaving and clothing, dyeing and embroidery, pottery and calabash-carving, leather and bead-working, metal-working and wood-carving (Oyelola 1981:19). With focus on indigo textile dyeing, of all the art scholars during this period, available documents and literatures showed specifically that the arrival of Ulli Beier, accompanied by Susanne Wenger²⁶ (her contribution is discussed later in this chapter), transformed the indigo dyeing industry, especially in Osogbo. This was because he "was concerned about art as a living thing and not a museum show-piece" so, he was involved in the arts and crafts of the Yoruba people and society by participating in the production processes of the arts and crafts; therefore, unlike "Armstrong and Bascom who also worked among the Yorubas but in a spirit of academic detachment" (Oyelola 1981:19).

²⁶According to a website, Susanne Wenger was born in 1915 in Graz, Austria. She studied Art in Graz and Vienna, and was part of the famous Vienna "Art Club". After the World War II, she spent sometime in Italy and Switzerland, had exhibitions with the most famous artists of the time in the gallery Des EauxVives in Zurich. Her journey to Nigeria began in 1949 when she went to Paris, where she met UlliBeier, A German linguist, who shortly after their meeting later accepted a posting as a phonetician at the University College, Ibadan (Nigeria). She married him in a registry office in London, because Beier had to be married to take up the position. They arrived in Nigeria in 1950, where she practiced art. From Ibadan, they moved to Ede (another Yoruba town) escaping what she called "artificial university compound". As Beier established MbariMbayo Cultural Movement, Wenger "quickly became part of the local culture". She decided to stay back in Osogbo (the Yoruba town that she adopted as her home) for the rest of her life - she and Beier separated and he returned to Europe. She later remarried a traditional Yoruba drummer, AyansolaOniru. She adopted 15 children whom she nurtured in the Yoruba way. She passed away at the age of 93 years old in 2009. (GbemisolaOlujobi on the 21st of May, 2009 from http://www.truthdig.com/report/page2/20090522_austrian_artist_becomes_nigerian_ancestor (6th of June, 2015)

Prior to Ulli Beier's coming to Osogbo in 1958, he was employed in Ibadan; "he did not fit into the society in Ibadan because he did not like the atmosphere in Ibadan; he was unlike the other Europeans who did not associate and visit the *bukateria* with students" (Oyelola 2014). While in Ibadan University, he co-founded the Mbari Centre – the writers' and artists' club in Ibadan – which organized summer workshops in 1961/1962 (Mount 1973 in Areo 2013:19; Oyelola 1981:19-20). However, when the Ibadan University started extramural department, it was an opportunity for Ulli to leave Ibadan for Osogbo – the first place to have a unit. While in Osogbo, he continued the modern experimental art movement of Ibadan by establishing Mbari-Mbayo with the advice and effort of Duro Ladipo, a teacher turned artist who persuaded Ulli Beier to start a similar centre in Osogbo (Littlefield 1999 in Areo 2013:19; Oyelola 1981:19-20).

Unlike the Mbari's club of Ibadan, Mbari-Mbayo of Osogbo, which may be classified as one of the most remarkable and influential art movements in the history of contemporary art in Africa, accommodated young artists outside the walls of formal education. It had workshops, which operated concurrently with the Ibadan club from 1962-1964 under the watchful eyes of Dennis William and later Georgina Beier and Ru Van Ruseu in Osogbo (Folarin 1989 in Areo 2013:19). The workshop continued until Beier's departure in 1967 and the movement was taken over by Susanne Wenger after the Civil War that took place between 1967 and 1970.

2.4.2 Nigerian Civil War (1967-1969)

Historically, Oguntona (1986) in Owoeye (2010:41) indicated that the use of folkloric renditions of the *adire eleko* by contemporary dyeing via candle wax in indigo dyeing came into existence

during the Nigerian Civil War²⁷ (1967-1969), after the ban on the importation of printed textiles. This ban was necessitated during the war as a foreign exchange saving device for the Nigerian Government (Gunilla & Bjorn 1998). The ban may have boosted the indigo dyeing industry in 1967 when Beier left Nigeria and Wenger took over the reign of the Mbari Mbayo centre – encouraging women dyers (see the next section).

At the twilight of the Nigeria Civil War, '*Kampala*' fabrics – another name for wax-resist pattern with the synthetic dyes, became prominent and were in great demand because it coincided with the Peace Talks held in Kampala, Uganda (Oguntona 1986 in Owoeye 2010:41-42). Although it had an economic influence – it created lots of jobs – it was the momentum of the *adire* renaissance that sustained the women dyers' artistic contributions until full operation of the factory textile industry. The introduction of candle-wax brought vitality to the dyeing industry – specifically, it increased the production rate and diversified the women dyers' production activities. Okundaye-Davies in my publication in 2010 stated that with the introduction and incorporation of the candle-wax technique, the women dyers appropriated the technique to relatively quicken the dyeing process as well as create choice for their clients. Noteworthy, after the Civil War in 1970, concurrent events occurred that either continued the renaissance of *adire* or negatively affected the

²⁷According to a website, The Nigerian Civil War is known as the **Biafran War** (6th of July, 1967 – 15th January 1970). The causes of the war were exceedingly complex but it was traced to claims of electoral frauds in the 1st election after the 1960 independence. This led to a Military Coup planned by most Igbo Junior Army Officers on 15th January, 1966. The coup failed but Gen. Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Igbo and Head of Nigerian Army became the First Military Head of State in Nigeria who rallied the Nigerian Army against the coup plotters. These arrangements were perceived to have favoured the Igbos by the Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba, then a counter-coup was executed by the Northerners 26th July, 1966 led by Lt. Col. Muhammed Murtala but placed Lt. Col Gowon as the 2nd Military Head of State in Nigeria. This coup and counter-coup led to an ethnic tension, which cumulated in the massacre of largely Igbo-Christians in the Muslim North of Nigeria in September, 1966. The political tension (electoral fraud and massacre in the North) led to the military Governor of the Igbo-dominated Southeastern Nigeria; Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu proclaimed secession of the Southeastern provinces (mainly Igbos) of Nigeria as the self-proclaimed Republic of Biafra. After several Peace Talks between the Nigerian Army and Biafran Army, no agreement was reached and the war ensued. The war was a stalemate in 1968 onwards until 1969 when the Nigerian Army launched an offensive which led to the surrendering of the Biafran army on the 13th of January, 1970. Retrieved 5th of June, 2015 from http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Nigeria_Civil_War.

productivity of the women dyers such as the Susanne Wenger's influence on women dyers in Osogbo and Osogbo Arts (1970-till her death in 2009), full scale operation of the factory textiles and oil exploration (1970-present) and the government initiatives under the guise of international feminist movements and economic initiatives (1979-present)

2.4.3 The Adire Renaissance Continues: The Influence of Susanne Wenger on Osogbo Arts (1970 till her death in 2009)

The contributions of Susanne Wenger²⁸ (See figure 8) – an Austrian by birth but a convert of Obatala and Osun religion – traditional Yoruba religion by experience, and an ex-wife of Ulli Beier, cannot be overemphasized. Prior to the *adire* renaissance, she moved to Ede from Ibadan with Beier (as at that time married to Beier) where she was initiated as an *Obatala* (and Osun) priestess by *Obatala* Priest, Ajagemo, into the spiritual dimensions of Yoruba religion and its traditions and she started her artistic works for the gods. Oyeronke (2006) stated that with her initiation in the Yoruba secret cult group, her main work over the years prior to her death in 2009 was “the constant reconstruction, renovation, and conservation of the shrines in the Osun Osogbo groves.” By this act, she was able to get the Osun grove to be listed among Nigerian Antiquity Conservation Areas and a United Nation's World Heritage Site. Wenger claimed that her “singular

²⁸Susanne Wenger was born in 1915 in Graz, Austria. She studied Art in Graz and Vienna, and was part of the famous Vienna "Art Club". After the World War II, she spent sometime in Italy and Switzerland, had exhibitions with the most famous artists of the time in the gallery Des EauxVives in Zurich. Her journey to Nigeria began in 1949 when she went to Paris, where she met UlliBeier, A German linguist, who shortly after their meeting later accepted a posting as a phonetician at the University College, Ibadan (Nigeria). She married him in a registry office in London, because Beier had to be married to take up the position. They arrived in Nigeria in 1950, where she practiced art. From Ibadan, they moved to Ede (another Yoruba town) escaping what she called "artificial university compound". As Beier established MbariMbayo Cultural Movement, Wenger "quickly became part of the local culture". She decided to stay back in Osogbo (the Yoruba town that she adopted as her home) for the rest of her life - she and Beier separated and he returned to Europe. She later remarried a traditional Yoruba drummer, AyansolaOniru. She adopted 15 children whom she nurtured in the Yoruba way. She passed away at the age of 93 years old in 2009. (GbemisolaOlujobi on the 21st of May, 2009 from http://www.truthdig.com/report/page2/20090522_austrian_artist_becomes_nigerian_ancestor (6th of June, 2015)

purpose....is to protect the sacredness of nature”, so her works combines architecture, religion and art.



Fig. 8: Susanne Wenger as Adunni Olorisha

Furthermore, Olajubu (2006) indirectly mentioned Wenger's beliefs in the two elements in the works of art: the inner and outer (beings) as well as the two levels of knowledge, esoteric (informs the inner element of art through knowledge, which is informed by the artist's intended meaning(s) for the work of art - few people have access to these knowledge) and exoteric (the outer element of art, which gives expression to the inner element and manifests at the exoteric knowledge level – it is accessible to all and expressed in aesthetic values and decorations, giving a work of art its visible and audible qualities). These elements proved significant and affected Wenger's works of art.

On the other hand, the Wenger also believed in that Yoruba view/belief that art and ritual are indispensable to communication between humans and the divine (Olajubu 2006). Therefore, during her apprenticeship and initiation into the *Obatala* cult group she also learnt the ancient art and craft of *adire* textiles from the women dyers in Ede (one of the families that specialises in *adire* craft) – a procedure during which cassava starch is used to create patterns on material, which was then dyed in indigo. With her knowledge of cassava starch resist pattern and indigo dyeing, she started painting interpretation of Yoruba mythology on pieces of cloth stitched together to create huge monochrome cavasses. Susanne’s life had another important turn when she moved to Osogbo with Ulli Beier in 1958 – which gradually nurtured and commenced the Osogbo art movement (Taylor 2011).

A critical review of the involvement of these two Europeans – Ulli Beier and Susanne Wenger in the recorded history of *adire* dyed-textile among Yoruba people showed that they were the centre of narrative – dominating the renaissance history of *adire* dyed-textile in Nigeria. However, in the light of the critical projects seeking to decolonise the making of anthropological knowledge, the recorded history of indigenous *adire* dyed-textile in Nigeria showed some form of “disparity and inequality based on the structure of racial and national distinctions” (Harrison 2016:161). It also indicated that the recorded indigenous and intellectual history of *adire* dyeing in Nigeria especially among the Yoruba people has been “performed through the sleight of hand of a god-trick” (Haraway 1988 cited in Harrison 2016:162) with the hands of “formally-credentialled southern intellectuals who are being treated as glorified informants rather than respected colleagues” (Harrison 2016). At this juncture, I suggest a re-reading of this historical process from bottom up in order “to redress this (knowledge) coloniality”, “level the landscape of knowledge production”

and “unsettle the megastructure of the academy” (Escobar, 2008:306 cited in Harrison, 2016:192) about the history of *adire* dyed-textile in Nigeria.

Despite the skewed recorded history about *adire* dyed-textile in Nigeria, the *adire* renaissance produced artists such as Taiwo Olaniyi (Twin 7-7), Jacob Afolabi, Jimoh Buraimoh, Rufus Ogundele, Asiru Olatunde (Areo 2013:19; Oyelola 1981). Areo (2013:19) added some other artists who later joined the movement such as Tijani Mayakiri and Ademola Onibonokuta, Nike Davies Okundaye, Yemi Elebuibon, Bisi Ogundele and so many others; these artists were encouraged to produce arts of individual creativity without any external or foreign interference, but they were given materials to produce them. However, Areo (2013:19) noted that the Osogbo art movement attracted mostly men (and may be few ladies who defied the odds) because the “workshop had a performing arts (and sculpture) tilt to it, and acting was a career deemed unfit for any serious lady wishing to be a future wife and mother.” One of the most prominent women dyers (if not the only woman dyer aside the old women dyers in the rural areas) that defied the odds was Chief Oyenike Omoyinka Davies-Okundaye (See Fig. 9), a 65 year old indigo/batik textile designer and the proprietress of Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery, in Osogbo with branches in Kogi, Abuja and in Europe and America.



Fig. 9: Nike Okundaye-Davies²⁹

Nike Davies-Okundaye moved to Osogbo during the Ulli Beier's adire renaissance period to be mentored by a male artist and later by Susanne Wenger amidst other male artists; after being nurtured from childhood by her great-grandmother – the head of indigo dyers and weavers' association in Ogidi-Ijumu, Kogi state, North Central Nigeria and surrounding areas. Her great-grandmother tutored her textile weaving and dyeing after the death of her mother and maternal grandmother in her early childhood. It was during Susanne Wenger's adire renaissance period that she learnt to apply modern approach to traditional themes with indigo dyeing as well the colourful batik and paintings (Nike's leading of the 21st century adire renaissance is discussed later in this chapter). Aside Nike Davies-Okundaye bold act during the renaissance period, most of the aged

²⁹ citypeopleng.com/though-i-didn't-go-to-school-i-teach-harvard-students-nike-art-gallery-boss-nike-davies-okundaye/

indigo women dyers became consultants of indigenous indigo textile dyeing during the renaissance period – becoming economically empowered and mostly teaching interested artists and scholars the art of indigo dyeing.

Essentially, one of the greatest contributions of the *adire* art renaissance in Osogbo to artistic enterprise was the rejuvenation of the indigo textile dyeing industry to the level that scholars in African arts recognized it as an art. “Beier, Pemberton and Abiodun who have followed Yoruba textile history since the mid-20th century published the first extensive work that recognized the full artistry and cultural expressiveness of women dyers and indigo textiles as an important medium of artistic expression as sculpture – citing as evidence their observation of the Yoruba markets being ‘a sea of indigo’ (Beier, Abiodun & Pemberton 2004:19 in Owoeye 2013). This has led to the coming into being of other academic research and articles published on indigo textile dyeing.

During this period, one of the noted artistic contributions of the women dyers in Nigeria whose shifting nature, characteristics and composition moves with the shift in the Nigeria political economy and especially among the Yoruba people, were the different *adire* textile patterns that came to prominence. Such *adire* patterns are *adire alabere*, *adire eleso*, and *adire eleko* as well as the different motifs such as *Oluokun*, *Ibadan Dun*, *Agboole*, *Alagba Berete*, which portrayed the environmental influences and value system of the Yoruba people. Although Areo (2013) stated that the coming of “Susanne Wenger into the *adire* industry in the 1970s coincided with the introduction of synthetic dyestuffs in the *adire* scene of Southwestern Nigeria”, she substituted (and also incorporated) the *adire eleko* for wax and used synthetic colourful dyes instead of indigo dyes to produce folkloric renditions of her understanding of the Yoruba traditional religion and lives. However, during this era, the women dyers were economically empowered and importantly,

their dyeing activities were recognized as an artistic contribution by scholars. Researches were conducted on these women dyers to understand the production processes and cultural contributions to the society.

2.4.4 The Factory Textiles (1970s-1990s)

The factory textiles existed prior to the Nigerian Civil War, but it became fully operational after the Civil War in the 1970s and early 1980s. The prevalence of factory textiles was used to make *ankara*, which became the *aso-ebi* (family uniform or dress) for most marriage ceremonies. These manufacturing companies were conceived to convert 60% and 70% of locally raw materials, mainly cotton, for the production of finished textiles with the exception of high quality cotton and synthetic materials. On the other hand, most of the motifs on the textile products were probably motifs from the traditional clothes like the Yoruba women indigo dyed-textiles (MBendi 2012; Abimbola 2009).

The textile industry became successful; the *adire* industry also existed though by the side as it was not as prominent as the pre-factory textile period. This was primarily due to the symbiotic relationship between the factory-made textiles and *adire* textiles - the textile factory's end product is the dyers' raw product. This was supported by Akinrinade & Ogen (2008:163) when they stated that "millions of other Nigerians such as cotton farmers, food sellers, cloth sellers (women dyers' inclusive), contractors, the dependants of textile workers and many others also depended on the textile sector for their survival. The principal products of the Nigerian textile industry are cotton and synthetic materials as well as multi-coloured fabrics, wax, and prints popularly referred to in local parlance as Ankara" (emphasis mine). The factory textile industry developed to incorporate fibre production, spinning, weaving, knitting, lace and embroidery makings, carpet

production, dyeing, printing and finishing. It also produced varied forms of fabrics annually, ranging from African prints, to Guinea brocades, wax prints, jute and other products. The activity of factory textile industry was adjudged as one of the growing sub-sectors in the manufacturing sector in Nigeria (Akinrinade & Ogen 2008:163-164).

The textile manufacturing sector, which is comprised of Cotton Textile and Synthetic Fabrics accounted for a significant proportion of the overall growth of manufacturing production in Nigeria, the growth was substantial over the years. Owoseye (2009) posited that the growth of the textile industry in the 1980s led to the existence of over 140 textile companies in Nigeria while Mammaga (2010) claimed that there were about 250 functional factories.

The factory textile industry requires more labour as a result of its little mechanization. Therefore, an estimated 150,000 Nigerians employed in this industry, excluding the thousands who are directly employed in the cottage sector of the industry; cotton farmers, food sellers, cloth sellers, contractors, the dependants of textile workers and many others also depended on the textile sector for their survival (Akinrinade & Ogen 2008:163-164; MBendi 2012).

The growing factory textile industry (and the invasion of Nigerian textile market with cheap smuggled textile from China and other European countries) may have attracted (and discouraged) the young artists who were affected by the decline in *adire* textile sales due to the love of Nigerians for foreign and *Ankara* textiles. This is because the Chinese and European textile exports provide cheaper access to a variety of fabrics (which were close imitations of the *adire* designs and patterns) (Akinrinade & Ogen 2008:166). This may have also caused stagnation to the artistic contributions of women dyers; however, the momentous achievements and the immense socio-

economic gains of the Nigerian Textile Industry were eroded by the tide of globalization³⁰ in the 1990s, which was a positive impetus to the traditional dyers.

The women dyers were negatively affected by the production of the ankara textile during the Nigerian factory textile industry revolution. The women dyers faced declining patronage due to the changing clients taste for foreign products and cultures. Also, the benefits of the *adire* renaissance revolution enjoyed by the women dyers were eroded as a result of the mass production of converted indigenous *adire* motifs onto the ankara textiles with an option of varying colours by the textile factories as opposed to the single-coloured indigo dyed products.

2.4.5 Oil Exploration and Oil Glut (1970s-present)

Aside from the impact of the textile factory industry on the *adire* industry and women dyers, the oil exploration took its toll in the 1970s – it steadily eroded the competitiveness of non-oil sectors products and sectors like factory textile industries – pulling human resources to search for white

³⁰ In this chapter, I use the term "globalization" with caution. Cooper (2005:93) claims that the popularity of the "globalization" concept in academic circles especially among contemporary academe shows that the concept is being misunderstood and argued ahistorically. He noted two problems with the concept of globalization – "global" and "-ization", which implies that the concept of "global" is "a single system of connection – notably through capital and commodities markets, information flows, and imagined landscapes – has penetrated the entire globe. On the other hand, the implication of "-ization" is that it is doing so now (happening now) – this is the global age". Cooper's argued that large-scale processes like globalization has "time depth of cross-territorial processes" and not just happening now – it has historical depth of interconnectedness – going "back-and-forth (for many centuries), (with) varied combination of territorializing and deterritorializing tendencies" under different concepts and name such as slave trade, colonization, and decolonization, as well as the structural adjustment programmes" (Cooper 2005:92) – it is a matter of semantics. He stated that the "missing gap in the discussion of globalization today is the historical depth of interconnectedness and a focus on the structures and what the limit of the connecting mechanisms are" (2005:91). Therefore, he concluded that scholars who use "globalization" as an analytical tool risk are being trapped in the very discursive structures. To Cooper, "all the changing forms of transcontinental connections, all the forms of integration and differentiation, of flows and blockages, of the past and present can be seen as aspects of a singular but complex process, which we can label globalization" (2005:112). On the other hand, Cooper did not proffer an alternative concept to replace globalization - as a result of this quagmire I risk the use of globalization in this chapter.

collar jobs neglecting the factory textile industry and most especially a continued neglect of indigo textile dyeing industry. The oil exploration added to the women dyers' woes by weakening the already debilitated apprenticeship system – attracting young and able-bodied women and ladies to the white collars and high migration to the urban centres from the rural areas where adire dyeing is mostly practiced. This continued until the crash of oil prices in 1986 and subsequently in 2015 – still remains volatile. The volatile price of crude oil has resulted in the diversification of the Nigerian economy to the non-oil sectors and an increase in the production and sales of indigo dyed textiles under the aegis of reviving and sustaining Nigeria's cultural heritage.

An example of the revival of Nigeria's cultural heritage evidenced by the increased in sales of indigo dyed textile was the elevation of Osun-Osogbo annual festival as a World Cultural Heritage Site by UNESCO (see chapter 1). During the annual festival, the roads are “a sea of indigo” – the women dyers having expectations of high sales on their dyed-products displayed their dyed-wares in front of tourists, worshippers and local attendees. These displays takes place by the road-side leading to the Osun-Osogbo shrine – a necessary route for passer-by, tourists and worshippers. Notably, these women dyers' high expectations failed during the Ebola crisis in 2014 and 2015 oil glut and economic recession in Nigeria. In 2014, there was the ban on tourists and local attendees of the Osun-Osogbo for fear of spreading the Ebola disease. Also, in 2015, the oil glut and economic recession that occurred in Nigeria affected the sales of the women dyers – some virtually sold nothing during the one week display of dyed-wares at the festival exhibition ground and the entrance to the Osun-Osogbo shrine (see chapter 8).

2.4.6 Government Initiatives as part of Renaissance (1979-present)

Prior to the 1990s, concurrent historical events (aside the crisis in the textile factory industry and crash in crude oil prices) on the international (See Aina, 2012)³¹ and local scenes (although not directly related to indigo textile dyeing industry) could have also sustained indigo dyeing. These events, hinged on freedom from all forms of women discriminations may also have aided the artistic contribution of the women dyers operating under patriarchal system. Specifically, the activities and policies at the international levels were adopted at the local levels during the military rule; it aided the women dyers to move out of social and economic oblivion – from the rural, extended family and settlements inscribed dyeing industry to global light – bringing out newer motifs and allowing the world to have knowledge of the women dyers and their *adire* dyed textile and to communicate their experiences as women textile dyers.

Locally, during the military rule in the 1990s, indigo textile dyeing industry became one of the indigenous technologies that attracted pet programmes by the Nigerian Military Government³² –

³¹ Aina (2012:15-16) stated that international developments focused on prevention of discrimination against women, hence the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 by the UN General Assembly which lead to the advent of the globalization of a discourse on rights to equality for all women and equal access to opportunities in political, business and public environments. Of course, this has yet to be realised. Noteworthy in 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women ended with the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), which provided that women must be part of the decision making process of matters relating to economic, political and social advancement – tying the idea of women empowerment to development across nations. In addition, the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 as a global strategy for poverty reduction further changed gender issue discourse in favour of women (Aina 2012:17). At the continental level, prior to the emergence of the African Union (then Organization of African Unity); women's issues did not come to the fore except for the Protocol for the rights of women in Africa, which focused on women's roles as child-bearers and community managers. However, women empowerment and gender parity came to the fore at the inaugural session of the African Union in 2002 in Durban, South Africa. This led to the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa with the introduction of NEPAD – being implemented within the purview of the MDGs (Aina 2012:20-21).

³² Government 'Development' initiatives were as a result of the crash of the crude oil prices in the early 1986, when the growth rate of Nigerian economy declined with high incidence of capital flight, negative gross domestic product and high inflation. The Nigerian government realized an urgent need for reforms to stop the over-dependence on crude oil. Therefore, she approached International Monetary Fund (IMF) for loan in exchange for a reform programme named Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP). The basic element of SAP includes deregulation of the government

to control inflation and correct imbalances in the balance of payment position through expenditure reducing policies. Pet programmes such as Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW), Family Support Programmes (FSP), and Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) were driven by the President's and State Governors' wives – all these programmes are to restructure and diversify the productive sector of the economy in order to reduce the over-reliance on the oil sector and imports, which the *adire* industry became a beneficiary, hence, the *adire* renaissance during the Nigerian Government 'Development' initiatives.

In my publication in 2010, I cited an example of the benefits accrued to the women dyers during these international and local intervention programmes. Specifically, I observed that women dyers at Kenta dyeing centre in Abeokuta had dilapidated dyeing spaces – working with broken pots under a ramshackle made of corrugated roofs and woods until the wife of the Military Governor of Ogun State; Mrs “Yinka Olufinmoyin built and commissioned a workshop house for the women dyers. These had a great influence on the women dyers’ activities – it placed high premium and value on the women dyers’ dyed products – which the government perceives and advertises as one of their achievement to women empowerment in the country. These women dyers’ activities led to the pronouncement of Abeokuta as the “Home of Kampala” – a beehive of activities for buyers and sellers of dyed-textiles.

Although these projects only focused on the economic importance of *adire* technology as shown in my previous work (Owoeye 2010 in Owoeye 2013:5); however, some women dyers established art schools and others galleries (or both art school and gallery). With the establishment of art schools and art galleries, the women dyers reinscribed the traditional apprenticeship system that

controlled sector, trade liberalization, reforming the public sector and strengthening institution, enhancing agricultural prices and remove obstacle to saving and investments.

was limited to rural dwellers and settlements – university students, educated housewives from rural areas, unemployed people (males and females) and interested artists enrolled in the women dyers’ art school and galleries to learn the art of indigo textile dyeing. For example, in my earlier publications, Chief (Mrs) Adenike Okundaye-Davies; a product of the Osogbo art movement under Susanne Wenger, a prominent woman indigo dyer and the owner of Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery in Nigeria and abroad (one of my research sites for this study) was famous for training people in various indigenous Yoruba crafts. Specifically, she is noted for her private workshop on indigo textile dyeing. Though, she started her art in 1983 but she came to global limelight in the 1990s during the Government initiative programme for local craftsmen and women (Owoeye 2009; Owoeye 2010).

The cumulative effects of the international events on freedom from all forms of women discrimination and the Nigerian Government intervention made artists like Nike Okundaye-Davies develop the passion to empower women through indigo textile dyeing. Nike Okundaye-Davies, with the economic advantage garnered during the Government initiative programme became the leading woman in the modern renaissance of adire dyeing in Nigeria today – the pioneer of the global revival of Nigeria’s ancestral dark-blue art of adire dyeing (Purefoy 2011). Her desire to emancipate women from all forms of discrimination especially those from the rural areas was hinged on her struggle as a girl and mother. All these experiences drove her to establish indigo dyeing and other art centres around the world. In these centres, Nike employs the hands of indigenous old women dyers; mostly widows from the rural areas – especially those from the dyeing family compounds – to empower them economically and to teach young women the art of indigo dyeing.

However, in the 21st century with over 90% of the national income being generated from the oil economy – during the Obasanjo administration, on the 24th of May, 2004, there was the launch of a policy package tagged National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS). It was driven by the principles of wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value orientation in order to enable Nigeria achieve a turnaround, and grow a broad-based market economy that was private-sector driven but with a human face (Aina 2012:26-27). It sustained the activities of the indigo women dyers and newer motifs emerged with abstract tilt from events in the social and political realm in Nigeria – as well as imitation of designs from imported and smuggled factory textiles. But, as the issue of human economy³³ for empowerment and development became argumentatively prevalent, humanistic explanations on academic issues also became more prominent.

For example, in a recent publication, I examined the use of indigo textile dyeing technology as a means of communicating cultural values and a means of empowerment in Nigeria's democratizing politics – a comparative analysis of Osogbo and Abeokuta, two prominent Yoruba dyeing towns (Owoeye 2014). The article focused on motifs and designs, which indicated that the difference between the two dyeing towns “lies basically in their decorative motifs and descriptive designs with their communicated symbolic meanings and names” (Ibid:184) Although, this has been part of the dynamics in *adire* production processes; however, such scholarly symbolic inscription is lacking in the processes in indigo textile dyeing; even though there is “a growing body of research

³³ Hart Keith in *The Human Economy: A Citizen's Guide* (2010) defined Human Economy as an economy that "privileges people before abstractions" - enabling people to contextualize (make and remake) their economic lives and allows humans to increasingly confront economic problems and dilemmas as humanity.

on textile tradition and the emergence of humanistic anthropology, which views textile culture as processually created through agency, practice, and performance” (Owoeye 2013).

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the history of indigo dyeing among the Yoruba people, which reflected the complexity of the Yoruba peoples’ history. Most of the available archival and literature documents in this chapter have focused on the contributions of Yoruba women dyers to the social, economic and political sphere of Nigeria and the Yoruba region in particular - with paucity of records on the *adire* dyers. Despite the challenge of lack of archival records, I have discussed in thematic forms the history of the Yoruba women dyers from the pre-imperialist period where Yoruba women dyers were confirmed as the first to artistically invent the *Kijipa* hand-woven cloth – dyed with the use of indigo dye (*elu*) and also applied to fading clothes. To the political economy during the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism that affected the art of dyeing and Yoruba women dyers – specifically the loss of uncountable numbers of productive artists and craftspeople; disrupted the apprenticeship system; the introduction of imported dye stuffs, the activities of inexperienced dyers and the colonialists’ drive for revenue through taxation reduced the activities of women dyers and caused some disruptions in the Yoruba society. Aside from these imperial activities, the cultivation of cotton and the drive to establish textile factory further led to the decline of the indigo dyeing trade. However, the responses of the women dyers were also creative; they adjusted to the political economy in the society by shifting to the demands of the new patrons of their products.

The Nigeria’s independence and post-independence periods – mostly driven by the oil economy, emergence of textile factory, Nigeria’s civil war and liberalization and globalization policies

mitigated against productive forces but also encouraged and witnessed an increased artistic impulse and contributions from women dyers. This is due to the art renaissance by Ulli Beier in Ibadan with Mbari Art Club and later in Osogbo with Mbari-Mbayo Art Club – where local uneducated artists were trained to be independent artists and the scholars’ recognition of dyed textiles as an art; as well as Susanne Wenger's immerse contribution to the renaissance period, which led to the United Nations (UN) recognition of the Osun-Osogbo Grove and Annual festival as World Cultural Centre, production and consumption of dyed-products increase as tourists consume more during the festival seasons.

However, in this chapter a critical review of these two Europeans; Ulli Beier and Susanne Wenger dominating the history of an indigenous Yoruba textile phenomenon shows that history has been recorded to favour these two Europeans and placed them at the centre of the narratives. The recorded history neglected the contributions of the indigenous dyers in the renaissance period. Therefore, I suggested a re-reading of this historical process from the bottom up – creating a more holistic narrative within the context of critical projects seeking to decolonize the making of anthropological knowledge.

In the next chapter, with the aid of Victor Turner’s symbolic anthropology, I will try to determine the nature of symbols in the oral history of Osogbo that makes the establishment of Osogbo town related to indigo textile dyeing. This will interpret the nature of the symbols in the adire dyeing process among the women dyers in Osogbo.

Chapter Three

The symbolic nature of Indigo textile dyeing in the Myths of Osun-Osogbo and Iya Mapo

3.1 Introduction

The preceding discussion seeks to explore the oral history of Osogbo, which makes the town of Osogbo, which is very constitutive to the invention of indigo textile dyeing. In this chapter, I argue that the conflicting myths of the goddesses of Osun-Osogbo and Iya Mapo over the creation of indigo textile dyeing, although very contentious in Osogbo because two different myths linked the two goddesses to the creation of indigo textile dyeing in Osogbo – a political development evidenced in the separation of Osun state from Oyo state. These events seemed contentious, but they are essential to the development of indigo textile dyeing. The significance of this exploration is to understand the nature of the symbols in relation to indigo textile dyeing in Osogbo through the narrations of the myths. In the course of chapter, I examine the concept of ritual and myth (focusing on myth) and how it has evolved in the discipline of Anthropology. I examine the mythic story of Osun-Osogbo goddess and the elements in the myth in the light of Structuralism from the viewpoints of Levi-Strauss and Ortner. These elements are further discussed under the myth-historical perspectives Leach and Bloch. Finally, the chapter takes a holistic examination of the characteristics of the goddesses of Osun-Osogbo and Iya Mapo – to reveal the nature of the symbols in the performances of indigo textile dyeing.

In this chapter, I use similarities in the arguments of Shokpeka (2005), Olajubu (2005) and Leach (1970), who suggest that myth is applied history and a cultural product that communicates certain aspects of a culture in a symbolic and metaphoric way. In essence, these scholars treat myth as a cultural past with symbolic meanings for present day rituals. So, in re-envisioning the mythic story of the goddesses Osun and Iya Mapo as it relates to the indigo dyeing craft in this chapter, I treat

myth as a symbolic communication; a metaphorical communicative instrument that enables humans to understand the world in which they live (Leach 1970:15) which also allows us to learn and explore the lives of people, values and culture beyond historical or philosophical accounts – “a model for human activity, which elucidates the connections between the supernatural and natural” (Olajubu 2006:5-6).

3.2 Myth in Anthropology

Prior to the 20th century, myth was conceived as an abusive term for "an erroneous belief clung to against all evidence" (Cohen 1969:337). But with the passage of time, myths were to be perceived as void of "errors in which science abounds, as no statements of observations could test them scientifically - (but) they are truth for those who accept them, and it is preserved for eternity." But, in the 20th century, the emergence of technological discoveries and the search for human meanings brought to light the emergence of mythic study, and its vigorous exploration in scholarship (Boskovic 2002:109).

During the 20th century, several scholars, mostly ‘arm-chair anthropologists’, examined the concept of myth. For example, Cohen (1969:339) expressed the view that Frazer and Tylor treated myth as an explanation. Frazer (1918:362-387) in Cohen (1969:339) perceived myth as an explanation of a particular phenomenon while Tylor (1958:368-416) in Cohen (1969:339) perceived myth as a peculiar explanation that makes use of language and metaphor in order for man to personalize the forces of nature that seek to control man.

On the other hand, Cassirer perceived myth as "one of the stages in the process of humanization" and without it, no higher stage of development is simply thinkable (Cassirer 1957 in Boskovic 2002:110). Eliade (1960) views myth as a very foundation of social life and culture. He is opposed

to scholars that take myth as mere stories, as he contends that myths are "more than just a story" (23); they are "sacred stories (which are) related to the events that occurred in the mythical times following the creation of the world, and are the only avenue to bridge our time and the creation of the world" (24). He also stated that rituals were believed to have been established by mythical gods and goddesses (Eliade 1963:7). This makes myth "the expression of a mode of being in the world" because it explains the deep meanings of life based on history and culture of the society (24). As for Freud and Jung, myths are functional in revealing the unconscious thoughts of human beings (Cohen 1969:340).

Anthropologists (and earlier ethnographers) reacted to these meanings of myth; some of them subordinated myth under ritual. Non-anthropologists, however, criticized anthropologists, and posited that the study of myth would go into extinction if subordinated under ritual (Boskovic 2002). However, apprehensive of the crippling and invading effects of technological advances and colonial expansion among the indigenes, these ethnographers dug deeply into the study of myth because they wanted to preserve the customs and values of the native people. They believed the only way to preserve the indigenes' legacies (histories) were through their narratives, made possible by ethnographic fieldwork.

Malinowski, from research in the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea, described myth as a "pragmatic charter", "a set of rules or codes of conduct, that enable social functions of a culture to flourish" (Malinowski 1926:28). Malinowski derived his view of myth from Durkheim's but differed from Durkheim when he stated that myth is "a reality lived" (18), "not symbolic, but a direct expression of its subject-matter; it is not an explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest, but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality" (19). For Malinowski, myth offers justification for beliefs and he never intimately linked myths to rituals.

Cohen (1969:344) observed that most anthropologists after Malinowski subscribed to Durkheim's view of myth as "a part of the religious system, and expresses in words what ritual expresses in actions: both have a social function of maintaining and expressing solidarity. The content of the myth, like that of ritual, is symbolically significant". Kluckhohn elaborated the connection of myth and rituals in his article, "*Myths and Rituals: A General Theory*" (1939). He agreed with Eliade's view of myth as a "sacred tale" but linked it with rituals. He stated that "myths and rituals equally facilitate the adjustment of the individual to his society" (74) and both are "cultural products, which are part of the social heredity of a society" (79). Although, Kluckhohn pointed out the cultural product character of myth and ritual, I found the explanations of Edmund Leach's cultural product character of myth and ritual as convincing – a reflection of Levi Strauss' explanation of myth.

Levi-Strauss perceived myth as a "paradox - fantastic and unpredictable" – having seemingly arbitrary content but similar thought patterns in different myths in different cultures. He assumed a cognitive study of myth by proposing that universal laws must govern mythical thought, which always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution to resolve the seeming paradox (Lévi-Strauss 1955:428-429; Lévi-Strauss 1969:10). Levi-Strauss compared myth to language - a human speech with *langue* and *parole* (an adaptation of Saussure's work in 1918 titled "*The Nature of the Linguistic Sign*"). He described *langue* as the structural elements of language while the *parole* is the statistical aspect of it; *langue* being the principle of language that makes meaningful *parole* (speech act) possible (Lévi-Strauss 1955:430). Levi-Strauss believed that the human thought processes like language are the same universally due to human biological make-up. He proved this idea by the concept of binary oppositions, which he believed underlies every mythic story in the universe. He later linked the concept of binary opposition to the analogy of culture and nature. Levi-Strauss perceived nature as composed of emotion, instinct

and intuition while culture is perceived to be intellectually driven with rules and laws that makes social order possible in the society. He stated that the “awareness of this binary opposition (in myth will lead) toward their progressive mediation” (440).

Levi-Strauss explicated the concepts of binary oppositions in his work *“The Structural study of Myth”*(1955). One of the mythic examples was the myth of trickster in several American mythologies. He stated that although the trickster is “a problematic figure” - it is “assigned practically everywhere to either coyote or raven” throughout North America. From this myth, Levi-Strauss assumed two opposite terms - life and death as it relate to agriculture (connected with the production of life) and hunting (connected with the production of death). This binary structural relation was also observed in the relationship between herbivores (plants) and beasts of prey (catching of meat). He stated that both raven and coyote are carrion-eating animals but they are also classified as food-plant producers; therefore, they are halfway between herbivores and beasts of prey: like beasts of prey, they eat animal food (meat) and at the same time like herbivores, they do not kill what they eat. Levi-Strauss argues that "we have a mediating structure, where each term gives birth to the next by a double process of opposition and correlation" (1955:440).

However, Edmund Leach, one of the numerous admirers of Levi-Strauss’s idea but also one of his major critics had a different opinion. Leach stated that myth “is one way of describing certain types of human behaviour and anthropologists’ use of structural models are other devices for describing the same types of human behaviour” (1964:14). Leach submitted that though Strauss had a sound idea, but "it is difficult to understand his sociological theory on (myth) as he combined baffling complexity with overwhelming erudition" (1974:3). This led to a break in the structuralist tradition - paving the way for neo-structuralism.

Leach thought that the nature of myth and ritual is similar to a cultural product, which is “a system of symbolic communication” (1970:13). He described ritual as “a symbolic statement which “says” something about the individuals involved in the action (myth)” (ibid) - to express individual’s status as a social person in the structural system h/she finds h/herself for the time being” (1964:11). He explicated further that rituals are the “dramatization of the myth, the myth is the sanction or charter for the rite” (13). In other words, myth is regarded as a statement in words that “says” the same thing as ritual is regarded as a statement in “action” (13-14). In order to explicate his myth-ritual idea in a structuralist manner, he insisted that rituals (human actions and interactions) caused changes in the societal relations. These changes are evident on one hand in the interactions between social structure and ideology (myth) and on the other hand between individual agency and material conditions of life (rituals).

Leach explicated his proposition in his classic ethnography “*Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure*”(1964). Leach (1964:13) assumed that the social structure in practical situations is in contrast to the abstract models of sociologists, which consists of sets of ideas about the distribution of powers between persons and groups of persons. In an effort to justify his proposition, he treated the people living in the “Kachin Hills” as a region and not a tribe or ethnic group. He saw them as people who had differences in most areas of their lives (languages, clothing styles and houses) but they had a common understanding of each other’s ritual acts - “a constituents of broader relational schemes” (Piliavsky 2013:467). He observed that the Kachins’ system was “neither stable nor closed” because the people entered, exited and experienced shifts in positions (ibid). Leach described this positional shifts as dynamism, which made “particular communities capable of changing from one sub-system into another” (Leach 1964:264).

In Leach's ethnography among the Kachins, he politically described the contradictory modes of life in the society (Leach 1964:8). He described the culturally defined objects and the peoples' actions and ideas in Kachin as being driven on one side by the Shan system of government, a system of feudal hierarchy. The other is referred to as *gumlao* system of organization, an anarchistic and equalitarian type of organization (ibid). This indicates that the two opposing modes of organization are consistent with the same general set of cultural trappings in Kachin society.

Leach showed that the Kachins' political organization presents a choice between the opposing systems of *Shan and gumlao* ideologies. But, he observed that most Kachins are organized in the system called the *gumsa* - a compromise between the Shan and *gumlao* ideologies while some others in the *gumsa* communities move to become *gumlao* - representing a symbol of hostility. However, Leach described that the actual *gumsa* communities are not static, they responded to the circumstances of political economy. Leach examined how the ideologies operated within the Kachins' social structure and "their implication on formal relationships that exist between social persons". He stated that these implications experienced as social changes, were enacted by the Kachin indigenes via political models. These political models has made ambitious persons justify their actions and use their decisions to influence policies that shifts the whole structure of the local society over time (Piliavsky 2013:466-467).

Levi-Strauss and Edmund Leach could be described as scholars on the opposing sides of the same coin. Levi-Strauss perceived myth from a cognitive and universal perspectives while Edmund Leach tries to explain myth from the social living and particularistic viewpoint. However, elements of Levi-Strauss and Edmund Leach arguments on myth are evident in every myth because they each described an aspect of myth. But, to resolve these opposing views, Sherry Ortner; a structuralist emerged.

Ortner recognized that “much of the creativity in anthropology is derived from the tension between these two sets of demands - human universals and cultural particulars” (Ortner 1974:67). Essentially, she emerged to resolve the increasing criticisms of Levi-Strauss’s idea - the oppositions between the structuralism and other approaches. She attempted to explicate universal social phenomena in the light of individual actions with the aim of genuine change in the social and cultural order in societies (Ibid).

Ortner argued that human actions and practice change cultural and social structures. This formed the core theory referred to as “*Practice Theory*”, which is a dialectic between social structure and human agency in a dynamic relationship (Dougherty 2010). With this argument, Ortner proposed that social beings in myths and rituals should be studied as having diverse motives and intentions, which transforms the world in which they live in. In other words, Ortner used this idea to examine the universality of female subordination in her analysis of “‘culture’ (not a specific cultural data) taken generically as a special sort of process in the world” (Ortner 1974:69).

She demonstrated this viewpoint in her paper titled “*Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture*”(1974). Ortner stated that in analyzing myths and the nature of rituals, “woman” became one of the most challenging problems to deal with in the tension between the human universals and cultural particulars - women's secondary status in the society (67). She explicated this problem by pointing out levels of the “woman’s” problem using examples from Asia and Europe.

She highlighted evidence of the universality of female subordination, especially culture that considers women inferior. These elements of female subordination are observed in the cultural ideology and informants’ statements that explicitly devalue women. There are also symbolic devices, which may be interpreted as implicitly making a statement of inferior valuation. And, the

social-structural arrangements that exclude women from participating in some areas in which the powers of the society resides.

She also argued that the secondary status of women in the society stems from the nature and culture arguments. This nature-culture spectrum rests on the concept of biological determinism, which makes male the naturally dominant sex in the society. This is caused by the perception that something is missing in females, which makes them a natural subordinate and also having a sense of satisfaction with their position. The women's subordination in the nature-culture argument was further linked to the generalized structure and conditions of existence - the nature as woman and culture as man. The reason is hinged on the woman's body and functions. These body functions lowered the status of women in the cultural process than man's body. Ultimately, this leads to a different psychic structure, which her social role has built in her.

Another level of explanation by Ortner is the placement of woman in the domestic context, where the biological family is charged with reproducing and socializing new members of the society. On the other hand, men are positioned in the public unit, which is the superimposed network of alliances and relationships - the society. Ortner strengthens the structuralists' arguments and also linked it to women's subordination; however, she could not resolve the tension between the human universals and cultural particulars. Bloch, a poststructuralist gave a new direction to the tension between the universalists and particularists when he claimed that structuralism should be an interaction between cognition and socio-cultural living.

Bloch criticized the two groups of anthropologists for their irreconcilable conflicts on the concept of agency in myth and ritual. He stated that the Particularists exaggerates the particularity of a specific culture and the Universalists for underestimates the particularity of specific culture (Bloch 1992:99-100; Staal 1979 in Bloch 2005:123). Yet, he agreed with Levi-Strauss's view that the

originality and authenticity of anthropology emerged from the unconscious nature of collective phenomena (Lévi-Strauss 1963). But, he criticized Levi-Strauss's view of myth as a form of thinking, which follows a system of language. He described myth as “a kind of double complicity between anthropologists and their readers” on one spectrum and “between anthropologists and their informants”, on the other spectrum. This “*double complicity*” leads to the “representations of thoughts in logic-sentential terms” (Bloch 1998:23). Bloch argued that myth is not language that represents a form of reasoning. He later described myth as “often speculation on practice”, which explores “all the imaginable possibilities in an intellectual search” - a group of networked signification arranged in a multi-stranded way and not in a linear way (Bloch 1992:99).

However, Bloch focused on the debate over the meanings in rituals, which is a controversial topic in anthropology. Bloch reconstructed Leach's argument; he denied the direct relationship between myth and practice (ritual), which he perceived as misleading. He found ritual in Leach's myth-ritual argument “very difficult” to understand, he was not “satisfactorily precise what ritual content might be” - other scholars found it meaningless to be a form of activity governed by explicit rules (Staal 1979:4 in Bloch 2005:123).

He observed that the vagueness of ritual is experienced during ritual performances; the informants claim that “they don't know what (a particular) ritual mean or why they are doing (the ritual) in this or that way”. These informants will also add “that these elements mean something very deep and they insist that it is very important to perform them in precisely the right way”. So, Bloch was motivated by this inconsistent action of the agents. He made the vagueness of rituals his main concern; by this, he offered a clue to the nature of human social knowledge (Bloch, 2005:123).

Bloch explained that human agents represent concepts as non-linear “*governed by lived-in models - models based on experience, practice, sight and sensation*”(Bloch, 1998:24). In order to examine

the “*live-in models*”, he recognized a historical approach in explicating his views of rituals. He termed this approach as “*connectionism*”, which states that the core of “*human beings cope with information as rapidly as they can (because) most knowledge involved in everyday practice is organized into highly complex and integrated networks or mental models (not linear, logic-sentential forms)*” (Ibid). For Bloch “*most elements are connected to each other in a great variety of ways, because of the simultaneous multiplicity ways that information is integrated into them. These mental models are partly linguistic, integrating visual imagery and other sensory cognition, which can be accessed simultaneously from many part of the model through ‘multiple parallel processing’*” (Ibid). With this analysis, Bloch interpreted the importance of thought process in the interaction of biological processes and described culture holistically and not as an imposed facts from an anthropologist.

Bloch argued his propositions of ritual and power in his ethnographic works in Madagascar. In one of his works, titled “*From Blessing to Violence: History and Ideology in the Circumcision Ritual of the Merina in Madagascar*” (1986). Bloch described the circumcision ritual among the Merina of Madagascar, which is perceived as a blessing - the transfer of ancestor’s love and concern to a child. But, the ritual ends with physical violence and a symbolic assault on women, which is accepted as a mark of blessing from their ancestors. The circumcision ritual grants political dominance to one group of Merina over other Merina or non-Merina groups in the transfer of descent group’s moral identity.

Currently, mythic study seems to have been neglected by anthropologists probably as a result of "the "opening up" of anthropology to new questions, which include new types of complexity in anthropological analysis under the idea that anthropologists should "practice anthropology"" Gottlieb (1989:487), or the contentious debate surrounding the definitions of myth, which makes

it an ambiguous and intricate concept with no single definition – a concept with imprecise distinctions and loose terminology (White 2010; Boskovic 2002; Bouvrie n.d.). But mythic study is still relevant in Africa, for it has a history of unrecorded histories and has to rely on myths to reconstruct the present. In order to present a meaningful mythic analysis and in particular the Yoruba myth, I will synthesize ideas of the afore-discussed scholars (Levi-Strauss, Leach, Ortner and Bloch) as each of them pointed out an aspect and element of myth.

3.3 The Myth of Osun-Osogbo

Most Yoruba cult³⁴ groups have organized patterns of living and *orisha* Osun of Osogbo cult group is not an exception. Each Yoruba town worships a major *orisha*³⁵ and prior to my field study (2013-2015), I understood little of the Yoruba elements, especially *orisha* (god) in the Yoruba indigenous practice (as a result of my faith background, a Christian). Wescott (1962) who studied "*The Sculpture and myths of Eshu-Elegba, the Yoruba trickster: Definition and Interpretation in Yoruba Iconography*", stated that the traditional Yoruba people have many gods; he claimed that "the exact number is not known and the Yoruba themselves give various conventional figures such as 201, 401, or 1,600".

Agboola Abiodun, an Associate Professor (Reader) in the Department of Rural Sociology at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and also an uncle³⁶ posed a different perspective to Wescott's statement. Agboola is in his early 50s, an Ifa devotee and priest, who had interest in my search of the indigenous knowledge. He stated that most Yoruba people especially adherents of the new religions (Christianity and Islam) have neglected the indigenous knowledge. He believed

³⁴ Cult; A group of devoted supporter of a system of religious beliefs and rituals (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015)

³⁵ The Yoruba term for a god

³⁶ The term Uncle among the Nigerian academics is usually a senior colleague with whom you are familiar with and takes you like a brother.

that these are some of the factors that seems to wane the influence of the Yoruba tradition. He further stated that these religions are foreign to us and could lead to loss of identity of most Yoruba people - he explicated his point by quoting a Yoruba adage “*odo ti o ba gbagbe orisun re, dandan ki o gbe*” (A river that forgets its source is bound to dry up).

During the interview with Agboola, which was held at the OAU Staff club’s Cool Room³⁷ between 4pm and 6pm, he Chairman of the Staff Club, popularly called “TJ” was present discussing the developmental projects ongoing in the staff club with another staff club member. I met Agboola almost finishing a bottle of Gulder lager beer. I asked him if he desired to drink more but he turned down my request – he has other appointments and he was also preparing for the Ifa festival coming up in Ogbomosho. He also asked me if I would like to have a drink but I informed him that we should start the interview.

During the interview, I noticed Agboola had a different viewpoint about *orisha* among the Yoruba people – he differed from argument offered by Wescott (1962). This is as a result of Wescott’s lack of understanding about the semantics in Yoruba indigenous practice – making Wescott (1962) put statistics in order to quantify the number of gods in Yoruba land Agboola stated that "there are 400+1³⁸ “*orishas*” in Yorubaland. He explained that "the 400+1 gods were first human beings – there is no spirit among them". The concept of *Orisha* could be expressed in the statement "*Eni ti Ori s'eda*" (Someone who's been uniquely created by the Head). *Orisas* are part of human beings, they were only "specially created". The *Ori* (Head) in Yoruba land is an expression of

³⁷ OAU Staff Club is a storey building dedicated for Staff of the OAU community, who desires to register as members. It is an open space relaxation area with a bar, kitchen, swimming pool, children playground and an event space. The Staff Club’s Cool Room is a special room that is always cooled because Air Conditioner was installed in the room compared to other spaces in the Staff Club that is an open space for relaxation.

³⁸ 400+1 in the Yoruba thought system is a way of recognizing that there are many gods in the Yoruba system and the “+1” represent another 400 gods

"*Olodumare*" (God) meaning "Eni ti *Olodumare* s'eda" (He who God has specially created – a unique being).

In the course of conducting my ethnography, I assumed the process of specially creating human beings has stopped due to increasing influence of foreign religions. Agboola agreed with my assumption that the process seemed to have stopped but it still exists and continues. He stated that the people of the past "recognized these *orishas* to be specially created" and that process of recognition has stopped today; this is because "as recent as it is, Wole Soyinka (African 1st Nobel Laureate) would have assumed the status of *orisha* and be a part of the 400+1 (but for lack of recognition). At this stage of the interview, "TJ" jokingly slapped my back and asked Agboola if he knew me very well. Agboola laughed and said "*ko se ajoji simi*" (he is not a stranger to me) and he discussed the staff club issues with us. I paused the recording device because the staff club developmental issue was of private concerns.

Both Agboola's and Wescott's arguments shared the same viewpoints on the premises that there are many gods in the Yoruba traditions. The difference between the two views is that Wescott (1962) probably wanted to put a statistical figure on the number of gods in Yorubaland to be "scientifically" correct. However, Agboola's argument seemed to be desist from quantifying the number of gods in Yorubaland because *orishas* are created and birth everyday.

Among these 400+1 *orishas*, there are major and minor *orishas*. Olupona (2001) in Murphy and Sanford (2001) expressed that each of the major *orishas* is linked to a Yoruba city, where the "mythistory, ritual, and symbols are intricately linked to both ancient and modern-day core values, transcending to the political and cultural lives of the Yoruba people of that particular city". Therefore, *orisha* Osun and Iya Mapo are major *orishas* in Yorubaland, worshipped as the "source of Osogbo core spiritual, economic and ethical values and these values define the basic ideology

of Osogbo's identity and community" (Woocher 1990:154 in Olupona 2001:49) and controllers of women's art and craft respectively.

However, the *orisha* Osun worshippers are ubiquitous everywhere the Yoruba people inhabit in the world. Although Osun is worshipped in other Yoruba towns and villages, no other Yoruba town or anywhere in the world celebrates *orisha* Osun like the people of Osogbo. Osogbo people celebrate Osun of Osogbo annually and publicly in Osogbo in a unique festive occasion called Osun-Osogbo festival.

Intrinsic to Osun-Osogbo festival according to my informants is a two-week ritual programme that involves the priests and priestesses of Osun, which ends with the procession to the Osun River where prayers are offered for the barren and prosperity-seekers via the goddess of Osun. Balogun (n.d.), Olaniyan (2014) and Babalakin (2011) claimed that some form of performances and aesthetic displays are seeable in the Osun-Osogbo festival. This makes Osun of Osogbo a unifying factor in Osogbo town irrespective of the faith or belief of the Osogbo resident. Despite the fanfare of the Osun-Osogbo festival, it is "shrouded in the myth and legends (of Osun), (during which) Osogbo recalls the founding narratives" (Olupona 2001 in Murphy and Sanford 2001).

With the preceding background, I proceed to examine the myth of Osun-Osogbo, which forms the core of this chapter. The myth has been narrated in multiple ways by several scholars with varying versions of the Osun's myth (See Appendix A), the most famous, used by many of the scholars is the Osun-Osogbo myths which is narrated as follows:

"It was said in the past a woman named Osun in the town of Igede Ekiti turned to a river after some altercations with her brothers. But, soon after Osun turned to a river, two brave and strong hunters, who were also brothers, named Olutimehin and Laaro (Olutimehin is the elder of the two brothers) left their father and travelled in search of water as a result of scarcity of water in Ipole Ekiti. After a long walk in the forest, the hunters got to a flowing stream (Osun River) and were happy and full of joy that they danced for they have discovered water. They drank from the water, took

their bath, fetched water and killed fishes home in Ipole Ekiti. They gave their father report of their expedition, he tasted of the water from the River and saw that it was good. They informed their father about the pleasantness of the environment to establish a settlement. Their father thought of his old age and fragile body and he decided to stay back in Ipole Ekiti; but, he sent the brothers back to establish a settlement at the River bank. After the hunters had relocated with their families, they located a conducive and good environment near the water, and as the brothers tried to settle down in their new found location, they started to cut trees to make room for their abode. Olutimehin, who was the better hunter and the elder of the two cut the tree to be used to build shelter and it fell in the river. Suddenly, they heard a scream and saw indigo dye appear on the surface of the river – neither seeing any pot nor the person making the dye. Suddenly, a voice beneath the river called and spoke to the hunters saying:

<i>Eyin Oso Igbo</i>	You, the wizard of the forest
<i>Eyin Omo Eniyan</i>	You human beings
<i>E ti fo gbogbo ikoko aro mi</i>	You have broken all my indigo dyeing pot
<i>E ti fo gbogbo ikoko aro awon omo mi</i>	You have broken all my children's indigo dyeing pots.

But, the brothers could not see anyone. On the next day, Osun (the female voice from the river) came out of the river, other rivers and forests came to console River Osun through the following:

<i>Osun, e ku oro aje ana,</i>	We greet you concerning yesterday's market misfortunes!
<i>E ku oro omo oo,</i>	We greet you concerning the care of the children oo!
<i>Aoniri aburu oo,</i>	We will not experience such misfortunes again oo!
<i>Busoyin, E se ooo</i>	Busoyin, thank you!
<i>Eleyele, E se ooo</i>	Eleyele, thank you!
<i>Lankonkon, E se ooo</i>	Lankonkon, thank you!
<i>Ijumu, E se ooo</i>	Ijumu, thank you!

Each “*ibu*” (river) came to console Osun. As they greeted Osun, she mentioned their names – “*Eleyele*”, “*Lankonkon*”, “*Busoyin*”, and “*Ijumu*”. While these greetings continued, the hunters hid themselves and they were amazed that even rivers had names. Osun noticed them and asked them what their business was at the river and the hunters expressed their desire to build a shelter. Osun stated that they could not stay where she was because the hunters were human beings, and that she being an “*Iwin*” (meaning a fairy/a ghost) could not co-exist with them. But, before their departure, Osun gave *Laaro* (the younger brother) a crown to make him the first “*Baale*” (Administrative Head) of Osogbo. She later asked him to stand on a rock called “*apata ere*” (Ere Rock), and to stretch forth his hands and open his palms, and that a fish dropped on to his palms from Osun. She explained that the river was her abode and fish were her children. With this action, the raconteur pointed out, emerged the name “*Ataoja*” – “*a te owo gba eja*” (the one who opens his palms to receive fish). She declared the elder one, *Olutimehin*, as the Head Hunter, who was to protect the forest surrounding the Osun River from other hunters. These interactions became a covenant between the hunters who were to worship the fish and protect her children, in return for protection – a symbiotic relationship between the human beings (hunters) and the Osun goddess. Osun thereon proposed that the hunters worship her and that in return she would protect them and abide with them. She added that in the event of any war or trouble, they were free to call on her. She also informed the hunters that it was possible that her children could come out from the river in any form, especially in animal form, so, they must not kill animals around the Osun River. She implored them to ask her whatever they needed, and that provisions would be made for them. Then, she suggested that the hunters move their shelter to the upper part of the river or to a place where her voice could not be

heard anymore. Thereafter, the hunters continued their journey until they heard her voice no more at the present "*Ojubo Osun*" (The Shrine of Osun)".

The Osun-Osogbo's myth has been interpreted by several authors such as Olaniyan (2014) and Babalakin (2011), but they limited their interpretations to the aesthetics in the annual Osun-Osogbo festival. However, there are certain elements of the myths that connects more directly to the issue of gender role and political compromises in the society. In order to explicate these elements, the myth must be examined in greater detail.

Table 2: Elements in the myth of Osun-Osogbo in binary opposites of Nature and Culture

Initial Pair	First Triad	Second Triad	Third Triad	Third Triad
Nature	Osun left siblings with a fight Osun turned river and flowed away	Osun sends Her children to on earth	Cut tree fell into the river and screams heard Broken dye pots and dye on water	She gave crown and protection during war or mishap
				Ojubo Osun (The Shrine of Osun) (Osogbo)
Culture	Olutimehin and Laaro (Hunters) left Father (Sibling) for Water	Took water, killed fish and gave report to their father Father sends the children to settle at the river bank.	Hunters cut tree	They received crown and Hunter's protection of the Osun River and forest

In explicating this myth, I identified a pair of opposites that define areas of importance (see table 2); these significant areas are shown to be a recurring pattern in the myth with a third pattern mediating the other two patterns. One of the recurring patterns in this myth is the presence of two

worlds - a dichotomy - Nature and Culture. The world of culture is controlled men as represented by the two brave and strong hunters who were also brothers from Ipole Ekiti (hunters, who used their technologies to kill an existing environment). On the other hand, the world of nature is represented by River water later known as Osun, which gives life.

In the myth, all the events grouped in the first triad have something to do with characters distancing *from blood relations and their homelands*. The characters left their homelands - Osun left home quarrelling with her brothers and the hunters left their father and home in search of a scarce commodity, water. The first triad was mediated by Osun turning into a river, flowing away from home. It was obvious that the second triad was a series of distancing and compromising. The characters in the myth have discovered a comfortable place - the river discovered a place of rest and continued to flow and the hunters discovered water and a place of rest. Osun sends her children above the river, to the earth and returning after a while. But, the second triad was mediated by a brief and quiet meeting of the two worlds; the hunters took of the water for their thirst, had their baths and killed fishes to feed their hunger. This is to Levi-Strauss, the power of hunting, it converts and transforms raw things into cooked - nature to culture. After the killing of the fish and taking of the water, they went back home to their father who later sent them back to establish their own community at the river bank.

In the third triad, the series of internal distancing and compromise in the two worlds soon led to a proximate relationship. The two worlds met, which created a tension and a chaotic middle. The hunters' cutting of the tree in order to use it as materials to build shelter - a protective element from animals, the harshness of nature and to establish a cultured community by the river bank. This tree also served as a protective element for the forest and her environment, especially the river and the lives within and around it. When the protective elements, the tree was cut; it fell into the

river. This disrupted the quietness of the river, Osun screamed about the fallen tree breaking her dyeing pots and an eventual spread of the dye solution on the surface of the river water. The chaotic middle paved way for a mediated middle, which ensued a compromise by the characters to resolve the situation. The situation was resolved by the emergence of covenant, which led to the emergence of the town's name, Osogbo and a description of the town "a home of dye". However, intermittent meetings exist as situation warrants between the characters but the hunters are to pay homage to Osun river annually for her magnanimity.

The manner of exchange between the dichotomous worlds in the Osun-Osogbo's myth showed a series of malleable relationships. These relationships are circumscribed by an agreement or compromise of bi-protection, which involves proximity and distance. The younger of the hunters became the custodian of the fish (Osun's children) that was earlier killed while the elder of the hunters protects the forest where the tree was cut down. They proceeded to establish a settlement where both the spirit and men can operate symbiotically but still maintaining the binary principles of proximity and distance. This invariably points to the nature of the world - a marketplace characterized by exchanges and compromises.

However, examining the myth from Ortner's argument of woman's subordination; the myth does not seem to show any form of woman's subordination. Although, the myth showed that the characters had motives and intentions, which was clearly driven by safety and security concerns. As against Ortner's argument that was mostly pro-European discourse, Oyewunmi argued in her book titled "*The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*" (1997) that gender has not been an organizing principle among the Yoruba, Southwest of Nigeria, which Osogbo shares in her history. Historically, the Yoruba people have not used biology as a measure of social relations, hierarchy, positioning and subjectivity (Bakare-Yusuf 2004).

However, the previous argument that cloth dyeing is a female-only activity among the Yoruba people contracted Oyewunmi's and Bakare-Yusuf's arguments that Yoruba people do not use gender as an organizing principle. This showed a contradiction between the theoretical perspective of Oyewunmi's and Bakare-Yusuf's arguments of the non-gender organizing principle and Ortner's universalist argument about nature/culture – evident of the lived everyday realities that cloth dyeing is a female-only activity, which the Yoruba women dyers enacted through indigo dyeing process. But, both scholars stated that instead of Yoruba people to do gender, they have always inscribed the social division and hierarchy with the concept of seniority - the chronological age difference (Oyewunmi 1997:42 in Bakare-Yusuf n.d:2). The seniority argument of Oyewunmi and Bakare-Yusuf showed the fact that the river existed before the hunters, therefore, it indicated that Osun was more elderly between the characters. Osun being the spiritual being (with the ability to see beyond the physical realm assumes the role of an elder) saw the ignorance of the hunters and the chaos around, she decided to resolve the situation, reflecting a Yoruba adage which says "*agba ki nwa l'oja ki ori omo titun wo*" (the elders will not lie indolent and let things go bad). Again, Osun seeing the hunters' intention to establish a community, decided to establish a joint community called Osogbo. This was performed on compromise and covenant; she empowers the hunters to protect the forest and establish a joint community, where humans and spirit could interact while she protects the hunters from external aggressions.

3.4 The Nature of the Symbols in Osun-Osogbo's and Iya Mapo's Personality as it relates to Indigo Textile Dyeing

The previous section examined the myth of Osun-Osogbo and its elements. In this section, I examine the nature of the ritual symbols in the Osun-Osogbo's myth. In order to clarify this section, I assume that the elements in the Osun-Osogbo's myth are symbolic representations of

rituals in the indigo dyeing in Osogbo. Essentially, the binary oppositions are important components of the myth structure. It particularly connects the river water, dyeing pots and dye, tree, and animals to nature and femaleness while the hunters, brothers and father to culture and maleness. However, a closer examination of the myth requires a historical recognition of the two dichotomous systems, nature and culture. This opposition in the myth is indicative of the stability, instability and compromise (mediation) in the political arrangements of Osogbo. This reflects the Yoruba proverbs:

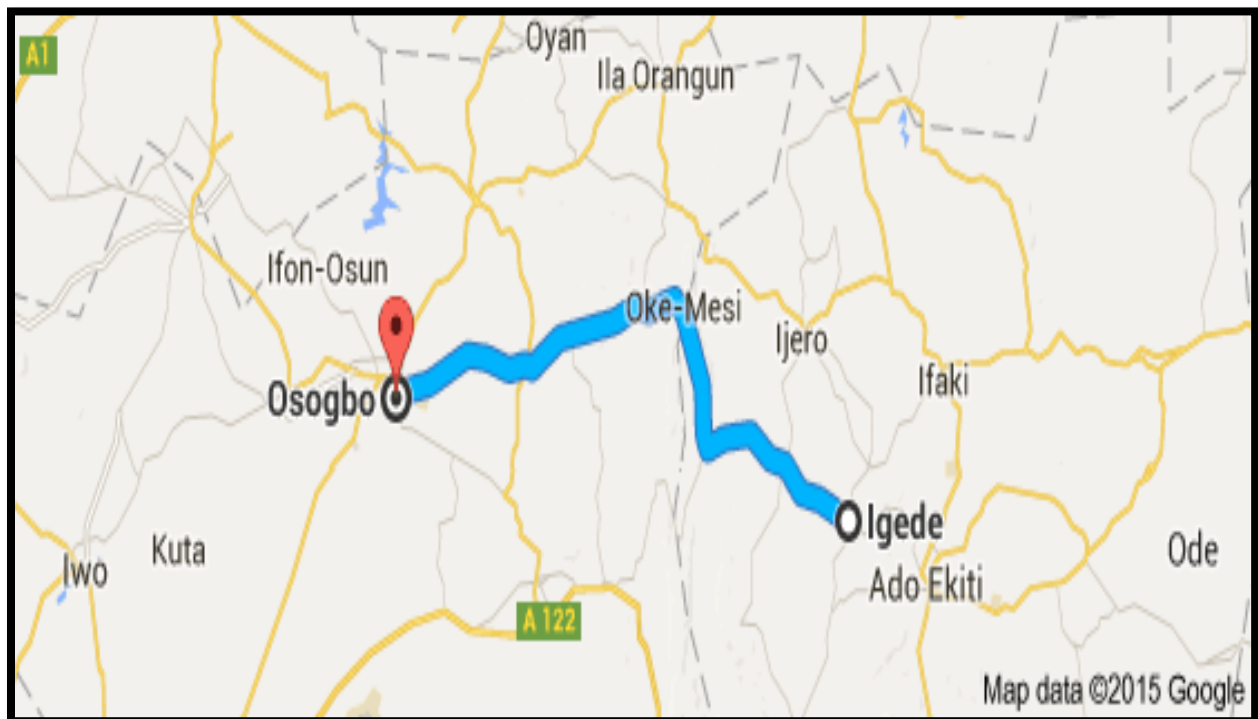
“agbajo owo laafin sanya, ajeji owo kan ko gbe eru de ori”
(In togetherness we can make it, no one stranger’s (divided) hand can lift a load onto the head)

“Adase ni nhunni; ajose ki i hunni”
(Doing it alone is what gets one in trouble; collaborating with others does not get one in trouble)

Essentially in this section, Osogbo is treated as part of the larger Yoruba group and it specifically focuses on the actions, intentions and expressions of the characters and elements in the myth seeking a politically united society in relation to the society’s social structure. I also examine the myth-historical element in the analysis of the myth.

When discussing the relationships of Osun's myth to the establishment of Osogbo and indigo textile dyeing craft, I assume that the aged have more knowledge of the myth than the younger ones. However, one of the aged informants claimed that *“it is our mothers that will be conversant with that (the myth) – and it is not that they have that knowledge per se. You see, aro is related to Osun. It is related to Osun because Iya Osun does dyeing. If there are no relations, we would not have been calling it Osun Osogbo.”* This response showed how myths are transferred among Yoruba people in Osogbo but also accurately echoed Bloch’s viewpoints about deference being the central character of rituals and rituals’ transformatory power (Bloch 2005:136).

Historically, the myth involved two worlds, two events and two sets of characters who sought a place of political unity. The mythic story of Osun tends to stress the establishment of Osogbo town and indigo dyeing craft to the emergence of Osun River and the goddess Osun residing in the river. According to my informants, Osun was a woman who hailed from Igede-Ekiti (a town in the present day Ekiti state - about 80kms from Osogbo (See Map 5).



Map 5: The movement of the Osun-Osogbo river from Igede to Osogbo (Google Map)

Iya Ewe³⁹, my fieldwork consultant in Osogbo sharing her knowledge about Osun stated that "Osun was one of the three wives of Sango (the famous 17th century Alaafin⁴⁰ of Oyo), who

³⁹ Taiwo Adeniran aka Iya Ewe is a woman in her late 40s, a radio news presenter, an indigo dyer and my main consultant during the fieldwork in Osogbo. She occasionally interferes in the interview with Madam Rafatu; the only surviving woman dyer in the Aka's family house (a prominent dyeing family compound in Osogbo); especially where Madam Rafatu seems to have no knowledge of the topic. My Research Assistant occasionally also seek clarifications from Iya Ewe concerning the areas that were not clearly stated for her to take note during the interview. The discussion of Osun took place under the dyeing shade surrounded by other family houses – covered dyeing pots, broken dyeing pots, rusted metal drums and other dyeing equipments at the dyeing shade. During the interview, passers-by that know Madam Rafatu and Iya Ewe intermittently come around to exchange pleasantries; this caused several breaks during the interview.

⁴⁰ Alaafin is the title for the King of Oyo people

committed suicide. The death of Sango made Osun and the other wives – Oya and Odo-Oba – to transform into river goddesses – Odo-Oba in Osun State and Oya is the River Niger. Hence the adage “don’t give Oba’s child to Osun; they are all co-wives” (See also Balogun n.d.).

Iya Ewe continued that "Osun came here (to Osogbo) as a person, living in the river that has its source in Igede Ekiti and she does indigo dyeing in the river (spiritually) prior to the incursion of any human being. However, Agboola was intrigued by the river's path during a project called Search Force (he was a member of the project), which involved tracing the river from its source in Igede-Ekiti to Osogbo⁴¹ (See Map 5). Although the myth suggests that the Osun goddess was an indigo dyer and played a prominent role in founding Osogbo, there are seemingly divergent opinions; some of these which link Iya Mapo⁴², the goddess of Yoruba women's arts and crafts, to the establishment of indigo dyeing in Osogbo (this will be discussed later in this chapter).

A look at the Yoruba social structure reveals that the construction of personhood and identity is fluid depending on the context of the person and the person’s craft or work in the referred context (Olajubu 2003:65). In the myth, Osun, left home but her dyeing skills never came to the public space until the tree was cut by the hunters. The tree was a representation of Osun’s paternal power and influence over her. Osun freed herself from her siblings, where her dyeing skills were hidden but not hidden from the protective coverings of the father (tree).

⁴¹ Agboola was fascinated by the nature of the river movements. It is assumed that every river should flow Southward but Osun River which flowed from Igede-Ekiti town coursed to the North (Aramoko Ekiti) instead of flowing Southward (Ado-Ekiti); from Aramoko town it flowed through the towns of Oke-Imesi, Ijeda, Osogbo, Ede the same Asejire river. It is the same Osun River, which flowed as Asejire river that finally flowed to Majidan (also called Majidun) in Lagos.

⁴² In Yoruba cosmology, Iya Mapo is considered as the goddess of creativity and the custodian and protector of all female craft. She is also perceived as the first dyer in Yorubaland.

For Osun's dyeing skills to unfold in the public space, the hunters needed to cut the protective covering of the father. This indicated that every obligation performed by the father of a woman stops, once a man marry her. However, the fallen tree broke the water, which represents the transparency of the woman - the woman's virginity being covered by the tree - the father. In other words, the fallen tree permitted the elder of the hunters; Olutimehin, to break the virginity of the woman, which allowed blood to spread (the spread of the dye on the river water). But the woman could not allow the men (hunters) to stand in the place of blood, so they had to move away from that private space.

Prior to the hunter's distancing from the river, a covenant ensued. This covenant formed a new social structure in the society based on compromise. Since the protective arm of the father has been cut down by Olutimehin; he replaced the father as the new protective arm of the Osun-Osogbo's grove - to prevent other hunters from intruding into the forest. She made the brother the custodian of the new community, Osogbo. With the new social structure, Osun could practice her indigo dyeing openly but in the private space.

To understand the myth further, there are some salient points to recognize: One, it was not suggested that Osun's transmogrification to river was wrong. This seemed to be the basic foundation of the concept of *orisha*, which I referred to as discovery of self-identity. Secondly, the chaotic middle is the high point of the myth – characters revealed their definite motives, which are the same but achieved differently. In relation to the characters' intentions, the hunters were proactive while the river was reactive, which echoed the popular Yoruba saying that “*eni yara ni ogun ngbe*” (it is the proactive that the god favors).

In light of these significant points, it is essential to examine the element of journey in the myth - the flowing river and the hunters' search for water are perceived as embarking on a journey. The

element of journey among the Yoruba is termed “*ajo or irin ajo*” - this creates a holistic view of the myth. *Ajo* differs from the normal travelling that human beings embark upon in the everyday sense. Lawuyi (1994:190) stated that *ajo* suggests that the movements in terms of times and seasons of the characters in “*aye*” (life) are uncertain – the boundaries and structures of the movements are not fixed – always fluxed with characters reflexive and transformatory actions in the myth.

Lawuyi furthered that “*Aye* is characterized as a market and so it is a place where the experiential, reflexive nature of day-to-day living implies the transformation of organized forms, transactional exchanges, and strong beliefs. To be alive is to experience the ups and downs of this journey” (1994:190). In another explanation, *aye* is described in Yoruba culture as cyclical, which reflects a Yoruba saying “*Òbírópo layé*” (Life goes in cycles) – filled with separations (distance) and unions (compromise).

The personality of the characters shows the nature of journey embarked upon by different sets of people in life. As King Sunny Ade, a leading Juju genre musician said in one of his albums:

<i>ototo laarin wa,</i>	We came to the world differently
<i>ototo laarin wa</i>	We came to the world differently
<i>se b'ile aye,</i>	But, in the world
<i>ile aye yin la ti paade ara wa</i>	It is in the world we met ourselves
<i>ojo ni pe ipade nki jina</i>	It is times that differs, our face-to-face meetings are not far away

So, both the hunters (humans) and *orisha* Osun (spirit) represented by the river embarked on a journey and their path definitely met.

Another salient element in the myth relating to *irin ajo ni aye* (journey on earth) was the training and initiation of the young ones. The children are sent from home in order to be initiated into maturity. Iya Olugun is a widow and an indigo cloth pattern maker in the Faleke’s compound in

Osogbo. The Faleke's compound is an *Ifa* religion devotee family, which Iya Olugun was married into the family - although, she is also from a family of *Ifa* religion devotee. The compound has two shrines; one at the main entrance of the compound (*Eshu's Shrine*) and the other (*Ogun's Shrine*), which faced the entrances of the *Ifa* Oracle room and traditional birth attendant (TBA) clinic room. We were patterning the clothes to be dyed under the shade of one of the compound's abandoned buildings because of the heat of the sun. And surrounding us while the cloth patterning and interview was in progress were the compound's children, who just arrived from their various schools making noises. Also, there were pregnant women who came to the TBA clinic walking around in the family compound, exercising their bodies by walking and preparing their bodies for child labours and deliveries. During the interview, Iya Olugun stated that her teenage years were filled with the experiences of helping her parents to sell matches or light sticks (used to light fire). This can be likened to the apprenticeship period in most Yoruba crafts. A child is sent to live with a master in order to learn a craft and also to be initiated in the way of the society. It is at this initiation stage the child learns the essentialities of living such as *iwapele* (gentle character) and *suuru* (patience).

The Yoruba people of Osogbo believed that during this *irin ajo* of *aye*, one acquires the essentialities of life. Abiodun Rowland in his paper "*Africa aesthetics*"(2001) discussed that learning the essentialities in the society needs one to "*ba agba rin*" (walk with the elders) - taking an interest in the traditional procedures and studying them. When a young one (male or female) walks with the elders h/she acquires the qualities of "*ifarabale* (calmness and control), *iluti* (teachableness and comprehensibility), *imoju-mora* (sensitivity), and *tito* (enduring, lasting, and steadfast). Other qualities, like *oju-inu* (insightfulness) and *oju-ona* (design consciousness and originality), are developed through training. These qualities require *suuru* (patience) and *iwapele*

(gentle character), which are the bedrock of desirable attributes of *iwa* (character) in Yoruba traditional thought” (Abiodun 2001:20–21).

3.5 The Nature of Symbol in the Indigo Textile Dyeing Production Processes in Osogbo

As stated in the previous section, during my fieldwork, a contentious debate on the claim of two deities (Osun-Osogbo and Iya Mapo) over the creation of indigo dyeing craft in Osogbo emerged. Confusing elements in the narratives emerged as some of the informants attributed the practice of indigo dyeing to another goddess, "*Iya Mapo*" (*Iya-Mu-Opo* – The Holder of the House). Although, Abodedele (2012) expressed that Iya Mapo was the Queen of Osogbo; the sentry spirit in charge of the Osun-Osogbo grove’s entrance – no one could verify this claim. But, in relation to indigo dyeing, some of the informants believed Osun goddess practiced indigo dyeing such as Iya Olugun. This created some difficulties to explicate the nature of symbol in the production process of indigo textile dyeing in Osogbo.

During the interview, Iya Olugun stated that "*aworoye, ni Osun fi aro dida se fun awon ara Osogbo*" (Osun goddess showed indigo dyeing to Osogbo people via vision) but "*I do not know if Iya Mapo is related to indigo dyeing*". On the other hand, Bartho⁴³ and Awaru⁴⁴ believed that Iya

⁴³ Albert aka Bartho was one of my informants in his late-40s. He is an Ifa priest, a sculptor, an educated artists (as he prides himself because he had his art education at Ibadan Polytechnic in Oyo state) and the cousin of Iya Ewe at Ayekale area of Osogbo. His house is situated opposite a Christian owned Secondary school that had students singing Christian songs and playing instruments - preparing for the end of the year activities. We met Bartho in his house when we visited his wife, who was a an adire cloth pattern maker and Ewe Elu (indigo leaves) supplier. Bartho is an outspoken and sanguineous personality who describes issue in a vulgar way. We sat in front of his house with his dog, where we had some soft drinks (Coke Cola and Fanta) that we bought from the wife’s shop and ate amala (staple food we bought on our way to Bartho’s residence).

⁴⁴ Awaru Omotayo in his early 30s was my main informant at the Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery, Osogbo. He was one of the Director of Studies at the centre’s workshop situated along Osogbo-Iwo road. The workshop is about an acre of land with two shades made constructed of planks and covered with roofing sheets - one at the entrance and the other on the left of the compound. The one at the entrance had tables and chairs for used for patterning clothes, while the other seemed abandoned with broken pots, chairs and table. There was also a constructed building at the far right end of the compound used for storing students’ dyeing and patterning equipments. Beside the building is a tap

Mapo is the deity that controls indigo dyeing and every woman's craft in Yorubaland. Bartho stated that: "every work has a deity in control of it⁴⁵...the deity that brought indigo dyeing is called Iya Mapo. She is female deity and as a woman, she has her power in her body"

He added that there is hierarchy in knowledge, and one cannot deny the dyeing skills of goddess Osun; he alluded that this could be found in the *oriki* of Osogbo (Osogbo's praise name):

<i>Osogbo Ilu aro</i>	Osogbo, the home of dye
<i>Oroki asalaaa</i>	Oroki, land of virtue
<i>Are o pe ta</i>	The stranger did not kill civet-cat.
<i>Are pe ta o gba oo</i>	The stranger then killed civet-cat, and he was accepted.
<i>Osun Osogbo pele o, pele o, olomo yo yo</i>	Osun of Osogbo, we greet you, the mother of many children!
<i>Seleru agbo, agbara agbo</i>	Seleru concoction, Agbara concoction!
<i>L'osun nfi w'omo re</i>	Is what Osun uses to care for her babies/children
<i>Ki dokita o to de</i>	Prior to the coming of modern medicine /doctor
<i>A bimo ma y'ana le</i>	The one who gives birth and turns away from home
<i>Osun la la</i>	Osun, come alive ... come alive!
<i>E kore yeye oo, e kore yeye</i>	Sing of the goodness of the Mother, Sing of the goodness of Mother Osun!
<i>Osun</i>	
<i>Aro nti be l'osogbo ni</i>	The presence of the indigo dye in Osogbo makes one like Osogbo!
<i>Osogbo nfi wu ni</i>	Osogbo, full of cultural practices!
<i>Osogbo kiki asa</i>	We are the children of those full of cultures!
<i>Awa l'omo akuko asa</i>	
<i>To gbe ori ope re le tete si</i>	Sitting at the topmost part of the palm tree
<i>Oju t'ole, Oju t'oko</i>	The eyes see home, the eyes see farm

and dug but covered well - water has been a major challenge to their dyeing processes. And beside this tap was an elu plant tree under which we had the interview and the dyeing processes.

⁴⁵ Some examples of other crafts and their gods among Yoruba people are "Obatala" - the god of creativity and creator of human body, "Ogun Onire" is believed to be the god of iron, modern technology and war such as blacksmiths and "Aje" is the god of wealth and prosperity in business endeavours.

Awaru stated the connections between Iya Mapo and indigo dyeing clearly thus:

"According to Yoruba history, it is believed that Iya Mapo was the first to show how to do indigo cloth dyeing to everyone in Osun/Osogbo physically that this is Aro (Indigo Dye). The establishment of Aro in Osun was by Iya Mapo; like if we want to dye now – we first praise Iya Mapo:

Iya Mapo mo fe p'aso o Iya Mapo, I want to dye cloth oo!
Je ko r'edu fun mi o Let it dye very well oo!
Je ki j'ere ni nbe o" Let me have profit from it oo!

He continued:

"In Osogbo, everyone believes that Osun owns indigo dyeing...Osun stands alone, Iya Mapo stands alone and indigo dyeing too stands alone. Although, Osun does indigo dyeing but her major contribution was the establishment of Osogbo. It was Iya Mapo that allowed us to have the practical knowledge of indigo dyeing in Osogbo – Iya Mapo showed us how to use everything (in indigo dyeing)."

This claim that Iya Mapo is the deity over indigo dyeing craft and other women's arts and craft was also supported by Olajubu (2002) and Folarin (1993). They showed that Iya Mapo (Iya Moopo) is the "protectress" of all women's crafts, trades and professions. It is asserted that she invokes the totemic semblance of *Iyalode*⁴⁶ attributes; that she is known in Yoruba culture as the inventor of pottery. The semblance of *Iyalode* was also echoed by Folarin (1993), who projected Iya Mapo as a possessor of multidimensional hands due to her versatility in art and craft. Ibigbami's comments in Folarin (1993) confirms the versatility of Iya Mapo. The comments show her "as many things combined - she is a miner when she digs the clay, she is an artist creating potteries,

⁴⁶ According to a website *Iyalode* is a chieftancy title commonly bestowed on women in Yorubaland. Traditionally, the *Iyalode* signifies the "queens of ladies" and is given to the most prominent and distinguished lady in or from the town (<http://faajihouse/dictionary.php?kw=iyalode>; Retrieved July 31, 2015)

she is a technologist when firing the pots, and a scientist when glazing the potteries” (Ibigbami 1992).

Whilst this position is strongly favored by available literature and some of my informants, there is no mythological story on Iya Mapo (compared to the river goddess Osun) except that she is dexterous and most of the craftswomen (mostly potters or weavers, dyers, soap makers and palm oil producers) deify Iya-Mapo in Osogbo and Yorubaland. As stated in Chapter 1, this contention may be due to the political creation of Osun state from the Old Oyo state. The current Osun and Oyo states in Nigeria were bound together to make old Oyo state until their separation in August 1996. This echoes Bloch’s argument on myth as used in this chapter as a historical story that indicated the establishment of Osogbo via political unity. Even though indigo dyeing is also performed in some parts of Oyo state, such as Ibadan where there is Mapo Hall, Iya Olugun echoes her view, which seems political that “*Iya Mapo is for those in Ibadan (Oyo State) while Osun is for Osogbo*” (See also Bloch, 1992, which shows the politics of myths as it relates to rituals).

In order to understand the nature of symbols in indigo textile dyeing production process, I had to take a holistic view of the Osun myth and the role of Iya Mapo. In doing this, I follow selectively and carefully the example of Victor Turner in his studies among the Ndembu and Joan Wescotts concerning “*Eshu-Elegba*” among the Yoruba. Both Turner and Wescott outlined the essential characteristics (external forms and observable characteristics by the specialists) of the symbolic figure or deity either in a ritual or myth.

From the informants' narratives and literatures on the Osun myth, Osun is a river goddess that enables women (barren) have children and eases delivery of children – no wonder she is sometimes called “*Iya wa*” (Our Mother). Osun is also recognized as the “*Osun Seegesi, Olooya Iyun, Adagbadebu Onimole Odo*” (Osun - embodiment of grace and beauty, the preeminent hair-plaiter

with the coral-beaded comb). This description, according to *Ifa* oracle by Agboola makes Osun the deity that controls the destiny of every baby and without her it is impossible to perform *Ifa* oracle divination (which is explained later in this chapter). According to Iya Ewe and Agboola in another myth, it is argued that she is the only female of the 16 primordial divinities (*orisas*) *Olodumare* sent for the creation of the earth (See Appendix B).

Murphy & Sanford (2001) also described Osun as a transformer who transforms through “the simplest of natural substances, water, and by the mystery of birth; a Creator of "civilization and urban life through her wealth of cowries"; a "cool" and peaceful deity who rises in defense of her devotees", and also a healer via water. She is also described by the title “*Alade*” (the crowned woman), who dances to take the crown without asking” (Verger 1959:426 in Murphy and Sanford 2001:5). This makes some *Obas* (Kings) in Yoruba land, such as *Ataoja of Osogbo*, pay homage to her; a consequence of Osun being the leader of the “*Aje*” people (elderly women, who use power secretly commonly called “*Iya*” -The Mothers).

On the other hand, Iya Mapo is described as a goddess in the domestic area and playing the role of the protector of all women's affairs - having a semblance of Iyalode (the women leader) (Folarin 1993). I earlier stated that she is usually depicted as a woman possessing multi-dimensional hand dues to her versatility in arts and craft. According to Areo & Kalilu (2013:357), Iya Mapo is believed to be the first dyer in Oyo (probably the Old Oyo Kingdom) – her *oriki*, therefore, goes like this:

<i>Iya Mapo Atiba, Iya Mapo Atiba</i>	Iya Mapo Atiba, Iya Mapo Atiba!
<i>Iya Mapo atiba, iba re o, ki aro oja</i>	Iya Mapo, I reverence you, may the dye be productive!

Oloyo, Iya Mapo, ohun to 'se, gbesin The owner of Oyo!
Iya Mapo, this is an
activity that earned
you the gift of a big
horse!
Iya Mapo oo fi ebi pa omo re ri Iya Mapo, you
have never allowed
your children to go
hungry!

Bartho specifically made it known that Iya Mapo is referred to as the vagina; Washington (2015) indirectly called her “Mother of Vagina” – her vaginal water is her most potent power because with the vaginal water woman bears children. Washington (2015:64–65) also confirmed that Iya Mapo exercises control over creation of *odu* (pots), which symbolizes her protection of *odu* of creation, the womb.

As a description of her characteristics, Iya Mapo is portrayed with a sacred bronze casting called “*edon*”. The “*edon*” shows Iya Mapo with two children – one held tightly to her bosom or her breast in an upright fashion while the other is strapped with “*oja*” (sash) with her head downward and feet pointing up. However, Folarin (1993) took this to be a symbol of the decay in the values of the present society. All these characteristics of Iya Mapo highlight the view that childbearing and child-care are under her jurisdiction in Yoruba tradition.

From the ongoing discussion, the observable and descriptive nature of symbols in indigo textile dyeing can be gotten from both goddesses of Osun-Osogbo and Iya Mapo – who are quite complimentary. Osun and Iya Mapo are recognized as creators, transformers, goddesses of fertility, childbearing and child-caring, dyers (as evident in their respective *oriki*), protectors via water – a flowing water and the other the vaginal water (which is also attributed to the potent power of *orisa* Osun in the primordial times, and ultimately, they are both referred to as “*Iya wa*” (Our Mother). This expression of motherhood hit a cord when Agboola observed that the Yoruba mothers do the “*Ona*” (Pathway or Destiny) of a newborn baby, which echoes the claim of Bartho and Washington about Iya Mapo as the vagina or “Mother of Vagina” through which woman bears children. It also coincides with the claim of Iya Ewe and Iya Olugun that women indigo dyers’ performance and practice is called “*Ise Ona*” (Craft that charts the path or creates destinies):

"ona to the patterns made on cloth as the gift of "Ise Ona"" (Iya Ewe)

"*adire dyeing was established via the odu Ifa (verses of Ifa oracle) termed "Ofu Ajitena" (The one who wakes up to draw patterns)" (Iya Olugun)*

Agboola (Interview 2015) expatiated on the "*odu ifa Ofu ajitena*" clearly:

"*Ona*, in Yoruba philosophy and the core of Ifa initiation is *ona* (patterning), which refers to patterning the destiny of a new born baby coming to the earth. *Ona* is divided into two - spiritual and physical. The physical realm is controlled by the fathers (men) and the sacred by mothers (women) – the reason in Yorubaland, one will prefer a father's spankings than a mother's curse". Related to *Ifa*, he said “we have 5 cardinal points as against the 4 cardinal points of the Western world: the North – *Iwaju Opon*, the South – *Ehin Opon*, the East – *Olumuru L'otun*, the West – *Olokanran L'osi* and the Centre – *Aarin Opon*. Out of these 5 cardinal points that I have just mentioned, there is a cardinal point only controlled by women – the Southern region – *Ehin Opon*. All other cardinal points are controlled by both men and women."

According to Agboola, in the Yoruba world-view, every child sojourns from "*Iwaju Opon*" (North - ancestral home) and comes straight to the Earth (some baby may not make it to the Earth such as stillborn, called *Abiku*). Once a baby gets to the Earth, the baby's pattern can be unlocked in the Yoruba tradition – the medical doctors calls it Chromosomes. These chromosomes are arranged by the women and they call it "*Ona*". All these arrangements called *Ona* are arranged at the Southern region; the water region is controlled by the women - no single man has the power to arrange chromosomes. So, everything happens in the womb of the woman before the baby takes a physical form and later comes to the world to move back and forth between *Olumurun l'otun* (East) and *Olokanran l'osi* (West). When the time is up (death) in the world, one goes back to the ancestral place (Northward - Heaven).

From this analysis, the nature of symbols in indigo dyeing from the characteristics of Osun-Osogbo and Iya Mapo indicated both of them as a gentle and caring personality, which could best be described as that of Motherhood. According to Makinde (2004), a woman may occupy several

positions but the highest positions and value a woman could attain in the Yoruba culture is Motherhood (no matter how young the girl or lady may be). Mothers are deified as *orisa* (just like Osun and Iya Mapo) Thus the Yoruba people will say:

*Orisa bi iya ko si
Iya la ba ma a bo*

There is no deity like mother
It is the mother that is worthy
of being worshipped

There are several expressions that echo this position in proverbs, one of which is "*Iya ni wura, Baba ni dingi*" (Mother is gold, Father is mirror). In songs, there is "*Iya ni wura iyebiye, ti a ko le f'owora; O l'oyun mi f'osu mesan; O pon mi f'odun meta; Iya ni wura iyebiye; Ti a ko le f'owora*" (Mother is a precious gold; That cannot be purchased with money; She carried me in her womb for nine months; She nursed me for three years; Mother is a precious gold; That cannot be purchased with money).

3.6 Conclusion

In the words of Victor Turner (1967:46), "the elements of a symbol's meaning are related to what it does and what is done to it by and for whom." This statement captured the essence of this chapter concerning the elements in the myth of goddess Osun-Osogbo from differing views of structuralists (Levi-Strauss and Ortner). It also analysed the nature of ritual symbols as it relates to indigo dyeing in Osogbo and the establishment of Osogbo as a political entity from the perspectives of neo-structuralists (Leach) and post-structuralists (Bloch). There are some contentious issues on the nature of symbols from the goddesses of Osun-Osogbo and Iya Mapo and their connections to *adire* dyeing. These different perspectives reveal the complex cultural histories of ethnic groups in Nigeria as influenced by political divisions and creation of states. However, these contentions may be resolved by understanding the characteristics of both

goddesses and their roles among the Yoruba in Osogbo, especially the indigo dyers in available literatures.

In the next chapter, I will analyze the motherhood symbols during the performance of indigo textile dyeing production processes from the dyers' perspectives. I will use the modified framework of Victor Turner's work among the Ndembu people to seek the dyers' interpretation and to explicate the symbols in indigo textile dyeing, which shows motherhood as a symbolic performance, communication and meanings of the women dyers and pattern makers during the indigo dyeing production processes.

Chapter 4

‘Child is a Cloth’: Symbolism and the Social Contexts of Indigo Textile Dyeing Production

Processes among Women Dyers in Osogbo

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter revealed some foundational elements in Yoruba mythology about Osun of Osogbo, the nature of ritual symbols and the contentious nature of symbols in the goddesses of Osun-Osogbo and Iya Mapo. This was explained through the politics of the region (specifically, state creation) – Oyo and Osun States – and resolved through the understanding and roles of both goddesses among the *adire* women dyers in Osogbo. In this chapter, I present the *adire* production process as a set of successive sub-processes which culminate in the *adire* dyeing. Specifically, the subject of concern pertains to the indigo textile dyeing production processes in Osogbo as a performance of the mythical symbols analysed in the previous chapter. As an anthropologist embedded among the dyers, I gleaned how the symbol of motherhood was incorporated into the ritual performance of the *adire* dyeing production processes in Osogbo. My knowledge of the symbolic performance of the *adire* production processes, as obtained through personal observations, was enriched by Yoruba proverbs, everyday sayings and comments and exegeses of symbolism by the *adire* dyers and *Ifa* oracle⁴⁷ practitioners. I showed how these *adire* processes are performances in a social process that is connected to the social system in Osogbo.

⁴⁷The *Ifa* oracle is a body of knowledge that is indigenous to the Yoruba culture. It is a divination system made up of 256 *odus* (*these are verses or stories that make up the Ifa literary corpus*), which are memorized by the *Ifa* priest known as *Babalawo* – who is an oracle consultant. In the practice of *Ifa*, divination and revelations are subject to the dynamics of the *odus*, which are built around divinity and human existence. It enhances the priest’s ability to draw on deeper information from the world of spirits (Abimbola 1975; Jegede 2010; Agunbiade n.d.)

4.2 Rituals in Anthropology

The study of ritual emerged in the study of religion “as a unit of religious expression and building blocks for all religions” (Birx 2006:130). The thoughts of early religious scholars such as Max Muller, W. Robertson Smith, Edward B. Tylor, and James G. Frazer “underscored the role of ritual in mirroring defining central features of society and culture, worldviews, identities, political forms, and social arrangements” (Birx 2006:130–131); however, recently rituals “do not only mirror these defining features, they challenge the defining features too.” (Ibid).

Scholars have explained and applied rituals in a variety of ways – mostly with disagreements on the nature of rituals. For example, Van Gennep (1960) explained ritual as a rite of transition with the concept of liminality – the movements of people through distinctive phases and passages in time, place, and statuses; Gluckman (1962), in his work among the Swazi people of South Africa, described how ritual exaggerates real conflicts of social rules by emphasizing solidarity and unity despite these conflicts; Douglas (1966) showed how ritual resolves irregularities in the society by avoiding the dangers of pollution; Levis Strauss examined how the thoughts expressed in ritual reflect the social structure of a particular society to discover a universal thought system (1966); Victor Turner’s work among the Ndembus was a study of the meanings, types, and structures of the symbols used in rituals as social drama (Turner 1967; Turner 1975) – advancing Van Gennep’s concept of liminality while Rappaport’s work titled *Pigs for the Ancestors* (1968) described how rituals control the ecology – focusing on environmental relations.

These early studies manifest that the disagreement in ritual studies is rooted in the nature of rituals, which dictates the focus of each scholar. Concerning the nature of rituals, different activities representing different purposes are considered as rituals, but the differences lie in the meaning

attached to each ritual act, guided by the use of symbols. These early scholars also focused on the expressive and symbolic features of non-rational behaviours – the mystical and sacred behaviours as ritual behaviours (Jones 2005; Kratz 1994; Katz 1981). These ritual behaviours are “rigid, stereotypic, conventional, conservative, invariant, uniform, redundant, predictable, and structurally static,” devoid of human agency, and neglected the practical, technical, secular, rational, and scientific behaviour (Katz 1981)

Leach, an anthropologist, tried to resolve the disagreement when he suggested that rituals should be applied to everything perceived as a set of cultural behaviour. For Leach, human behaviours are a form of social communication or a code of information that has symbolic dimension regardless of issues like its explicit religious and social content (Leach 1968:524; Zuesse 2005:7833). This inclusive sense of ritual creation recognized the social, non-religious, technical and secular behaviours as ritual, and paved the way for the interchangeable use of performance and ritual (Katz 1981:335–336). Rituals, in this light, are a kind of performance found in every human culture – either in the public or private realms – they are acts done and performances ritualized: they are codified, repeatable actions (Schechner 1994; 2005). These performances extend to the organized re-enactment of actual events such as role playing of religious, familial and/or social life – largely used to represent human conditions and for getting things done (Schechner 2005).

Importantly, several scholarly contentions have emerged concerning Yoruba rituals. One example is Margaret Drewal's (1992) “*Yoruba ritual: Performances, Plays and Agents*,” in which ritual is viewed as an active, transformative process, rather than a static structure. With this post-structuralist perspective, she examined the power of human agents to transform ritual through performance. Drewal (1992) viewed ritual as a journey, whilst Lawuyi (1994:189) re-echoed its Yoruba translation as *ajo* – “a synecdochic relationship to the ontology of the human spirit

journeying through birth, death, and reincarnation.” However, most of the Yoruba rituals examined by Drewal were limited to every day performances, except where they related to a particular art and craft such as sculpture – a good example of a craft with an inscribed performance among the Yoruba people that reinforced and enriched beliefs (See Chapter 1)

Following Leach’s assertion that any human acts could be perceived as cultural behaviours – a ritual – a form of social communication with symbolic dimension (1968:524), crafts like the *adire* production processes can be perceived as ritual with symbolic performance – a goal-oriented activity. The symbolic interpretation, which I do in this chapter, using exegetical meanings in the textile dyeing process, created an avenue for the women dyers (and pattern makers) – who are heterogeneous as a group (either belonging to one dyers’ association or an independent craftswoman) in Osogbo to articulate and communicate their knowledge about social processes and structures via symbols in the *adire* production processes.

Ojo (1966) described the composition of the Yoruba women dyers in the pre-colonial period as an integrated and homogenous group – a contiguous extended family discussed in my previous publication in 2010; as evidenced among the Akoda family in Ede and Kemta (or Kenta) in Abeokuta. Presently, the composition of the dyers is along specialty lines; thereby creating separate industries. No particular reason has been given for the heterogeneity of specialties in the dyeing profession, but I observed that the different religious affiliations of the dyers, changing political economy and the employment opportunities offered by the dyeing industry may have turned women dyers’ into a heterogeneous collective of concerns and separate industries (See Chapter 2). Despite this heterogeneity, the women dyers (pattern makers) have no factional groups among themselves; however, while some informants have technical knowledge of the dyeing process and limited knowledge of the symbolism in indigo dyeing due to their religious affiliations,

other informants that belong to the *Ifa* religion are able to articulate and relate the indigenous beliefs and symbolisms in *Ifa* religion to the indigo dyeing processes.

In this chapter and the next two chapters (chapters 5 and 6), I present the activities of the Yoruba women dyers – specifically, the textile merchant and pattern maker, then the dyers (Chapters 5 and 6) in Osogbo in the light of Victor Turner's Symbolic Anthropology. Turner in his Ndembu ethnography, presents the symbolic performances of ritual as a set of distinct phases in the social process; it is associated with human interest as an instrument which can be “physical, moral, economic, and political”; with the ability to “operate in isolation” and maintain or “change fields of social relationships” (Turner 1975). A central feature of Turner’s symbolic anthropology is liminality⁴⁸ used to explore the symbolic properties of textiles with its transformative potential that the women dyers use in the *adire* dyeing processes; but, not specifically in a ritual context.

In the analysis of this chapter, I explore the symbolism of a child in the *aso* (cloth/textile) during the purchase of cloth at one of the dyers' favourite cloth merchants in Osogbo. I move to the *ona* (pattern-making) on the cloth, and then the ultimate dyeing in the next chapter (chapter 5). Against the background of this ethnography, I will proceed to compare the symbolism in *adire* textile dyeing processes with the contemporary textile dyeing processes in the next chapter. The symbolic inscription in one of the production processes, the ash and alkaline water production process, will be analysed as the husband-wife (man-woman) relationship among the Yoruba people of Osogbo in Chapter 6, and the colour symbolism will be explicated in Chapter 7.

⁴⁸ Liminality is a concept from Van Gennep which states that the status of the participant is deliberately made ambiguous, so as to separate the ritual process from normal social life (Barnard & Spencer 2010).

4.3 *Aso: The Cloth-Child Symbolism in Adire Textile Dyeing*

Clues abound as to the symbolism entailed in the textile among the Yoruba people. Ifasina⁴⁹, an *Ifa* priest, for instance, maintained that all clothes “...were once humans at the time of *iwase* (beginning of creation). Then, they do not speak as human but people could hear their speech”. Bartho⁵⁰, who spoke extensively on the nature of symbol in *adire* dyeing processes referred to the observable characteristics of cloth, and said that the kind of cloth one wears speaks so much on the identity of the wearer (See chapter 3). This is evident in one of the Yoruba proverbs, which says, “*aso la nki, ki a to ki eniyan*” (We first greet a person's cloth before greeting the wearer). The *Ifa* divination in the Yoruba traditional thought-system adds, too, that “cloth does not wear to shreds”, expressing the symbol of deathlessness or immortality in cloth, which is incidentally one of the natures of *Olodumare* (The Supreme Being) - permanency and immortality (See Renne & Agbaje-Williams 2005).

In order to understand the symbolism of *aso* (cloth) as it relates to this research, I and my research assistant went to my research field consultant, Taiwo Adeniran⁵¹, popularly called Iya Ewe among women dyers in Osogbo. Iya Ewe has an idea of the specific type of cloth suitable for indigo dyeing. Iya Ewe took us to a cloth merchant called Mama Tolu, whose shop she has been frequenting for the past 20 years.

⁴⁹ Ifasina or Fasina is one of the *Ifa* priests in the Faleke's compound in Olugun area – an *Ifa* religion family compound in Osogbo (see chapter 1), where Mama Olugun; the Pattern Maker resides. He is in his mid-30s. In addition to his knowledge in *Ifa* religion, he also has National Certificate in Education (NCE) and ascribing to further his education in the University. The interview took place during one of the Faleke compound's celebrations.

⁵⁰ Albert aka Bartho was one of my informants in his late-40s. He is an *Ifa* priest, a sculptor, an educated artists (as he prides himself because he had his art education at Ibadan Polytechnic in Oyo state) and the cousin of Iya Ewe at Ayekale area of Osogbo.

⁵¹ Taiwo Adeniran aka Iya Ewe is a woman in her late 40s, a radio news presenter, an indigo dyer and my main consultant, contact and informant during the fieldwork in Osogbo.

Mama Tolu's shop is along the Osogbo-Iwo Expressway. I gathered that most of the Osogbo women dyers' patronize her for their dyeing clothes. Mama Tolu's shop is the ground floor of a storey building she owns in Osogbo. Her shop opens at 8 O'clock in the morning and closes at 5 O'clock in the evening, when she goes to church for her daily prayers – which she does faithfully. Mama Tolu has a rather big stature, which slightly restricts her movement in the shop. She picks textiles for sale whenever buyers are around but, when her children and husband are present, they run most of the errands for her. She also sells other dyeing materials, mostly chemical dyes and contemporary pattern stamps. I observed that she knows her textiles very well – calling out the names of specific textiles and their respective prices - a result of her longevity in the business.

Mama Tolu seems to provide most dyers with some assurance about the authenticity of the textiles being purchased from her. Iya Ewe confirmed that most dyers call her textile “guarantee” because the textile manufacturers/importers knows that she sells mostly to dyers. So, her shop is a better locus for this study, than going to the market or textile hawkers to buy textiles fit for dyeing because they could sell the ones that would not absorb dye at all. They will only tell one that they are not the manufacturers of the textiles. Mama Tolu does not have any other business aside cloth merchandizing. Mama Tolu knows about the contemporary dyeing processes, all different kinds of materials relating to *adire*⁵² and German dye⁵³, except indigo leaves. There is nothing she does not have in relation to German dye, and she has been in this business for a long time.

⁵²Noteworthy, when Mama Tolu use the term *adire* (tie and dye), she refers to the patterning style and not the dyeing style. The patterning styles are the styles used in making designs or motifs on the clothes; it may be through *eko* (cassava paste), ropes from the rice sack to tie the cloth before dyeing it or metal/wooden stencil to pattern the cloth prior to the dyeing.

⁵³German dye is a term used by the dyers to refer to the synthetic dyes – mostly used for the contemporary dyeing processes. It is called German dyes because it is usually produced in Germany. The synthetic dyes are different to Elu dyes because the synthetic dyes are factory and chemically manufactured dyes while the Elu dyes are natural dyes from the indigo leaves.

Having met Mama Tolu, I ventured to extract some information from her about the cloth required for indigo textile dyeing, for the Yoruba people says ‘*enu onitan, lati gbo itan*’ (we hear the story from the horse’s mouth). Following a few moments of hesitation, Mama Tolu then explained that a required cloth for the *elu* dyeing should be 100% pure cotton that has the ability to absorb dye – “*iyen ni aso gidi*”, meaning, “that is good and quality cloth material.” She went on to explain that good cloths are those that can absorb dye during the *elu* dyeing process; the dye does not fade and does not tear as a result of use, especially after the first time the wearer uses the dyed cloth. She said she got the good cloth from her supplier and customer, who was an expert in the merchandise, “...because others could do ‘*magomago*’ (deceive me). Pure cotton is the best textile for dyeing, and some people misuse the label.”

I looked on with much interest as Mama Tolu discussed prices and quality with other potential customers. She explained that cloth price depended on both quality and maker; that one could tell quality by touch and feel:

“...when you touch it, and feel the cloth, you will know the difference, irrespective of the maker of the material”

Mama Tolu made me feel the texture of the cloth and said, “you can see one is more nourished than the other”– the more absorbent a textile, the more expensive the cloth. Indeed, it is this absorbent quality, coupled with the cotton composition requirement, which she kept reiterating as absolute necessity for a genuine final dyed product. I, however, could not tell the difference by simply touching and feeling the various materials, although I kept this fact to myself.

There were many potential brands of cloth on offer for the *adire* dyeing process, all priced differently. I naturally inquired about the various brands and their relative suitability for the dyeing process. Mama Tolu insisted that one could, with experience, always tell the difference by the feel

of the hand, and pointed out that the textile price could range from #2,500 to #10,000. These are her words: “*Àwọn aladire kò ní ra irú aṣọ yẹn, taani yio ra lẹwọ wọn? Iye owó mélòó ni wọn máa taá?*” (But dyers and artists will not buy such textiles to dye any cloth, who will buy it from them? And how much will they sell it for?) At this point, Iya Ewe offered her opinion:

“I will not have anyone to sell it to. My price as a dyer is determined by the textiles' price, the nature of the design, and the time consumption in the production of the dyed textiles. If some dyers sell theirs for #4,000 and I sell mine at #10,000, consumers will complain that my products are more expensive than others’, even though the expensive textile will bring out the beauty of the design on the dyed product. Although most consumers do not have the price knowledge of textiles; the reason for the comment on some dyers’ products being cheaper than others”

Though Mama Tolu seems versatile in the technical aspects of textile merchandize especially the prices and textiles fit for indigo dyeing, she seems unable to articulate the symbolic properties of textile – the reason was not evident in the interview. I observed her limited knowledge of *Ifa* religion – probably because Mama Tolu is a professed Christian.

As we were discussing the prices of these cloths, one of the old Yoruba sayings turned to a song by Funmi Adams, a popular Nigerian artist in the 1980s, came to my mind about “*Omo l’aso*” (Child is a Cloth). This song also echoes Renne & Agbaje-Williams (2005) description of a cloth as a metaphoric representation of a child. So, I noticed that both cloth and child are like blank pages, and can be written on – capable of receiving any form of education – in this case informal education as opposed to formal education received from a recognized institution, which parents are not directly involved.

As Agboola (Interview 2015) expatiated upon the concept of *Ona* (patterning the destiny of a new born baby coming to the earth) in the "*odu ifa Ofu ajitena*" in the Yoruba world-view (See Chapter 3). He stated that every child sojourns from "*Iwaju Opon*" (North - ancestral home) and comes straight to the Earth (some baby may not make it to the Earth such as stillborn, called *Abiku*). With the latter information, I reflected on the liminal *persona* of Mama Tolu (and the cloth manufacturers) in the *adire* dyeing process. Mama Tolu shared with me the symbolic properties of the gods, who are charged by *Eledumare*⁵⁴ to finish the creation of beings on earth while the cloth manufacturers have the symbolic nature of *Eledumare*. So, a cloth merchant or cloth manufacturer is structurally treated as the creator (or an informed person) of every "being or baby" in the concept of *Ona*.

With respect to the earlier discussion on equating cloth to a child in the Yoruba thought system, Mama Tolu's (the cloth merchant) earlier opinion of 100% pure cotton clothes requirement for indigo dyeing fits this analysis. The metaphoric representation that equates a child with cloth also points to the imagistic equating of *aso-gidi* (100% pure cotton cloth/good cloth) to *omo-gidi* (good and receptive child): both having the ability to absorb – the cloth, the ability to absorb indigo dye and the child, the ability to imbibe the necessary trainings and education given by the parents. In contrast, a child that is unreceptive to parental trainings is called *omo-buruku* (bad child), and the child is perceived not much better than a dead child. Likewise, an *aso-buruku* (bad cloth), which is not 100% pure cotton and non-absorbing, is not entertained among the women dyers in Osogbo; it is thrown out and rejected like an outcast. Importantly, the concept of *omo gidi* among the Yoruba people is sometimes referred to as "*Omoluwabi*".

⁵⁴ The Supreme Being and the Creator of all beings. He is also called *Olodumare*

Fayemi (2009) stated that *Omoluwabi* – is an adjectival Yoruba phrase with the components of *Omo-ti-Olu-Iwa-bi*. He translated each syllable in the word as *omo* meaning child; *ti* as that or which; *Olu-Iwa* as the Chief or Master of Character; and *bi* meaning born. When combined, it is translated to mean the baby begotten by the chief of *Iwa* (character), which Fayemi (2009:167) described as a person with “the paragon of excellence in character.” However, the concept has some contradictions rooted in the questions: “who is an *Omoluwabi*? and “*omo ti o ni iwa bi tani?*” (a child who has character like who?).

With reference to the concept *Omoluwabi*, Gbadegehin (2007:87) in Fayemi (2009:168) described *Olu-Iwa* as “God, the creator of every baby” and claimed that every baby is an *omoluwabi*. Fayemi disagreed with Gbadegehin’s claim that “*olu-iwa*” could also refer to “a dignified parent with excellent character” (2009:168); although Fayemi in his analysis recognized that there is the possibility that the child may turn out to be an *Omoluwabi* while not born by parents with good character.

Therefore, Fayemi suggests that this discourse gave a picture of *Omoluwabi* in Yoruba thought culture as a person “given deep knowledge, wisdom, and trained to be self-disciplined and to develop a sense of responsibility that shows in private and public actions, that which earns individuals social integrity, and personality in Yoruba society” (2009:168). So, as against *omoburuku* (bad child) or *omokomo* (worthless child), *omoluabi* is perceived and defined as a “good and cultured person.” Hence, a common belief among Yoruba people to represent *omo-gidi* as an ideal child is synonymous with *omoluwabi*, a “good person” (Fayemi 2009). In the light of the ongoing discourse, an *omoluwabi* (a cultured person) has been through the process of socialization – forhaving received good behavioural nurturing and education; however, *aso-gidi* has not been

through the process of indigo dyeing by the dyer – therefore, it raises a conceptual problem regarding the metaphoric representation of *aso-gidi*.

Ali (1997) examined this conceptual problem of 100% pure cotton cloth in the light of the *omoluwabi* when he criticized the earlier argument on *omoluwabi*. He stated that for a person to be an *omoluwabi* in the Yoruba cultural context, the biological, metaphysical, epistemological and ethical connotations must be considered. He listed some criteria as guide: self-consciousness, rationality, abstraction, freedom, memory, intellectual intuition, intellectual perception, intellectual synthesis, and induction, rational language, a true power of will, a powerful analytic judgement, preservation and affection (Ali, 1997:55 in Fayemi, 2009). Therefore, Ali claimed that “people like idiots, those who are senile, imbeciles, kleptomaniacs, or neurosis agents, moral outlaws, social deviants, dumb and deaf, even children – though potentially persons, are left out on the basis that they cannot fully (perhaps at the moment) manifest the salient characteristic features for being a person” (ibid.).

So, an *omoluwabi* from this position is someone that is well-behaved, with impeccable character to a considerable extent, possesses good anatomical and psychological elements needed for being a human being – demonstrates fairly well, the intrinsic psycho-physiological potentiality of human features as well as the normative principles of *iwapele* (good character). From this discourse, an *aso-gidi* (good cloth) is not yet a metaphoric representation of *omoluwabi* until the 100% pure cotton cloth is patterned by the pattern maker and ultimately dyed by the dyer. Therefore, like an *omoluwabi* who has been educated or in the Yoruba textile dyeing, lingo “dyed”, a 100% pure cotton textile is a potential metaphor for a good child having the right condition to be educated – physically, mentally and spiritually (See Chapter 5).

With the notion of fluidity in the symbols of *aso gidi* (good cloth) and *aso buruku* (bad cloth), it shows that no child is thrown away or abandoned among the Yoruba people – every new born child has the potential to be good or bad. So, the Yoruba people of Osogbo (and Yoruba generally) do not abandon any child, and no child (person) is beyond transformation (at least with sacrifices and prayers).

As my visit with Mama Tolu drew to an end because she wanted to attend her usual 5pm Christian prayer, an important issue arose as to the effect of the political economy on the sales of textile. Mama Tolu had this to say:

"The imported cloth has been affecting the clothing market especially the guinea brocade (a popular and prevalent brand of 100% pure cotton cloth among indigo dyers) in Osogbo. Yes, it has; people now buy Ankara (a pre-designed factory-made textile) material more than guinea brocade because it is cheaper; some people just down grade dyed textile, and do not regard it as something of great essence. But, as they use the Ankara, they soon discover that it does not have prolonged life, or last longer than guinea brocade. Once you dye guinea brocade brand of 100% pure cotton cloth and wear it, it lasts until it wears."

Despite the changing and evolving political economy in Nigeria, as I outlined in the historical chapter above, the resilient nature of the dyed textile industry has ensured that it remains relevant.

4.4 The Symbolism of *Kadara* (Destiny) in the *Ona* (Patterning) of the *Adire* Dyed Textile

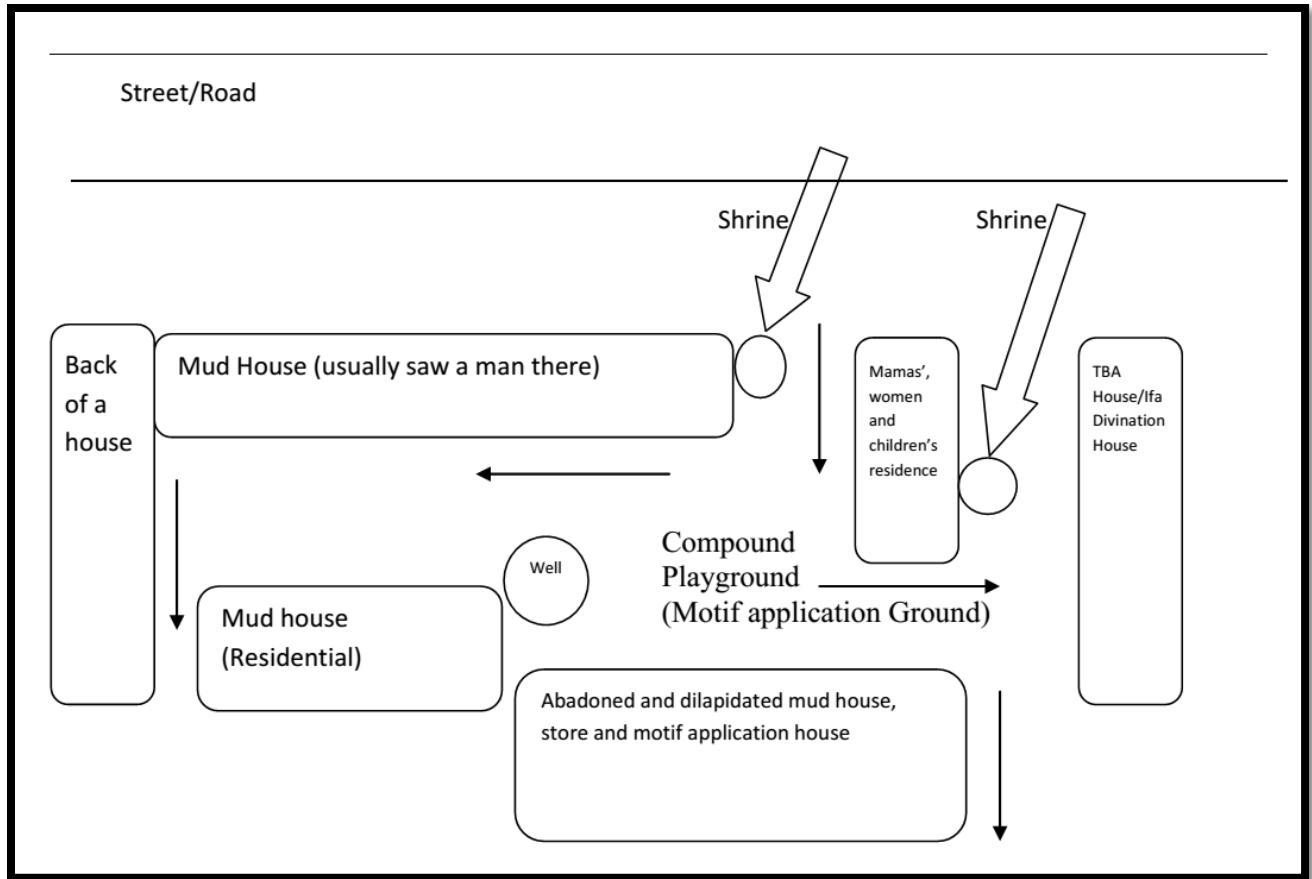
We took the purchased cloth to Olugun, to meet the *Onisona-Eleko* (a cassava paste pattern maker), popularly known as Mama Olugun. It is common practice to name elderly persons by their place of residence. Her real name is Aworonke Oloosade Faleke. Mama Olugun is an expert indigenous

onisona (pattern maker) from the Faleke's compound, and an *Ifa* religious follower. Her pattern making is usually the indigenous type – the pap-resist design technique⁵⁵ popularly called *adire-eleko* among the women dyers and pattern makers. Mama Olugun's residence is some minutes' walk (15-20 minutes) from the dyeing place.

The houses in Faleke's compound are arranged to have a sort of play ground in the middle, with narrow pathways within the compound, which allows Mama Olugun to frequently interact with passers-by. The patterning space is usually kept clean by her granddaughter, Ifafunke. Mama Olugun does her patterning of clothes in the middle of the compound under the shade of a dilapidated mud house, which also serves as a place to prepare traditional medicine because Mama Olugun's son is an *Ifa* priest and herbalist.

The compound is also home to an *Ifa* divination school, as well as a traditional birth place. I noticed pregnant women and other people coming and going to see the *Ifa* diviner apprentice and the traditional birth attendant called Ifatunde. Notably, at the entrance to the birthing place is a shrine for Ogun (the god of iron) where the goats in the compound ate whatever was left on the shrine (see Map 6 for the Faleke's Vicinage). Faleke's compound also has a close affiliation with Islam, I noticed during the fieldwork the excitement in the compound when they celebrated some of their children's graduation from Quranic school (See Chapter 1).

⁵⁵ The pap-resist design technique is also called starch-resist technique; a pattern making technique that is made from cassava flour to produce a smooth thick paste that could be applied by using freehand drawing and metal stencil called *adire oni batani* – *batani* refers to patterning in English language. However, there are other patterning techniques outlined in my previous work (2013) such as *adire-oniko* (patterning with raffia palm rope, sometimes with stones, fruits and other objects in the clothes prior to the use of raffia palm or rope to tie the pattern. There is also *adire-alabere* popularly referred to as stitch pattern, however, sewing machine is used to do stitch patterns today.



Map 6: The geographical arrangement of Faleke's Vicinage

We met Mama Olugun in the middle of the compound. I observed that most of the men in the compound were Ifa priests working in the *Ifa* room or the birthing centre. I also noticed pregnant women walking up and down in the compound, apparently on instruction to exercise their bodies in preparation for the birthing process at the traditional clinic in the compound. The presence of the birthing centre and the pattern maker in Faleke's compound reiterates the argument that the performance of the pattern maker among Yoruba people is rooted in Ifa religion, which claims that the *orishas* (gods and goddesses) are essential to the patterning of destinies and humanity (See Chapter 3). So, as against the *Ise Ona*, which relates to dyers' performance and practice of pattern making; *Ona* in Ifa religion is the core of *Ifa* initiation – patterning the destiny of a new born baby coming to the earth, which, in indigo textile dyeing pattern making lingo, is referred to as *Ise ona*

(pattern making) – a symbolic performance representation of the patterning the destiny of a new baby’s life.

As explained in the previous section, the textile from the cloth merchant possesses the symbolic property of a child (a baby) coming from its ancestral home in *Ona*, the Yoruba philosophy and the core of Ifa initiation. After the baby has left the ancestral home to come to earth where its pattern called chromosomes by the medical doctors get unlocked in the Yoruba tradition, the baby moves to the Southern region – the water region controlled by the women – in the womb of the woman called *Ehin Opon* (South) before the baby takes a physical form. The symbolic representation of this physical transformatory process in *adire* textile dyeing is undertaken by a pattern maker; in this case Mama Olugun – who takes on the liminal character of pattern making a baby in the mother’s womb in *Ise Ona* (pattern making) of textile dyeing.

In the *Ifa* religion, the patterning of a baby’s life relates directly to the concept of *Ori*⁵⁶. *Ori* (Head) among the Yoruba people is one of the constituent elements and a vital part of a human being (person) (Balogun 2007:118; Ademuleya 2007; Lawal 1985). *Ori* holds three essential elements: *Ara* (the physical body) – which has the major sensory organs. The other elements are *Emi* (life giving elements) and *Ori* (the spiritual head – which the Yoruba perceive as the human destiny). Contrary to the head in the physical body, also called *ori ode* (outer head) and *emi*, called the life giving elements, the *ori inu* (the spiritual head, inner head or human destiny) determines the

⁵⁶ *Ori* among the Yoruba people refers to the physical head of animal or human being; however, the Yoruba people claims that *ori* encompasses both physical and metaphysical elements Lawal (2007). In this chapter, *ori* refers to the spiritual head among the Yoruba people, which also symbolizes human destiny.

existence and fate of the individual on earth (Balogun 2007:118; Lawal 1985:91), which *ona* refers to in this chapter.

As my research assistant spoke to Mama Olugun, we handed over the purchased textiles to Mama Olugun to check their authenticity, and to choose the ones most suitable for patterning. Ifafunke (one of Mama Olugun's granddaughters) was told to bring some water to test the authenticity of the textile we purchased from Mama Tolu, the cloth merchant. To start with, my assistant took out one of the textiles from the packaged nylon. Secondly, the water was poured onto a scarf, most of it rolling down the material surface. The scarf, it was said, could not "*mu omi*" (absorb water). Iya Ewe remarked, "you see that most of the water stayed on the scarf, with only a little absorbed. This shows that the scarf is mostly polythene material - the reason you see most of the water rolling on the scarf."

To this, Mama Olugun added, in corroboration, "the one that absorbs water is 100% pure cotton cloth." Mama Olugun and Iya Ewe alleged that other dyers, such as those in Abeokuta, often used non-100% pure cotton cloth – low quality textiles for dyeing – which made their products cheaper and got torn easily due to excessive use of synthetic materials like caustic soda. This may be, in part, the origin of the Yoruba adage that "*aso gidi mbeni Osogbo, eniyan atata nmbe ni Ibadan*" (Good and quality cloth exist in Osogbo, good people are in Ibadan). The metaphoric description of cloth as good and quality cloth and low quality textiles as well as the preference of each dyer with respect to dyeing location reiterates the earlier argument about the fluidity of the concept of good cloth and bad cloth in contrast to good child and bad child in cloth-child symbolism in the previous section.

Several arguments have been made in attempts to explain the fluidity in the symbolism of cloth-child as it relates to the concept of patterning human destiny in Yoruba ontology (Lawal 1985; Ogunade 2006). But, based on the claim that every human destiny is patterned good by *Eledumare*, Dopamu (1985) theorized that a person's destiny is a matter of process – a process which starts from heaven and effected on earth. Ogunade (2006) furthered the frontiers of the argument when he claimed that *Ori* is the personality-soul and not the destiny of a person, it is “the arrow-head of human destiny, the receiver of destiny before *Olodumare*” and *Olodumare* is incapable of creating *ori buruku* (bad destiny) – except altered as a result of certain eventualities on earth, such as environmental (social, economic and political), biological and diabolical situations in life (Ogunade 2006; Dopamu, 2008).

Mama Olugun emphasized that making patterns on clothes is a process, and pattern making is the penultimate activity prior to the dyeing of the cloth in indigo dye solution. This clarification from Mama Olugun further suggests that the birthing and nurturing of a child turned *omoluwabi* is a process, which requires a fundamental element of a receptive child, symbolically represented by a 100% pure cotton, dye-absorbing cloth in the dyeing process.

Hence, Mama listed the major ingredients needed for the *adire* eleko's pattern application: *Elubo Oyan*⁵⁷(Oyan Cassava Flour), *Somiro*⁵⁸ (black alum), white alum⁵⁹, kerosene⁶⁰, wood⁶¹, *iyè adie*

⁵⁷ Elubo Oyan: This is a brand of cassava flour recommended for cassava paste pattern technique in indigo dyeing in Osogbo. The cassava flour is produced in town called Oyan – a town in Odo-Otin local government area in Osun State – some kilometres to Erin-Ile, the border of Osun state and Kwara state in Southwestern region of Nigeria. Although, I had earlier thought Oyan to be a different name for cassava flour in Yoruba.

⁵⁸ Somiro: This is referred to as a lime substance – it is bluish in colour – it is also called the balek alum. It is an additive to prepare the cassava paste and it enables the cassava paste to have a prolonged stay power on the clothes.

⁵⁹White Alum: The white alum is popularly used to cook the indigenous okra and ewedu soups. This is also an additive substance to the preparation of the cassava paste

⁶⁰Kerosene is used as fuel the cooking fire and make firewood to burn effectively.

⁶¹Wood is used to make the fire to prepare the cassava paste.

(hen's feather)⁶², *igi igbale* (broom stick)⁶³ and *ape* (pot)⁶⁴. But as we were discussing the list, Mama Olugun warned:

“If I prepare the pap well enough and it is well cooked, it could take up to 10 or 15 days before it gets spoilt – if not used at all. Once you have good pap, you will cover it and not allow salt to come in contact with it. Once salt has had contact with the prepared pap, it does not show any defect during the pattern application and drying. But, once it is dipped into the indigo dye vat, it will *jonpo* (lump up) and wash away immediately.”

Salt is generally avoided because it is *majele* (poison) among *elubo* (cassava flours), so that the cassava paste will not be cohesive and firm on the cloth. We went to the *Oja Oba* (The King's Market) and procured the ingredients for the cassava paste technique.

As Mama Olugun prepared to commence the procedure on *ààrò* (traditional stove) with the firewood and kerosene; I inquired if one could use any other means of cooking than the firewood to prepare the *eko* (cassava paste), such as a gas cooker or electric stove. Mama's response was that “to use stove or gas would be challenging a bit”, because the cassava paste in the cooking pot required some stirrings with the stirring stick while on the fire.

⁶²Iye Adie is the hen's feather. The hen's feather is used to do pattern on the cloth. Mama Olugun explained that the left hand side of the hen is suitable for patterning. Mama demonstrated that the suitable feather for patterning will go on the cloth smoothly; while the unsuitable feather would lump all the paste and motif together. However, no strict rule on the use of right or left hand to pattern, it is all about functionality.

⁶³Igi Igbale is called Broom stick, but in the textile dyeing craft it is called *opa-latona* or *opa-atona* (skewer). It is used to divide, split, marked out lines on the textile

⁶⁴Ape is called Pot. The pot is used to prepare the cassava paste. The question about the originality of the pot arose during the ethnography, Mama Olugun counselled that when you knock the pot, and it sounds like an echo, then it is the original pot.

Meanwhile, the pot had been put on the fire prior to use, to make it ready. Following the pre-heating, the pot was rinsed with water. Water was then poured into the pot for the preparation of the cassava paste, which was through the *fi-oju-da* (eye measurement, intuition) method, and placed on the traditionally made fire. I suggested that the measurement could have been two bottles of water, 1.5 litres each, but Mama Olugun and Iya Ewe countered that only one bottle had been put in. Then, Mama added other ingredients while the pot was on the fire.

When the pot of water on the fire had boiled, Mama Olugun brought a green big bowl and poured the cassava flour into it. Almost everything was done on intuition, it seemed, because there was no measurement of the cassava flour to fit the pot of water. Mama explained, "We will measure it. You will mix it as if you are mixing pap." I discovered that the cassava flour was half of the bowl, and cold water was poured into it gradually while she stirred it. The flour dissolved in the water and the mixture looked fluffy. Mama Olugun poured the mixture of flour and water into the pot on the fire at once. My assistant stirred the mixture with a stick about 2 feet long. The mixture of the floury substance and the water in the pot was almost half of the pot on the fire. After a few minutes, Mama Olugun said the stirring should stop to give time for the paste to cook well until it had hardened.

While Mama Olugun waited for the paste to cook, a discussion on *orin a mu ise ya* (motivational songs) came up, which made Iya Ewe and Mama Olugun burst into laughter. The reason for their laughter was unknown. Haviland, Prins, McBride & Walrath (2011:357) have however stated that "songs are natural outcome of work situations and express group values, beliefs and concerns."

Haviland, Prins, McBride & Walrath (2011:357) defined work song as a particular type of song used to coordinate efforts in heavy or dangerous labour. Although these work songs are diverse – their diversity is attributed to the nature of a particular kinds of work, condition of work, forms of

social relations in the workplace, other factors such as gender, family, and community influence the choice of songs, mode of songs and the effect of songs on the process and experience of manual work.

Vijaya Ramaswamy (1993) in his ethnographic study titled “*Women and Farm Work in Tamil Folk Songs*” examined the songs rendered by the Tamil Nadu women in South India as the work on the farm. Most of their work includes seed sowing, cotton picking and harvesting. He stated that these work songs are not limited to economic activities only, but that their songs also comment about social situations especially those which are particular to perception of women within their patriarchal systems. The research discovered that work songs are dying in the tradition of South India as elsewhere as a result of the prevalence of sounds from radio blare and TV antennas dotting the landscape. This was apparent as I interacted with Mama Olugun and other ethnographic informants – they had radio sets with them, listening to radio sound as they performed their task in the dyeing process. However, Ramaswamy opines that some of these Tamil Nadu women preserves this tradition – holding on to these work songs.

Work songs are a conspicuous aspect of workers’ life. Generally, work songs have played an important role in most manual labour: it synchronizes the activities of the workers, relieve tedium and provide the necessary spur to heavy manual work. However, Mama Olugun, commenting about work songs during fire making to prepare cassava paste for the pattern making, said:

“...there are motivational songs while one works, there are different forms of motivational songs. There are no specific songs. It depends upon the state of mind. For example, as the paste is under preparation within this smoky condition, songs cannot emerge as a result of discomfort. When one is at ease, one can sing songs. But as one tries to make the fire

flares into life, all that will be on one's mind is to make the fire intense. So, by the time the fire is fully burning and active, one can be settled to sing there”

Another reason for songs is to avoid “dozing off while one works.” The paste was stirred intermittently and gradually became hard, under Mama’s watchful eye.

So the stirring continued. Mama explained that the cassava paste was considered well-cooked when it had “*faadaadaa*” (become very elastic). She scooped the cooked cassava paste from the pot into a bowl and covered the scooped cassava paste for protection. She continued:

“Until we are finished applying the pattern, we will be scooping the paste from the bowl. We will take the needed one for tomorrow, sieve it and use it. That is done until the process is completed”

She added that the prepared cassava paste’s life span

“depends on how fast one is on the motifs. It depends on how work comes in. If work is moving progressively well, it could take up to 4 days to empty the bowl. Once we are through with sieved shaft, this prepared paste may not be enough for about 5 yardage of textile. If it were to be the *batani*⁶⁵ (patterning) technique, it does not need sieving; just as it comes from the fire, we use it for the *batani* technique”

Mama described the *batani* technique for me. Although I had some knowledge of the technique, I let her carry on. She brought out an Aluminium patterned plate to show the material used for *batani*. She indicated that some of the cloths would be patterned with the *batani* technique.

⁶⁵ *Batani* is a patterning techniques in adire dyeing pattern making. It is mostly used with the cassava paste and aluminium patterned plate. In *Batani*, the cassava paste is un-sieved and allowed to cool before applying it with *batani* aluminium technique.

We returned the next day for the actual cloth patterning process. I watched Ifafunke as she picked up the broom, swept the compound and the patterning area, and later set up the table for the patterning.

As we continued with the patterning, a pregnant woman gave birth at the Traditional Birthing Centre (TBC). Some of the relatives of the newly born babies came to purchase nylon (plastic) bags from Mama Olugun. I commented on the quick delivery of the babies, to which Mama retorted: “A baby knows the exact time to come.” My Research Assistant added: “... *eni to da aro, ko ni wa l’osan*” (the person that proposes to come in the morning will not show up in the afternoon). My attempt to change the subject to that of technique, with the observation that the *batani* technique seemed quicker and faster than the free hand patterning, met with resistance – Mama Olugun had more to say about pregnancy, and some mothers’ lack of preparedness:

"Omo ti a o bi ni osun kesan, ki lode ti a se nma mura re si le"
(why not prepare for a child that you know would birth in the 9th month). I have never done it in my life - they will give birth and now be running helter-skelter for things needed by the new born - as at 3rd month, everything I need for delivery must have been ready. *Eledumare* has finished his part, it is left for us to do our part"

As the women discussed about motherhood, pregnancy and birthing of babies in relation to a child’s destiny, I became sensitive to the fact that pattern making and *patterning* are central in Yoruba thought. Lawal (1985) and Lawal, Thompson, & Clarke (2007) state that the connection between pattern making and *patterning* is on all fours with the fact that *Olu-Iwa* (The God of Character) – referred to as the *Olodumare/Eledumare* (Supreme Being), generates *ase* (the enabling power that sustains and transforms the universe) to commission an artistry deity to pattern

the destiny of an unborn child. So, the pattern maker is a symbolic representation of a lesser deity in dyeing procedures, who patterns the cloth and points to the creative and patterning process of a baby's destiny in *orun* (heaven).

Suddenly, the patterning began: Mama brought the *eko* (cassava paste) prepared the previous day, sat on the patterning table, and scooped the starch from the bowl into another, smaller, plastic bowl, covering the bigger bowl. She started to stir the starch in the smaller bowl with her hand for about 30 seconds, adding some water in order to make the paste smoother and said, "*Once it is too hard, you add water to it.*" She stirred more in the bowl, cleaning the paste-laden hand by the edge of the smaller bowl in the process. Later, she washed the hand in water.

She brought out a black linen cloth, which she said was for sieving the cassava pap. She related the evolution of sieving styles:

"it is in these modern times that we started to use this silky cloth. However, in the olden days, we used white cloth, especially the type used to pack salt in the olden days – it is not nylon like. It would be cut into two and used to sieve the pap. But today any cloth could be used to sieve the paste. You can see (displaying the silky cloth) that this is also a corn pap sieving cloth. All we are concerned about is that it should be able to sieve the pap"

After sieving the paste, Mama washed the bowls and sieving cloth immediately, because she argued, "... if we don't wash it immediately, the paste will harden on them and will not be easily washed off". She explained that the sieved paste would probably be used to pattern

"... one yard or a yard and half but it would not be able to pattern two yards ... and, if the style does not take too much

of pattern, it could be applied to more than a yard and half or two yards. Designs differ from each other, so the quantity of starch consumed is different.”

As Mama Olugun discussed the patterns of different motifs and the amount of cassava paste consumed by motif and techniques of patterning, Iya Ewe state that pattern making takes time; which Mama Olugun said is dictated by the weather condition.

Mama Olugun referring to weather as a determining factor in pattern making on cloth, she says:

“I look at the weather to do pattern works. If it is about to rain, I do the patterning along the house walkway – although, the house roof leaks some drops of water, I try to stay where there are no leakages in the roof. And, if the weather is conducive at night and there is power supply, I stay under my makeshift patterning house. When there is no power supply, I either pattern along the house walkway or outside as the weather permits me”

She cleared and cleaned the patterning table, brought a broom, and picked a stick from it, which she called *opa-latona* or *opa-aton*a (spatula-like stick). She straightened the skewer with her right thumb and fourth finger, and explained that it could not be called *igbale* (sweeping broom), because it performs a different function in pattern making. In the craft, she said, “there are specific sticks I can use ... the one you feel is ‘*tinrin ati le lowo*’ (thin and hard in one’s hand). It is the one I will use to mark out or direct the textile.” She washed the stick, put it in the paste, and said that one needed to wash the stick, “... in case it is dirty”. Then, she brought out five feathers from one of her wrappers. She washed and straightened them in the water, put them in the paste, and arranged them systematically. She explains “... as you use one for the middle part of one textile,

you can use one for the middle part of another... I will know and recognize. I will understand which one I have used for a section. You will also understand as we use it too”.

Prior to patterning, Mama paid homage saying “*Atilola omo Sangooka, iba re oo*” (Atilola, the child of Sangooka, I pay homage oo), let me be successful today.” To this Fasina, the Ifa priest, said “*Ase ooo* (So shall it be).” I asked Mama who Atilola, the child of Sangooka is. She said, “I had my pattern making apprenticeship under the tutelage of Atilola, the child of Sangooka – she is like my ancestor in this patterning craft.” The act of paying homage to one’s ancestor (mentor or teacher) in a certain craft is prominent among *Ifa* religion adherents as against the contemporary religion, in which such acts are absent. According to a website publication⁶⁶, ancestors are claimed to be the foundations of all things – the link between the seen and unseen and they provide guidance whenever one needs. The paying of homage suggests that they were once humans, they have an understanding of human needs, desires, and wants from the spiritual realm. However, to seek for their help, one must balance it with a homage and honouring their lives. Therefore, as Mama Olugun paid homage prior to patterning the cloth, she honoured and asked for the help of Atilola, her mentor and ancestor in cassava paste technique pattern making. This act of homage paying was also confirmed by Fasina as a rite an Ifa priest performs prior to any Ifa divination.

Mama Olugun took a skewer and drew a straight horizontal line from one end of the textile to another, just below the folded two-inch – the part that enables the dyer to pick the textile while dyeing. She drew another horizontal line. She drew four lines vertically up to the first part of the fourth fold of the textile. The drawing of four vertical lines continued until it formed four different

⁶⁶ <https://sites.google.com/site/theyorubareligiousconcepts/egungun-the-ancestors>

spaces for a section of the fold. She drew another four lines at the end of the textile; then, a line at the folded part of the textile was drawn to form the second horizontal set of lines.

The four-line patterns continued. As she explained:

"If I want to do *obotere* (one patterned cloth) without creating anything within it, say this one will be one design, the one with two or three designs is important, so we mark it out with line like this. If it is only one design, once we have the horizontal line, there will be no more marking out in square again. As we continue designing, it will be one *obotere* throughout. But one has to mark out into square, so as to avoid mixture of designs. We can call it *ore meji* or *ore merin* (two friends or four friends)."

She used the knife to hold the tip of the cloth, for the wind was taking the cloth off the patterning table. She said that "... the knife performs several functions. If the designs want to *jonjupo* (messed up), the knife is used to separate the marked out patterns clearly - especially as a result of mishandling or overlaps caused by the wind". Still marking out boundaries and squares, she picked up the skewer to draw the horizontal lines, and the feather for the vertical lines. She sometimes used her hands to separate the mixed up areas, especially "... when it is not too much", Mama said.

On the question of measurement, Mama was adamant that she used intuition. She admitted, however, that her granddaughter, Toyin, did measure her design space. I wondered what would happen in the event that the stick broke, whereupon she explained:

"There are no taboos connected to the breaking of the skewer; just pick another one. If anyone says there is a taboo there, the person is lying. The only known taboo at this stage

of pattern application is salt. In all (at this stage), it is the way you pose in front of the photographer that is the way you will meet yourself.”

The designs Mama patterned included *gangan* (talking drum), *orunkun aro* (the knee of a lame person), *ogede* or *bogedeje* (plantain or destroy the plantain). All these patterns are attributed to *oju inu* (intuition) and what are observed in the environment.

As Mama Olugun was marking patterns on the cloth through the cassava paste technique, the concept of inscribing *Kadara* (Destiny) on the cloth – which involves transforming the factory cloth into an indigenous product came to the fore. Awaru⁶⁷, the manager of Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery, during my interaction with him at the centre in Osogbo, explained that “... the cassava paste we use, we call *kadara* (destiny).” This concept was on my mind when Mama Olugun stated that “...this patterning work I am doing now is called *Ise Ona* (craft that creates destinies).” Earlier in this chapter, Agboola⁶⁸ stated that the patterning of an unborn child’s destiny in a woman’s womb as described in *Ifa* religion is called *Ona* (patterning of human destiny) (See Chapter 3). This patterning of human destiny shares similarities with the pattern making on cloth in indigo textile dyeing.

From the ongoing analysis, the performance of Mama Olugun and other pattern makers could be related to the ritualized patterning of human destiny. This symbolizes the relationship between mother and child (foetus) in the womb. As the women pattern makers apply the patterns on the clothes, the clothes cease to be factory clothes – they become initiated into the Yoruba social life.

⁶⁷ Awaru Omotayo in his early 30s is one of the Director of Studies at the Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery, Osogbo centre’s workshop situated along Osogbo-Iwo road.

⁶⁸ An Associate Professor lecturer in the Department of Rural Sociology at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and an *Ifa* priest.

For instance, while Mama Olugun used cassava paste to make inscription on the clothes (like other pattern applications), she drew four lines on them, which represented the concept of a worldview as enunciated by Agboola - *Iwaju Opon* (North), *Ehin Opon* (South), *Olumuru L'otun* (East), *Olukanran L'osi* (West) (See Chapter 3). The Centre, *Aarin Opon*, is where the motif is located. Hence the patterned cloth takes for itself the name of the motif. Although generally, contemporary designs are mostly abstract and individualistically driven, thus requiring the artist to explicate the meaning of the patterns, most of the patterns on the *adire* dyed-textile are environmentally driven. In the Yoruba social system, the naming of patterns, as in the naming of children, is culture-driven in the Yoruba adage that says "*Ile la nwo, ki a to s'omoloruko*" (we look at the ancestry or environment prior to giving name to any child). However, one needs to recognize that the ancestry or the environment one looks to name a child changes – the society does not remain stagnant; hence, there are contemporary techniques of making patterns – as stated that eventualities of life can affect a person's destiny, in this case the social change in the society.

Furthermore, the social and politico-economic change in Nigeria has brought some schisms especially in the women dyers' group as regards the technical aspects but the changes have not changed the relationship among dyers - I almost pass them off manifesting consanguinity in Osogbo. Although *adire* dyeing is a business almost every Yoruba woman was involved during the pre-colonial period, they were a homogenous group – a contiguous extended families which was evidenced in the Aka's family compound, the only surviving indigo dyeing centre in Osogbo (detailed discussion in the next chapter). In contemporary times, women dyers are younger and heterogeneous based on their individual specialties in the dyeing process and technical differences in dyeing – even forming dyers' associations, a long lines of specialization in Osogbo. The

heterogeneity of women dyers has also brought changes to symbolisms in indigo textile dyeing in Osogbo.

A visit to Yabotech Gallery was instructive in the change-in-symbolism phenomenon, Iyabo's contemporary patterning has replaced the cassava paste of Mama Olugun's compound with candle wax. It is classified, however, as a different kind of dyeing technique. She put wax in a small pot on a small kerosene stove, with only two strands of wool. Iyabo elucidates "If the heat is too much, the candle wax will be too hot and, if it is too hot, it is not useful for any cloth." She controlled the light beneath the stove as she clarified this point.

Iyabo made an interesting point about the recyclable and reusable nature of the candle wax in contemporary dyeing: "One does not throw it away; it is mixed every time with another new wax. In a whole wax, I confirmed this pattern more than 3 textiles of 10 yards from it." She examined the temperature of the wax by applying a little of the latter on the cloth she wanted to pattern, adding "... if it is too hot, the wax spreads and penetrates to the back of the textile. If you want to know whether it is too hot, you can test it on the tip of the textile." The act of recycling and reusing of patterning substance could suggest the remoulding of life and destiny of a cloth, which symbolizes deathlessness. As earlier adverted to, there are only good destinies from heaven; however, because a destiny or a child is bad due to a personal choice or eventualities of life does not mean it should be thrown away – there is chance of the child being "recycled and reused" for another good purpose.

She reduced the intensity of the fire under the candle wax pot, dipped the foam in the candle wax in a pot on the stove, and drew a straight line by letting the wax flow. I observed that, unlike the cassava paste technique, there was no space left at the tip - either at the top or bottom of the textile.

However, the application of the candle wax was the same as that of the cassava paste, the difference being in the materials used for patterning.

Importantly, there are other patterned cloths that were produced by Iya Wunmi, the *elu* leaves gatherer. For instance, she patterned the *adire-oniso* (tying *adire* pattern). The *adire-oniso* is the cloth patterned with rope or cloth, and does not involve the procedure of paste- or wax-patterned textiles. The *adire-oniso* only requires the use of raffia palm or rice sack ropes to tie the patterns. But it is a very tedious process, and most of the patterns are called *alagbole* (group of family compounds). Even though different patterning styles exist, they still engage with the *ona* inscription by mothers in Yoruba philosophy.

In addition to the *ona* inscription by mothers in Yoruba philosophy, the process of *ona* has given motherhood esteem and valued status among the Yoruba people. Motherhood is perceived as one of the sources of women empowerment in Yoruba society. Makinde (2004) expounded the value of motherhood among the Yoruba people in songs and proverbs. According to Lawal (1996:778-79), as cited in Makinde (2004:166), "Motherhood is considered to be very important in Yoruba culture because the preservation of humanity depends on the role of mothers in the society." Makinde (2004:165) quoted one of the popular songs in Yoruba society (I was also taught the song in my elementary school):

<i>Iya ni wura iyebiye</i>	Mother is a precious gold
<i>Ti a ko le f'owora</i>	That cannot be purchased with money
<i>O l'oyun mi f'osumesan</i>	She carried me in her womb for nine months
<i>O pon mi f'odunmeta</i>	She nursed me for three years
<i>Iya niwuraiyebiye</i>	Mother is a precious gold
<i>Ti a ko le f'owora</i>	That cannot be purchased with money.

The notion that one's biography is written before one enters the world, noted above, suggests that a new born baby does not have any choice in making any decision concerning his/her life. Preordination, however, seems at odds with some of the Yoruba adages. One adage, for example, says "*Ẹnitólórí rere tí kò níwà, iwà re niyó ba orí re je*" (A person who is blessed with good fortune/destiny but lacks good character, his bad character will ruin his or her good fortune - evil character ruins good destiny) (Owomoyela 2005:269). The suggestion, thus, by the Yoruba thought system is that destiny alone cannot lead a human being to a successful life.

4.5 Conclusion

As earlier alluded to in this chapter, the concept of *omoluwabi* portrays a child or a person that has been socialized and educated in the culture and beliefs of the Yoruba society is opposed to the symbolic representation of pattern making in indigo textile dyeing process, which represents the patterning of an unborn child in the mother's womb. The patterning in the womb represents the destiny of a child; however, for the destiny to be realised in the physical realm, the new born baby will have to be socialized in the Yoruba culture. Therefore, a patterned cloth (either of cassava paste or any of the contemporary patterning techniques) for indigo dyeing process is not reckoned with as *omoluwabi* until the cloth has been dyed in the indigo solution or symbolically representing a socialized person within the human society. Notably, the indigo solution is a metaphoric representation of a society, in this case the Yoruba society. Hence, the next chapter continues with the dyeing aspect of indigo textile dyeing process.

Therefore, the ethnography in this chapter shows that indigo textile dyeing processes are a form of ritual because it does not only represent the movements of people through distinctive phases and passages in time, place and statuses, but it shows that the processes are a form of social communication with symbolic dimension – a goal-oriented activity – to show the process of

socializing a child among Yoruba people. However, the dyeing process is also transformative because ritual is associated with human interest – a goal-oriented activity, the ethnography shows the dyeing process as a form liminal phase to explore the symbolic properties of textiles with its transformative potential in the hands of the women dyers.

In the next chapter, I will examine the symbolism in the dyeing process of indigo textile. Specifically, I will examine the concept of *Ewa* (beauty) as it relates to *Iwa* (character) in the indigo textile dyeing process. The concept of beauty and character is thereafter examined in connection with the concept of *Omoluwabi* (a cultured and good person with socially acceptable character) in Yoruba thought system.

Chapter 5

“Ewa” and “Iwa”: The symbolism of Beauty and Character in the Dyeing Process of

Indigo Textile Dyeing

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw in the cloth pattern making phase in Olugun, at the Faleke's family compound, that pattern making, when perceived holistically in the indigo textile dyeing process, relates to patterning of destiny in Yoruba thought system; indicating that individuals and their destinies are inseparable. In this chapter, I consider the dyers' activities of *gi-gun-elu* (pounding of indigo leaves), *di-da-omi-aro* (creation/making the dye solution) and the subsequent *pi-pa-aso-l'aro* (dyeing of the patterned cloth) to symbolically represent the formation of human society and the socialization of an individual in the society. With the latter in mind, I present the argument that dyers' activities, which incorporate an exegesis of symbolisms relates the concepts of *iwa* (character) and *ewa* (beauty). I also argue that the dyers' activities culminate in the concept of *omoluwabi* (a good and cultured person with socially acceptable character) in the Yoruba thought system – when the patterned cloth is ultimately dyed.

Abiodun (2001) discussed several Yoruba philosophical concepts as alternatives to Western theoretical paradigms in his article “African aesthetics”, and one of those concepts is “*iwa*” (character). *Iwa* is the core of Yoruba philosophical thought and several arguments have been enunciated directly or indirectly with respect to it (See Abimbola (1975), Akiwowo (1983, 1986a, 1986b), Lawuyi and Taiwo (1986), Abiodun (1990), Hallen (2000) and Abiodun (2001) to mention a few). Despite these diverse viewpoints, these arguments are summarized at two levels – individual and societal levels.

Much has been written concerning *iwa* at the individual level, which “arises from the *Ifa* divination literature and the technical, professional terminology of artists in traditional Yoruba society” (Hallen 2000:127). Generally, most of the scholars agreed that character is a constitutive element of the individual. *Iwa* emanates from *Olodumare* (the Supreme Being) and an individual is imbued with character at creation (Abimbola, 1975; Akiwowo, 1983; Dopamu, 1985; Lawuyi and Taiwo, 1986; Makinde, 1988; Abiodun, 2001; Gbadegesin 2007; Oluwole, 2007). This is the reason *Olodumare* is also called *Olu-Iwa* (the creator of character), which was extensively discussed in Chapter 4.

On the other hand, *iwa* at the societal level was mostly enunciated by Barry Hallen in his book “*The good, the bad and the beautiful: Discourse about values in Yoruba culture*” (2000). Hallen perceived *iwa* from the moral or value-behavioural sense of a society – the character of a particular human society – an ordinary language in everyday social discourse (Hallen 2000:127). Idowu (2005) described *iwa* at the societal level as “a standard or aspiration in-built into the framework of societal institutions”. He opined *iwa* “reflects the laws of the society, which in Yoruba land, every communal and collective enterprise evaluates and judges”.

Concerning *ewa* (beauty), Hallen saw beauty as a normative belief that is subjective and relative from one society to another – a standard, criteria and prescriptive judgment that relates to value, which is likened to *awo* (colour) – a seemingly apparent consequence of social changes that explains individualistic tendencies and personalities within the society (See Akiwowo, 1986a, 1986b for emphasis); an issue that was explained in colour symbolism in chapter 7. But, in relating *iwa* and *ewa*, Hallen (2000) and Abiodun (2001) argued that scholars are yet to apprehend the relationship existing between *iwa* and *ewa* because character and beauty are often symbolically attributed to persons than crafts.

However, Abiodun (2001) considered *iwa* crucial to the definition of beauty as declared in that saying, '*iwa l'ewa*' (character is beauty). This consideration directly refers to the deep philosophical essence of Yoruba culture and metaphysics – a metaphor of inner beauty that relates to a person's physical appearance, an appearance that is deemed superficial and unimportant (Abiodun 1990; Abiodun 2001; Hallen 2000). Hallen (2000) indirectly made a vital point that beauty emanates from a process: “the transition from good” through a “systematic and coherent” process (2000:127) to produce an end-product. The end-product refers to *omoluabi* (a good and cultured person with socially acceptable character) – the core of Yoruba social and ethical system, that can only be internalized provided that a person's *iwa* is rightly constructed through socialization, which takes place within the *iwa* of the human society.

Against this background, I present in this chapter the ethnography of dyers' activities at the Aka family compound and those of other related informants that work side-by-side with the dyers in the family compound. Specifically, I describe the pounding of fresh and budding indigo leaves and the creation of indigo dye solution as the symbolisms of the formation of *iwa* (character) at the societal level. The ethnography also covers the actual textile dyeing process as the symbolism of *Ewa* (beauty), which can only be achieved through socialization to create an end-product – *Omoluwabi* – a cultured/good person with socially acceptable character in the Yoruba society.

5.2 The symbolism of *Iwa* (Character) in the Formation of Indigo Dye water

Following the cloth patterning phase with Mama Olugun, we (myself, my research assistant and Iya Ewe) went to the Aka's family compound (sometimes called Alaka's family compound) – the only surviving and functioning indigenous indigo dyeing centre in Osogbo to attend the “*omi aro di da*” (creation of indigo dye water) and “*pi-pa-aso-l'aro*” (cloth dyeing) phases of the dyeing processes.

The Aka's family dyeing centre is managed by Madam Rafatu Akanni – a daughter-in-law in the family and Mama Bilikis, a granddaughter in the family compound in the absence of the most senior woman dyer in the compound. As at the time of this study, the most senior woman dyer was unavailable to be interviewed due to old age sickness. This corroborated Areo's description of the Aka's family dyeing compound as a composition of “a very old woman of about ninety years old supported by two of her daughters-in-law and a granddaughter, struggling to keep the centre running in the face of competition from modern challenges.” (2013:21)

The Aka's dyeing centre is the only surviving family among the indigenous indigo dyeing families in Osogbo. Areo (2013) also confirmed the existence of other dyeing family compounds in Osogbo such as Balogun, Kujenyo, Layiokun, and Oke-Baale. Due to the changing political economy in Nigeria, which was discussed in Chapter 2, other dyeing families are non-functional except the Aka dyeing family compound.

As we went through narrow paths to the Aka's dyeing site, I noticed different houses (storey buildings and bungalows) owned by different families – some with inscriptions of the family's name, and others with none; some with shops, and others without. The arrangement of houses was of the traditional kind, except that the houses, though built of mud, were plastered with cement, and some of the buildings were dilapidated. We (I, Iya Ewe – my Osogbo contact and key informants, and my research assistant) navigated through the pathways till we reached a large, spacious plot with the dyeing shade surrounded by houses. Under the dyeing shade was Madam Rafatu, a mid-70 year old women, popular called *Iya Alaro* (Madam Dyer). She either sat in her room when textile dyeing was not taking place or under the dyeing shade with her radio; listening to Yoruba news and music. This limited movement may have been due to her knee problem

(probably rheumatism). However, Iya Bilikis, the only surviving granddaughter and her daughter, Bilikis, rendered help to Mama Rafatu (See Fig. 10-12 for Dyeing Shade).



Fig. 10: Aka's Dyeing Shade – My Research Assistant chatting with Madam Rafatu



Fig. 11: Aka's Dyeing shade with dyeing iron drums and pots



Fig. 12: Aka's Dyeing shade with covered dyeing pots and broken dyeing pots

I noticed that the dyeing sites in Osogbo were of different sizes, depending on each dyer's financial status. At the Aka's dyeing space, the ground was hard, rocky and brownish, but swept clean, despite several domestic animals roaming the compounds. The dyeing shade is located almost at an *orita* (junction), where Rafatu could see events in different family compounds. Rafatu described the family name of each of the buildings surrounding her dyeing space: "That is the house of Layiopon, where Sango is worshipped (pointing to the house in front of her). That is the pathway to Layiokun's compound where *amala* (a staple) is sold. If one gets to the market and desires to eat '*amala*', one will be directed to the Layiokun's compound. The pathway you took to this place is the compound of the current king, Opoleba. That is Ojege (facing her left), Olobedun (on the down right after turning left) is over there. So, that is how the compound stands side-by-side. But because we know our job, no one could take our dyeing space.." (See Map 7 – Aka's Vicinage)

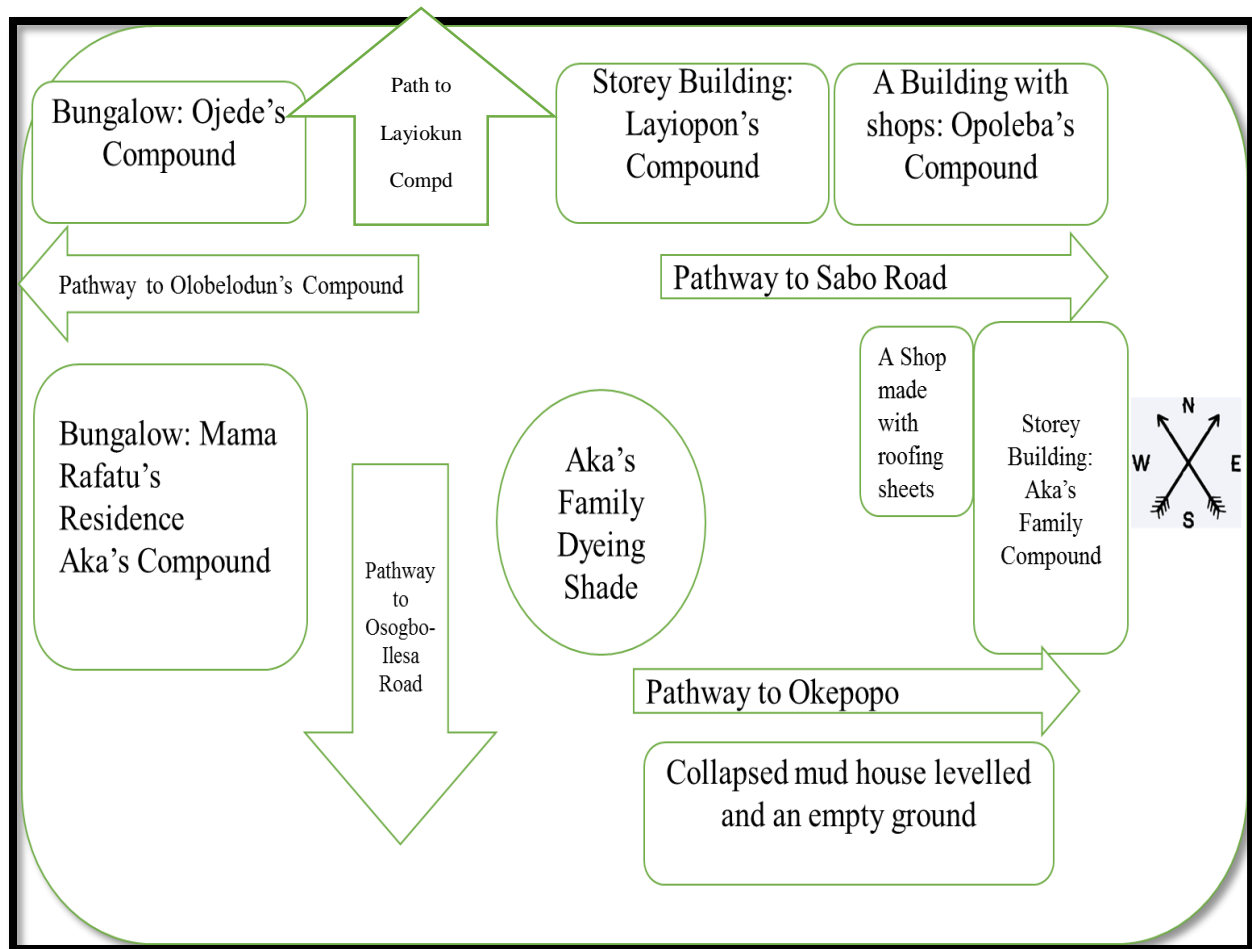
Although the location of the dyeing shade at an *orita* (crossroads) within the households suggests the vantage point, the dyer (and pattern makers) has to see events within each compound as they occur. *Orita* in Yoruba mythology seems dominated by males – specifically, the gods and not the goddess – and it is also a meeting point to establish anything that could support the *awujo eniyan* (society) such as Motor Park⁶⁹. According to Ademowo (2010b:212–213), in my article "*Twale Baba*" – *Living Invisibly and Rendering Visible Services: An Ethnographic study of Motor Parks' Boys and Men in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria*" (Owoeye n.d.), *orita* houses two ministers of

⁶⁹A motor park is a distinct geographical location and a public space that provides transport services and a market for both social and cultural needs of the people of the particular geographical area the motor park is situated (Ademowo 2010).

'Olodumare' (the Yoruba God), *Ogun*⁷⁰ and *Esu*⁷¹. *Ogun* is feared for his propensity to induce violence and cause deaths when provoked while *Esu*, known as *'onile orita'* (he who owns the cross roads), is believed to hold the power of life and death because of his intermediary office between other divinities and *Olodumare*. The absence of any goddesses' inscription of the *orita* (crossroads) complicated the performance of the dyer (and pattern makers) to the concept of *orita* until the description of *Esu* as a special relations officer between *Orun* (heaven) and *Aye* (Earth) emerged. *Esu* is described as the inspector-general or confidential secretary of the Supreme Being, who makes the final recommendation to the Supreme Being for the latter's approval and also reports the activities of men and divinities on a regular basis to *Olodumare*. This makes *Esu*, the owner of the crossroad, a communicator between the heaven and earth. Respecting the dyeing space and the woman dyer in Aka's family compound in Osogbo, the dyeing space is the *orita* (crossroad) for the woman dyer so as to communicate clearly the events in society on the patterned cloth. The symbolic implication is that the woman dyer, such as Madam Rafatu, acts as the communicator between the spiritual universe and the physical other in a symbolic way.

⁷⁰Ogun in the Yoruba mythology is the god of iron and of war – a patron of hunters. The name of Ogun seems to mean “one who pierces through with something pointed); the reason iron is sacred to Ogun and to swear by him one will need to touch an iron implement. Ogun is specially worshipped by blacksmiths, those who make use of iron weapons or tools or any other piece of iron can be used as a symbol of Ogun. www.sacred-texts.com/afr/yor/yor03.htm (Chapter II - Chief gods – Internet Sacred Texts Archives Evinity Publishing INC

⁷¹Esu called Satan or Devil among the Yoruba Christians; but, the Ifa practitioners believe that the Esu in Yoruba mythology is not the same as the Satan in the Christian beliefs. *Esu* in Yoruba mythology is a fundamental Orisa and of great importance in Yoruba land. There is no shrine you will get to in Yoruba land where you will not see the image or a representation of *Esu*. In fact, well-established towns (i.e. those that have their OSUGBO and the OBA in council) also have their *ESU* at a spot, some in the entrance of the town and some in the ILEDI (i.e. the secretariat of the traditional and indigenous system of government). <https://ifamatters.wordpress.com/esu/>



Map 7: Map showing the geographical arrangement of the Aka's Vicinage – Dyeing House

Madam Rafatu proclaimed with some sense of pride, that, prior to the decline in dyeing activities, Aka's dyeing centre "occupied a wide expanse of land in the Aka's family compound, with dyeing production activities going on from morning till evening – ladies, young and old women participating in the dyeing process". She described the dyeing enterprise in Osogbo as a family enterprise where each additional daughter-in-law is given tools of trade in indigo dyeing. I noted this trend in my earlier publication in 2010 in the Akoda dyeing family in Ede (about 12 kilometres from Osogbo). Madam Rafatu stated that "this was the case prior to '*olaju*' (civilization, which mostly referred to the coming of the Western people) which led to the decline in the production

activities of the *adire* clothes, with the younger generation of ladies/women showing disinterestedness in the dyeing productions to have formal education and fat incomes.”

Aside the effects of civilization and Western education, Madam Rafatu was of the view that “the few young ladies/women interested in the dyeing craft today are interested in contemporary dyeing techniques – which are faster and easier to dye clothes than the tedious indigo dyeing techniques of old that try to use some of the chemicals in contemporary dyeing.” Although she complained that two of the most recognizable negative effects of contemporary dyeing techniques are the disinterestedness of apprentices due to the painstakingly rigorous process and low income generated from the craft compared to white-collar jobs; but, she exalted in the fact that “contemporary dyers in Osogbo are my children – either our kinsmen’s children in Osogbo or apprentices in the Aka’s dyeing centre – and they have all formed an organized association in Osogbo”. She was also glad that contemporary dyeing has given the youths (males and females) employment opportunities. However, contemporary dyeing techniques have added to the decline of the indigenous indigo dyeing art in Osogbo.

The decline in *adire* dyeing in Osogbo has not only affected *adire* production activities and a number of apprentices in the craft, it has also drastically reduced the number of patrons of dyed textiles. Madam Rafatu said that “the buyers or patrons that patronize us have all gone except on occasional visits during festive periods like Osun-Osogbo annual festival. This festival brings lots of people – Nigerians and foreigners – to tour the dyeing centre or teachers and interested learners (researchers) like you that visit us”.

As my fieldwork commenced at the Aka family compound’s dyeing centre, Mama Rafatu described the indigo textile dyeing production as a cooperative work – “*kii ise adanikanse*” (it is not an individualistic craft)”. The cooperative nature of the craft was evident in the ethnography

of the dyeing processes at the Aka's dyeing centre – some people were involved in getting the indigo leaves called *elu*, another in the pounding of the leaves and another, dyeing the textiles. During the ethnography, Iya Ewe, my field consultant, and Madam Rafatu summed the adire dyeing processes as a form of creation of indigo dyeing water and re-creation of clothes – using the phrases “*di da omi aro*” (creation of indigo dye water) and “*pi-pa-aso-l'aro*” (cloth dyeing).

Madam Rafatu stated that one of the major raw materials for the production of dyed textiles in Osogbo is the indigo leaf (popularly called *ewe elu*). Indigo dye is obtained from various species of the indigo leaf among the Yoruba people, such as the *lonchocarpus* and the *indigofera* species (See Chapter 1). Most of my informants described the plant's ability to grow to the height of several feet; I specifically mentioned 3-4 feet tall in my previous publication (Owoeye 2010), with the ability to creep, twist, turn, and seek support of a stronger tree, as described by my research assistant.

The search for and the ability to recognize the indigo leaf require some knowledge of Yoruba traditional leaves. Even though all the informants had something to say about *elu* leaves, it was Iya Wunmi, to whom Iya Ewe, as directed by Madam Rafatu, took us that described ways to easily recognize *elu* leaves. Iya Wunmi resided in Ayekale, an area in Osogbo along the Osogbo-Ilorin Expressway. She is the wife of Bartho (one of my informants during my ethnography in Osogbo) and also Iya Ewe's in-law (Bartho is Iya Ewe's cousin). We went to Iya Wunmi in her tailoring shop to discuss some of the indigo leaves issues with her. So, we left Iya Ewe with Bartho as they discussed some family issues.

Iya Wunmi did not discuss about her educational background but her husband, Bartho took pride in his educational achievements and the knowledge in Ifa oracle, which makes him tower over

other artists in Osogbo. Iya Wunmi had junior secondary school education but she prides herself on tailoring craft as it brings her extra income to complement her husband's income.

In addition to tailoring and the search for indigo leaves for dyers, she also patterns clothes for dyers – specializing in *adire-oniko* (the use of raffia palm) patterning techniques. She said that her love for textile dyeing, especially the patterning techniques, started when she had a brief stint learning of the craft while in primary school but she got re-introduced to the craft by Madam Rafatu. Since Iya Wunmi was quick to recognize the indigo leaves among other leaves in her environment, she became one of the major suppliers of the leaves to the dyeing family. She also stated that she does the indigo leaves gathering and cloth patterning “to have extra income to complement my husband's dwindling income as an artist in Osogbo”. Iya Wunmi was introduced to the craft by dyers in Aka's family compound and since she recognizes the indigo leaves among other leaves, she supplies indigenous indigo leaves to the dyeing family.

Iya Wunmi took us round her neighbourhood at Ayekale in search of the *elu* leaves. We found the leaves mostly around uncompleted buildings (See Fig. 13). Said she, “... one way to recognize the indigo leaf is to rub the leaves into one's palms. It changes the colour of one's palms - initially, it turns to green, then with oxidization, it turns to black”. From a personal point of view, the search process seemed tedious. When we returned from the search for *elu* leaves, Iya Ewe and Iya Wunmi pointed out one of the salient natures of the indigo plant, which Iya Wunmi explained (while we picked the *elu* leaves): “We didn't plant the indigo tree. It '*lalenwu/o la ilewu*' (breaks the ground to grow/grows voluntarily). It grows naturally and can grow anywhere. To identify the leaves is not a problem; if one sees a newly cleared bush, especially a burnt one, it is one of the first plants to grow. Within two weeks after clearing a bush, one will see the leaf spring up. And, once picked from the plant, it doesn't take long, maybe like 2-3 days the leaves would be growing again”

Iya Ewe and Mama Rafatu explained that the *elu* tree could be cultivated. One dyer that cultivates the *elu* tree is Nike Okundaye-Davies, of Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery (See Fig. 14). She owns an acre of land where she cultivates *elu* plants. However, there is currently a controversy on the land because the State Government has taken over a large portion of it to construct a road. Currently, most *adire* dyers are supplied the leaves by those that go into the forest to search for them.



Fig. 13: Elu leaves growing by the roadside and around uncompleted building at Ayekale



Fig. 14: Cultivated Elu (Indigo)Tree at Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery (NCACG) Workshop on Osogbo-Iwo Expressway during the rainy season



Fig. 15: Cultivated Elu tree at NCACG Workshop during the harmattan season

Most of the indigo leaves we got from Iya Wunmi were not baby leaves but large and matured indigo leaves, which Iya Ewe said were too old. The dry season was the reason for the non-availability of the baby indigo leaves (See Fig. 15). However, at the Nike Centre for Arts and

Culture, there were baby leaves. The value of the baby leaves lies in their ease of pounding. Mama Bilikis expressed her choice of baby leaves, especially the newly picked budding leaves: “If the indigo baby leaves are brought early, we pound it the next day... Once one harvests the leaves, especially when it is in one’s environment, one should pound it immediately, or else, it will be hard to pound”.

The primary sense that the *omudun* of the *elu* plant is a budding thing reaffirms the symbolic representation of growing child. If the baby leaf is represented as a budding child, the nature of *elu* leaves as a plant that “*la Ile wu*” (grows wild) shows that every child grows naturally – uncultured and untrained.

A dyer needs to be cautious when picking *elu* leaves; it is not only the *elu* leaf that can be used to dye cloth – another *elu*-like plant exists, called *isokun*. Other informants, such as Ifafunke (the pattern maker’s granddaughter at Olugun, Faleke’s compound) called it *buje*. *Isokun* can also be used to dye cloth, but most informants call it the fake or false *elu*. Awaru expressed this vividly about *Isokun*: “It is a leaf, it turns dark like indigo leaf, but it cannot be as dark as the indigo leaf ... As you pass by it, and your body touches it, that part of your cloth becomes black until you wash it ... This is why the Yoruba people sing thus “*isokun o, ma se ise elu, aro lo laso*” (*isokun*, do not imitate/act like elu, elu owns textile/cloth).” From the aforesaid, and according to most informants, *elu* leaves seem superior to *isokun* or *buje* leaves. Without *elu* in the olden days, clothes could not be dyed, it would seem. The *elu* must have been prestigious for this reason in the olden days – one was classed among the Kings and chiefs if one dyed one’s clothes in *elu* dye.

The pounding of the *elu* leaves was done with a mortar and pestle, so one could assume any posture in the process – sitting or standing – so long as one was comfortable (See Figs 16-18). Occasionally,

there was the turning of the leaves inside-out during the pounding, and a sprinkling of water helped to soften the leaves. Although baby leaves, the leaves had been picked three days earlier, and so had hardened. I noticed, at both venues (Aka's compound and Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery (NCACG)), that the women pounding the leaves would pick up the ones spilled on the ground, and I pointed out the possibility of contamination. Iya Bilikis responded: “As I pound, there is no taboo against sand in this process. You see in that sand ... as it is now as the leaf falls to the ground, you pick it and shake the sand off and puts it into the mortar again. It is better like that. But, if the place you are is neat, then no need to worry.”



Fig. 16: Budding leaves in the mortar and a pestle on it ready to be pounded

The leaves have to be pounded to slime, according to Iya Bilikis. The pounding continued to a point when the mixture was slimy enough for the dye water to be effective, and for the indigo to turn black, according to her. So, she periodically checked, with her bare hands, how slimy the mixture was. When I asked if the pestle and mortar were not a little too old, she replied that it did not matter.



Fig. 17: A picture showing me pounding the indigo leaves in the mortar with a pestle



Fig. 18: Mama Bilikis pounding the indigo leaves with a mortar and pestle

Once pounded, the slime is packed into an empty bag or sack of rice – a process known as *di ba*, “... to put something in a storage place, where it will sieve out the water and heat up”, as Iya Bilikis explained. At the NCACG, Awaru pointed out, there is an additional step of moulding the pounded mixture into balls prior to storing. A lack of suitable storage place is a problem for Iya Bilikis:

“There is no place to *keep* it; so we keep it under the table in the dyeing shade – it is to avoid the chicken and hens from perching on it and eating it ... You know, if we don’t wrap it in a sack, all the water may drip into *‘kini’* (something) (indistinct word). As we have wrapped it now, there can be no problem.”

The process of *si su* (moulding) the pounded *elu* leaves (See Fig 19), thereafter storing in a bag may last up to four days, whereafter the product is either sun- or air-dried, depending on weather conditions (See Figs. 20 & 21). The emergence of worms in the storage bags provides a signal that the product is ready for the next phase, according to Awaru: "It is the growth of worms from the *elu* that informs them that the *elu* leaves are well done. If the worms never come out in 3 days, they won't continue with the process until the worms are out; they won't continue. They will store the pounded *elu* leaves in bag."



Fig. 19: Mama Bilikis holding some pounded Indigo leaves



Fig. 20: Slimed indigo leaves packed in the rice sack



Fig. 21: Sun-dried Indigo leaves in Aka's family Compound

In terms of price, each processed *elu* ball can fetch up to ₺2,000 at the NCACG, according to Awaru: "... this one ball costs ₺2,000. I must not play with it as it is and if I want to sell it to a

stranger it is ₦2,000, if a known customer ₦1,500. And we need 21 *elu* balls in a pot” (See Fig. 22). *Elu* leaves, are more expensive during the dry seasons because the leaves are scarce.



Fig. 22: Processed dried indigo leaves at NCACG sold between N1500 and N2000 per ball

I observed the action of Mama Bilikis as she pounded the elu leaves in the mortar and pestle; she had explicitly stated that she did not know what it represented. Since most of the dyers are indigenous Yoruba people, they subscribe to the Yoruba proverb that says "*amoràn bini Oyo, bí o bá gbé kete lérí, wón a ní oko lò nìlọ tàbí odò*" (like the people of Oyo who know the answer yet ask the question: if they see you carrying a water pot, they ask whether you are on your way to the farm or the stream). In other words, if the answer is plain to see during the performance, I do not need to ask the question about the symbolic representation of the mortar and pestle. I also thought that this lack of interpretation on this phase of production is often thought of as a reference to the

sexual act, but adults are loath to talk openly about this act as it is seen as disrespectful especially among women.

Iya Ewe took exception to the reference to sexual act. She stated that the symbolic representation of the mortar and pestle only points to the male-female relationship within society. She said “*agbajo owo la nfi so aya, Ajèji owo kan ò gbégbá karí* (community of hands work effectively, a single hand does not lift calabash to the head), they signify neighbours and formation of a community” – since, she continued, “both mortar and pestle are not stuck together unlike the interaction of the two pots in the production of alkaline water solution” (See Chapter 6). This male-female relationship reemphasized the aspect of the Osun-Osogbo myths where Osun and the hunters decided to form a joint human community (See Chapter 3).

Following the pounding of *elu* leaves, I continued my ethnographic research with Madam Rafatu at the cloth dyeing section under the dyeing shade at the Aka dyeing family compound. She repeated the narrative of Aka’s dyeing centre as a beehive of dyeing production activities from morning till evening – ladies, young and old women participating in the dyeing process during the renaissance period of late 1940s to 1970s. Madam Rafatu claimed that the present Aka dyeing space was smaller than it used to be: “All our space for dyeing were all here under this storey building. The dyeing space were all claimed when the storey building was built (pointing to the buildings near the dyeing pots) The adults from the opposite house were also involved with dyeing but when the adults who make them here are no longer alive, what is the essence of keeping the dyeing space. If not that we are still alive, that is the reason for maintaining this space in the Aka compound. It is a popular compound name, the *Aro Aka* (Aka Space).”

Obviously, urbanization, growing population and the changing socio-economic life within family compounds have caused more building constructions, especially storey buildings in Osogbo;

hence, the decreasing space to perform the dyeing activities in the Aka family compound in Osogbo. In my publication (Owoeye 2010:147–148), where I compared contemporary dyeing and indigo dyeing styles in Osogbo and Abeokuta, I noticed that the practice of indigo textile dyeing is prominent in the hinterlands of Nigeria because of urbanization and the ageing population of the women dyers. Even though the *elu* textile dyeing is prominent in Osogbo, the ageing population of women dyers is an issue to pore on because fewer young dyers are interested in the indigenous *elu* dyeing styles.

More evidence of the ageing population of women dyers in Osogbo is the dyeing shade which was built with tree branches and roofed with thatch. There were ropes tied across the branches for sun-drying dyed cloths. The shade seemed to be on the verge of collapse, with broken pieces of *ikoko aro* (dyeing pots) strewn around, and *ikoko* (pots) and iron drums called *gorodom* scattered within and around it – the iron drums are the evidence of urbanization and changes in the socio-economic life of the dyers. Madam Rafatu expressed her disappointment that pots were no longer produced in Osogbo: “we buy the ‘*ikoko*’ (pot) from the pot sellers that come from Ilorin. In the olden days, they usually made the pots here in Osogbo, but now they bring them from Ilorin.”

When I asked why pots are no longer made in Osogbo, she offered a furious answer: “Where are the adults? Ah! The adults producing the pots are all dead. There are no more adults who make them again in Osogbo; they bring the pots from Ilorin nowadays. But, you can get it from the ‘*elewe omo*’ (herbal sellers) stand at Oja-Oba market, you can buy them there.”

Mama Rafatu’s angry response indicates that the young ones in Osogbo are not interested in the indigo dyeing craft and also points to the changing social structures and social economy in Osogbo. This reiterates my findings in 2010 in the Akoda indigo dyeing family in Ede town (one of the major towns in Osun State – a 15 minute drive from Osogbo). In the Akoda family of Ede town,

“there was a custom that every woman married into the family must be endowed with all the instruments and raw materials utilized in indigo textile dyeing...in recent times, there have been changes in the custom because some of the newly married women did not stay in the Akoda family compound and most of the younger women in the family quarters were educated women with their individual career unlike the old women and wives in the quarters that were not educated” (Owoeye 2010:72). However, most of these elderly women I met during the fieldwork showed their love and earnestness to pass the knowledge of indigo dyeing to researchers like me who has developed interest in the seemingly abandoned and ageing craft of indigo dyeing.

Notably, Madam Rafatu opined that “the few young ladies/women interested in the dyeing craft today are interested in contemporary dyeing techniques – a faster and easier means to dye clothes than the tedious indigo dyeing techniques; however, recently, dyers in the indigo dyeing techniques include some of the chemicals in contemporary dyeing to make the indigo dyeing process relatively easier and faster.” Aside the painstaking processes in indigo dyeing, Madam Rafatu stated that the “low and dwindling income generated from the craft compared to white-collar jobs” is another factor contemporary dyeing techniques are more attractive to the disinterested apprentices. Hence, the absence or the ageing composition of the indigenous women dyers and loss of interest by young ones (especially ladies) in Osogbo symbolically represent the gradual erosion of the arts and customs of the dyers in Osogbo.

Mama Rafatu informed me that the production of the dye water does not take much time. Once the *elu* leaves are sun-dried, they are taken to the dyeing pot to prepare for the production of *omi aro* (dye water). She had already filled a pot with water, into which she later poured the pounded, dried indigo leaves, with no visible sign of measurement of quantity: "... it is the desired amount of dried indigo leaves you desire that goes into the indigo dyeing pot". She requested an *orogun*

(stirring stick) from the rooftop of the dyeing shade. This caused some confusion, as there were many sticks at the rooftop of the dyeing shade. She later explained the difference between *orogun* (stirring stick) and *opa aro* (dyeing water stick): “the stirring stick is used to stir in order to prepare dye water. It is much stronger than dyeing-water stick. You need something strong to stir the leaves. Dyeing-water stick is different – we use it to remove textiles from the dye solution ...”

Madam Rafatu brought out a sack with a white, opaque plastic bottle. She scooped two spoonfuls of a white substance into the dyeing pot containing the dried *elu* leaves, and stirred the water with stirring stick. Initially, Mama was reluctant to say what it was, but later she said the substance was called (caustic) Soda. I knew of the substance, but I wanted some clarification, because caustic soda is used mostly by contemporary dyers. According to her, “... it is soda that I put in the pot, ‘*ise aro na ni o se*’ (it works in the dye). ‘*O ma bo awon ewe ye ka le*’ (it will draw out the power of the leaves into the dye)”.

Surprisingly, she tasted the dye solution; this action sent a chill up my spine, and I inquired if it was safe, to which she replied: “It is to know if it is ‘mu’ (sharp). It does not cause any harm; if it causes any harm, we would not have tasted it as I did, nor put our hands in it raw.”

The caustic soda is a fixative agent that replaces the alkaline water of the olden days, which will be discussed in the next chapter. However, Bartho at Ayekale area where I collected the indigo leaves warned me against tasting the dye water solution: “... if they (women dyers) use their fingers to feel it – they only want to confirm if the agent is strong enough as a fixative agent. The dyers are only tasting it to know if the fixative agent is enough or not. It is you that you must not try it. ‘*O nikan ti agbalagba je te ile ikun, ko to so wipe, iya yo oun*’, ‘*O nikan ti obo je te ile iku, ko to s’aju gbonge s’olede*’ (there are some things that the elders have eaten to conclude that

troubles satisfy him; the monkey must have eaten something to be show pride to the hunter). It is you that must not try it.”

After the tasting, Mama Rafatu took a bowl of dye solution that had already previously been prepared, and poured it into the dye solution being prepared. The dye water pot was then covered, and she said, “... *if we da aro* (prepare dye water) today, it may be up to 8 days for you to dye textiles, there is nothing wrong with that. However, this process is to make the dye water solution to ferment.”

Contrary to Mama Rafatu's claim, Awaru (one of the tutors and director of studies) at the NCACG, had this to say concerning caustic soda use: “the use of caustic soda spoils the textiles to be dyed because soda on cloth is destructive – we use it with German dye, Japan and Gem Dye. We use caustic soda and hydro sulphite for contemporary dyes and dyeing.”

This difference of opinion which concerned the use of caustic soda for the production of indigenous dye water led to an argument with Awaru. Awaru claimed that caustic soda is only used along with synthetic dyes for contemporary dyeing and not for indigenous dyeing. I recognised his strong refusal to accept the use of caustic soda to replace alkaline water as a fixative agent in the dye water solution, to protect indigenous knowledge. He focused his argument on the alkaline water which acts as a fixative agent – left for 14 days to ferment. When the covered dye water solution is opened, the odour is one of the signs that show it is ready to be used for dyeing textile. In all, every prepared dye water solution must be used within 2 weeks, and can last up to four months (depending on how frequently the dyer uses the dye water) before it does not *mu aso* (textiles do not absorb it) any more.

In line with the symbolic discourse of the creation of dye water, Madam Rafatu and Iya Ewe stated that every ingredient that makes up the creation of dye water has an *isesi* (pattern of doing, or simply an action to perform) like every human being that makes up a society; hence, the symbolic performance of Mama Rafatu in the making of dye water, which involves the mixture of different ingredients, makes the dyer stand as an *Alasuwada* – the author and creator of human society.

Therefore, the performance of Mama Rafatu in the dye water activities of indigo textile dyeing process is a symbolic representation of the assemblage of individuals to create a human society. Evidently, no dye water can be formed without the collective action of the ingredients, which forms the indigo dye solution. Also, there can be no human society or community without the collective actions of individuals; which explains Iya Ewe's earlier comments that joined hands form a community, not a single hand.

After the interaction at the making of dye water, Mama Rafatu told me to return after 8 days. I was surprised by the 8 days gap because I was used to 14 or 21 days for the dye water to ferment until I remembered that Mama Rafatu did not use the indigenous alkaline water whose functionality we will expound upon in the next chapter. Rather, she used caustic soda as the fixative agent in the dye water.

5.3 The Symbolism of *Ewa* (Beauty) and *Omoluabi* in the Dyeing of the Patterned Cloth

After three weeks, we returned to Madam Rafatu to examine the dyeing process of the patterned cloth. She suggested that the cloths patterned with the cassava paste (also called starch-resist patterned cloth) be dyed.

The preparation for textile dyeing was slow, and I used the opportunity to inquire about the taboo concerning the dyeing space. According to Iya Ewe, the menstrual period or condition of a woman

“... does not have any effect.” Madam Rafatu confirmed this claim, and added that the only taboo in the dyeing space is “... to avoid faeces ... because its odour contaminates the dye solution”. Both Iya Ewe and Madam Rafatu emphasized the negative effect of faeces on the dye solution, because “... if the *aro* perceives the faeces, it will damage the effectiveness of the *omi aro* (dye water). Everything has its do’s and don’ts”.

To get the process underway, Madam Rafatu picked a black nylon cloth with a bottle wrapped inside it. And a small blue plastic bowl about two litres in capacity. She opened up the nylon, and immersed it in the pot of dyeing water. She seemed secretive about the procedure, and said: “this is *ogun aro* (dye solution's medicine) called *jellu*.” She poured the *jellu* into the bowl and dipped the bowl in the dye solution in the pot. Using one of the *opa aro* (dyeing sticks), she stirred it and gradually emptied it in the dye solution. The dye solution became darker. She deemed it right to aerate the *elu-jellu* combination: “it works together with *elu*; if *elu* does not see the *jellu*, it will not *mu aro* (absorb dye), and, if *jellu* does not see the *elu*, it will also not work”, she said.

Mama Rafatu took one of the starch-resist patterned textiles, and slowly immersed it in the dyeing pot – first with her hand, and then with the *opa aro* (dyeing stick). She then pulled it out gradually, with a turning motion. At this stage, the textile was still white, and I noticed how she handled it with care. Struggling to stand up, Mama Rafatu pulled the textile out of the dyeing pot and spread it on the roofing sheet covering the dyeing pot. I noticed that every dip of the textile lasted about two minutes, and she said that it was to avoid the paste washing off. The textile was immersed yet again – a third time – and then pulled out and hung on a wood nearby to oxidise. My research assistant was then asked to put the textile in the sun, with the paste exposed (See Fig. 23). The same procedure was repeated for each of the remaining patterned cloths, thus completing the dyeing phase.



Fig. 23: My Research Assistant putting the dyed cloth in the sun

During the last round of dipping, Mama Rafatu reminded us that, while dipping the cloth in the dye solution, the reverse should be dipped first for cassava paste clothes. But, Mama Rafatu noticed that the cloth has not been properly dyed. She added some more *jellu* to the *omi aro* to make it darker. When the cassava paste had been dyed, it was sundried for about three days, after it was confirmed that the *aro ti mu aso* (the cloth has absorbed the dye). The cassava paste was then scraped off with a knife (See Fig. 24). The dyeing time for the patterned cloths made by Iya Wunmi was different. The patterned cloth was soaked in the dye water and removed at 15-minute intervals, until it was fully dyed in indigo by the fourth day.



Fig. 24: Madam Rafatu Scrapping the cassava paste off the patterned clothes

In terms of the performance of textile dyeing in *omi aro* (indigo dye water), the production phase sets in motion the socialization of the child (represented by the cloth). Metaphorically, we have earlier suggests that the *omi aro* is a representation of human society/community with its own *iwa* (character); in this case the Yoruba culture and society. Hence, the textile dyeing process is driven by the symbol of *ewa* (beauty), which Awaru alluded to as the symbolic meaning of the dyeing process. Abiodun (2001) noted that the Yoruba people used *ewa* for human beings. He suggested that the concept of *Ewa* could refer to outer beauty – a physical attribute, which could be a vessel for inner beauty. The Yoruba people, however, consider outer beauty as empty and insignificant, as opposed to inner beauty, termed *iwa* (character). This finds expression in the Yoruba saying *iwa l'ewa* (character is beauty).

The dyeing of cloth termed *re aso l'aro* (dip or soak the cloth in dye water) represents the ritual process of initiating and inculcating the Yoruba societal values and ethics in a child. This is to make the child *Omoluabi* (*Omo-ti-Olu-Iwa-bi*, meaning the child birthed by the god of character) among its peers and in the society. However, I referred to Oluwole Sophia's argument in my earlier discussion during the patterning section, where she gave the full sentential manifestation of the concept of *omoluabi* (*omo-ti-o-ni-iwa*) as an incomplete phrase. She interrogated the concept and proceeded to provide a comprehensive picture of the concept: "*omo-ti-o-ni-iwa-bi-eni-ti-a-ko, ti-o-si-gba-eko*" (A person that behaves like someone who is well nurtured and lives by the precepts of the education one has been given). According to Oluwole (2007:13), *omoluabi* in the Yoruba view is "a person who possesses a deep knowledge and wisdom of the culture, trained to be self-disciplined and to develop a sense of responsibility that shows in private and public actions which earn individuals social integrity, and personality in Yoruba society."

Therefore, in the light of the Yoruba society and its link with *omoluabi*, Abiodun (1983:14) and Fayemi (2009) described *omoluabi* as a person who is well trained and highly cultured in the human sociality of the Yoruba culture and society. Hence, Oyeneye and Shoremi (1997:253) agreed that an *omo-lasan* or *omo-buruku* (uncultured) or *omoluabi* (cultured person) is a general description of a given personhood or character traits of a person that is a misfit, a cultural deviant or a socially integrated person within a given society/human sociality respectively.

To the dyers, a properly dyed cloth symbolises *omoluabi* (a properly cultured and socially acceptable Yoruba child) that was educated and imbibed the training. Abimbola (1975:389) and Fayemi (2009:169) clearly described such a person as a child with *iwapele* (good and gentle character). He further suggested that the *omoluabi* phenomenon presupposes a set of moral principles guiding moral conduct, such as *oro siso*, (spoken word), *iteriba* (respect), *inu rere*

(having good mind to others), *otito* (truth), *iwa* (character), *akinkanju* (bravery), *ise* (hard work) and *opolo pipe* (intelligence). Fayemi added *iteriba* and *inurere* are part of the moral principles that beautify *omoluabi* with *ewa* (2009:169) – a symbolic representation of an end-product.

The aforementioned are the characteristics probably most students in the Osun state-owned secondary schools lack as observed by Madam Rafatu during the dyeing process. She opined that these state-owned school students were undisciplined, and disrespectful to their elders and teachers. However, she blamed parents for the pervasive malady in society today – echoing improper and mal-socialization of the children in schools today, supporting Akiwowo’s thesis that states that the *ajobi* (consanguinity) bonds will be weakened as the local economies link with the metropolitan markets either in Nigeria or outside of Nigeria as a result of the changes in the socio-economic structure and political-economy in Nigeria (See Chapter 2 for the effect of the political economy on the indigo textile dyeing industry in Yorubaland and Nigeria).

From the foregoing, the concept of dyeing symbolized by *ewa* (Beauty) in *iwa* (Character), in addition to the concept of *kadara* (destiny) in the pattern making process in the Yoruba thought system, shows a holistically developed child or human being in Yoruba society. This worldview has been explicated by women dyers in indigo textile dyeing production processes. However, the concept of indigo dyeing and *omoluabi* among women dyers could also be related to Fayemi’s (2009) sociological analysis of the interaction between community and the formation of personhood among the Yoruba people of Osogbo. Symbolically, indigo textile dyeing is related to Fayemi’s conception of *omoluabi* as a formation of personhood based on the principle of communalism, represented by the *omi aro* (indigo dye water solution). Adeniji-Neil (2011:2) explained that *omoluabi*, with respect to communalism, perceived that a “... person is not merely human by being born ... but because of the deeds and actions that connect us to others: families,

friends, community and the nations”. This echoes the concept of *Ubuntu* among African countries South of the Sahara, which Arch Desmond Tutu (1999), cited in Adeniji-Neill (2011:2–3), described “as the very essence of being human – I am human because I belong, I participate because I share.”

Indigo dyeing production processes also symbolize the process of social and ritual transformation of a person. Menkiti (1984:172) observed that the African concept of personhood differs from the Western perspectives in that the “community takes priority ontologically and epistemologically over the individual” – in other words, the community defines who a person is. This means that “one must undergo a process of social and ritual transformation” such as symbolized in the indigo textile dyeing processes in order “to attain [the] full complement of excellence” – determined by the collective norms in the community. Therefore, an infant is not a person because it cannot be said to obey the norms of the community and has not undergone the ritualization or socialization process. However, the concept of communalism, in view of the dyeing process, does not indicate a rigid space. The community being symbolized by the indigo dye solution is also receptive to change. The use of caustic soda shows the receptivity of the Yoruba culture in Osogbo in order to make the production process faster, without losing the essence of the production processes.

Notably, the textile dyeing industry has undergone changes in terms of its dyeing techniques, following the advent of contemporary dyeing processes via synthetic dyes popularly known as *batik* or *kampala*, earlier reported in Chapter 2. The introduction of the synthetic dyes allowed for quicker production times and mass production of dyed cloths prevalent in Itoku, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria (Owoeye & Owoeye, 2012; Owoeye, 2010). Some dyers in Osogbo engage exclusively in this industry. One of such dyers is Iyabo, who has a gallery named Yabotech. She has been in the dyeing business for over 15 years; she was an apprentice with Nike Okundaye-

Davies, the proprietor of the NCACG (Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery (one of my field sites).

Iyabo belongs to the association of contemporary dyers in Osogbo and one of its most respected members. She specifically stated that the elderly women dyers in the indigo dyeing techniques “are our mothers; without them we could not have had much experience in this craft”. She continued that as at the time of the study they “were contemplating and contributing money to reconstruct the dyeing shade at the Aka dyeing family compound so as to make it a befitting one for Madam Rafatu”. Several apprentices have been tutored by Iyabo with graduation pictures her gallery store. She also has some Fine Arts department students from few tertiary institutions conducting their internship at the Yabotech Workshop. However, during the ethnography, Nigerian tertiary institutions were on vacation. Iyabo, describing dyeing techniques, clarified that “contemporary dyers call the synthetic dyestuff *aro*, whereas the indigenous dyers use the same name for *omi aro* (dye water)”.

Iyabo starts the synthetic dyeing process by putting cold water on a stove. A kettle may be used, she said, since the idea is merely to heat up the water to ensure proper dissolving of the caustic soda. Her apprentice, a pregnant lady, warned, however, that the dye solution needs to be cold before textiles are immersed in it.

One of her apprentices, Tinu, (an undergraduate student at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso) was sent to purchase some dye stuff from Mama Tolu, the textile merchant in the previous chapter. In her process, Iyabo explained that the dyestuff is first mixed in hot water, and cold water added later for cooling. “Once the dye solution is hot, the candle wax used to pattern the clothes will dissolve”, she explained. The hot water is used to *bo* (de-wax) the dyed cloth. Comparing the process of de-waxing to the preparation of *amala* (a popular staple food

among Osogbo people), she went on: “the water will be boiling, as if we want to prepare *amala* with the aid of the *orogun* (stirring stick) - it is the stirring stick that we will use to stir as well as lift the dyed cloth up and down in the hot water to enable de-waxing. The candle wax must dissolve in the *ikoko* (pot) of hot water; we will scoop the dissolved candle wax into another container, so that we can de-wax another cloth ... we can de-wax up to 20 cloths in a single hot water.”

However, the issue of de-waxing several cloths in a single hot water raised the question of stains and contamination of other dyed-clothes. About this she responded: “the secret is that if you don't want the dyed cloth to take in excessive dye, it is proper to rinse the dyed-cloth very very[sic] well that when it drips water, it will be pure white water prior to de-waxing the dyed cloth. This does not allow water to have any of the dyed-clothes colours. When the de-waxing is over, we would gather the de-waxed candle floating on the hot water in a place, put it on fire and cover it until the next day. The reason for the cover is because of rain. Once rain falls on it, it will be a mess.”

By the end of the discussion, Tinu had returned from the purchase of the dyestuff. Wearing hand gloves, Iyabo put three table spoonfuls of caustic soda into a bowl. She then added about six table spoonfuls of a whitish substance called hydrogen sulphite, followed by six wraps of dye. “Some other people use cold water”, she said, contending that “... but I was not tutored that way. Those that use cold water to dissolve caustic soda are the lazy people, ‘*ti won r’oju*’ (lazy people).”

Iyabo removed the factory starch on cloths prior to patterning and dyeing: “I will first wash off the factory starch from the textile. If the starch is not washed and we want to soak it, we could soak it for ... one or two hours, so the starch would have dissolved in the water. If that is not done and you put candle on it, all the candles will wash away – we will not see our desired design come out at all or come out very well ... There is no textile you want to use, once soaked, the starch will come out.”

She explained the role of the various materials in the process: the caustic soda is likened to the alkaline water produced in the indigenous indigo dyeing system – “... it makes the dyes stick to the cloth”. The hydrogen sulphite, she was clear, “... makes the colour of the dye come out very well – making the colour stay on the textiles [...] the caustic soda makes the colour stick to the textiles”. After the mixtures were done and cold water was poured into the mixture, the patterned cloth was dipped in the dye solution, and left therein for 20 to 30 minutes.

While we were counting minutes, she remarked about peoples’ attitude to the dyeing work: “this is the only work that people do not really have the wisdom to do in this community.” She gave an example of a woman that joins every business that seems lucrative in the community. She said the woman in question sold beer and liquor before her current trade. Returning to the business of dyeing currently underway: “some dyers do not wash or rinse immediately so as not to wash off the dye as a result of using inadequate dyestuffs, probably using #50 dyes for this kind of job. If it were to be Abeokuta people, this dye solution will be kept for another set of textiles to be dyed...”

Iyabo also talked about the influence of the rainy season on contemporary dyeing business: “the whole thing is interwoven. We all love this period (dry/harmattan season) because the products dry faster. In the rainy period, water is readily available but the waiting time is longer. For example, in this period, those in *eleko* patterning (starch resist) – this is their best and productive periods – once the rain drops on the starch resist, it will wash off but candle could be stopped and continued the next day. However, the rain disturbs because it takes more time to finish/complete the designing and dyeing.”

Importantly, the contemporary dyeing shows that Yoruba culture and society in Osogbo absorb from other cultures (for example, in the use of caustic soda). This is an indication that the Yoruba culture and society in Osogbo is not rigid, but receptive to progressive and developmental ideas.

Metaphorically, contemporary dyeing production processes raises the issue of moral autonomy of a person/child in the community that is seemingly neglected in the indigenous dyeing system. Contemporary dyeing symbolizes the expressive ability of an individual in the community by the ability to have differently coloured dyed-clothes, usually referred to among young Yoruba children as “*showing your colour*” (showing your individuality). This opposes the mono-colour (blue-black) of indigo dyed-clothes. This can be identified in the critical idea by Gyekye (1992) and Oyeshile (2006) supported by Fayemi (2009) that a human personhood is partly determined by communal values and essential elements that make a human being enjoy his/her personhood. These elements include rationality, capacity for virtue, ability to make moral judgments and confer personhood on the individual (Gyekye 1992:111). But Oyeshile (2006) asserts that the biological factor also determines personhood; this could be inferred from the nature of the cloth in the *adire* dyeing system. He continues that the biological factor is a necessary relationship between the individual and the community, as the individual destiny cannot be separated from the communal destiny.

During the fieldwork, the informants, especially the older women dyers in the indigo dyeing processes, alluded to the fact that the introduction of the contemporary dyeing process has aided mass production and faster production time; however, metaphorically, they perceived the contemporary dyeing as an inversion of the traditional system of motherhood and child nurturing and socialization (See Chapter 6) – which Madam Rafatu sees as evident in the children being raised in Yoruba homes today – lacking respect and patience, and with a desire to be successful without any moral principles guiding them.

5.4 Conclusion

The communicative power of indigo dyeing is enabled by the use of symbols of procreation, child nurturing and child socialization. Gender distinction in the production processes is an extension of the basic division of the male and female worlds, which ultimately leads to the exclusion of males from the dyeing, patterning and cloth merchant's locations. However, the alkaline water production process is neglected in this symbolic analysis of the dyeing processes. This is because the seemingly symbolic representation of the pounding activities of mortar and pestle is disregarded as a sexual act between husband and wife. It points to the symbolic male-female interaction to form a society, which is evident in the Osun-Osogbo myths where Osun and the hunters agreed to form a joint human community. A reflexive analysis of the alkaline water will examine the interpretation of the production of alkaline water in line with the symbolism of husband-wife procreating power in order to form a human society, the activities involved, and the implications on the women dyers' performances in the society.

Also, the neglect of the conventional alkaline water production and the emergence of contemporary dyeing in the dyeing processes points to the generational conflicts between the older and younger women dyers in Osogbo – different generations use different styles and materials to produce dyed-textiles. As against the conventional indigo dyeing processes, the contemporary dyeing techniques by the younger generations of women dyers points to the evolving democratic values and living strategies in Nigeria. The younger generations which considers popularity and wealth than human development and individualistic lifestyle, corrupt existence fast living and quick-fix survival strategies to communal living of the older generations.

Chapter 6

Sex, Water and Symbols: Reflections on Alkaline Water Production in Indigo Dyeing

6.1 Introduction

As we have seen in the two previous chapters, the *adire* textile dyeing production process involves a set of successive processes, which culminate in *adire* dyeing. This dyeing act is a ritual performance by women dyers in Osogbo – a re-enacted symbolic performance of the formation and evolution of human sociality and socialization of human beings. It is also a symbolic representation of motherhood (parenthood when it comes to the societal level) – a process of inscribing the *kadara* (destiny) of a child and the development of *iwa* (character) and *ewa* (beauty) to be an *omoluabi* (good and cultured child) in Yoruba culture. Specifically, I showed in chapter five that due to the transformatory nature of rituals, indigo dyeing processes also change as a result of transformations in society; hence the introduction of modern ingredients such as caustic soda to replace alkaline water.

Notably, despite the use of modern ingredients in other dyeing sites in Osogbo, some dyeing centres such as the Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery (NCACG) still use alkaline water in the recursive processes of indigo cloth dyeing. In this chapter, I considered the alkaline water production processes as part of that recursive processes. I reflected in detail on the performativity of gender, made known and communicated through the production of alkaline water among the Yoruba indigo dyers in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.

6.2 Gender and Performativity of Gender

For over two and a half decades, the discourse around gender and feminism has grown tremendously. Ampofo, Beoku-betts, Njambi, & Osirim (2004) reviewed the state of research in

African Women and Gender studies in order to point to the new perspectives in the field of social sciences. They focused on the existing and new areas of knowledge production in African gender studies and African women's agency in transforming African societies, states, and economies on the continent and in the Diaspora. The article focused on the history of discourse on gender and feminism and how it has moved in several directions. Some of the directions are the issues of difference between genders, power, knowledge production and representation and how they have been contested, negotiated, and analyzed from multiple and shifting sites of feminist identities. Specifically, the authors tried to contextualize the contributions of research on African women and gender studies in Africa within the global discourse of gender and feminism – which were historically ignored and marginalized by the global North. However, one vital contribution of the global North to the discourse on gender and feminism was the redefinition of social institution and theorizing gender as a social institution.

Martins (2004) perceived gender as a social institution. To establish her argument and viewpoint, she reviewed the history and the use of social institution as a concept from the pre-twentieth century to the twentieth century. She stated that social institution as a concept evolved from its enduring and persisting image to its contemporary use that highlights practices, conflict, identity, agency, power, and change. She clarified the concept of the social institution by outlining 12 features of social institutions (1256–1258)⁷². So, based on these features, Martins proposed in her judgment that “gender qualifies as an institution as any other social phenomenon” (2004:1259).

⁷² Martins (2004) stated that the criteria used to qualify gender as a social institution are: profoundly social – they are characteristic of group; endure/persist across extensive time and geographic space; entail distinct social practices that recurs; constrain and facilitate behavior/actions by societal/group members; social positions and relations that are characterized by particular expectations, rules/norms, and procedure; constituted and reconstituted by embodied agents; internalized by group members as identities and selves and they are displayed as personalities; have a legitimating ideology; inconsistent, contradictory, and rife with conflict; continuously change; organized in accord with and permeated by power; institutions and individuals mutually constitute each other; they are not separable into macro and micro phenomena.

Even though, Martins (2004) clearly argued gender as a social institution, she neglected technology, either indigenous or modern (contemporary), which is an institution like gender.

Ampofo, Beoku-betts, Njambi, & Osirim (2004) were influenced by the gender-technology institution gap in Martins' work; they argued that it is one of the areas neglected by the global North. Ampofo, Beoku-betts, Njambi, & Osirim (2004) though discussed the issue of technology as it relates to gender, they only outlined and discussed technology in general. They neglected the indigenous African technology such as *adire* technology, which is perceived by my research participants as an avenue to communicate the gendered worldviews of women among the Yoruba people of Osogbo. One major feature that connects this chapter as well as Martins (2004) and Ampofo, Beoku-betts, Njambi, & Osirim (2004) articles is the recursive, recycling and repetitive nature of gender (Martins 2004:1256) as evident in the alkaline water production process in indigo dyeing production – which is used to investigate the gendered worldview of women dyers in Osogbo.

Regarding the repetitive nature of gender, the feminist, Judith Butler, opined that gender and sexuality are both performances based on repetition. Butler's theory of performativity of gender in *Gender Trouble* (1999) is a stimulating type of theory perceived as an intermediation in feminist theory. Butler criticized the pervasive heterosexual assumption in feminism (especially in this era). Sexual violence is continually carried out against homosexuals in most African countries). She countered the assumption of propriety and restricted meaning of gender to masculinity and femininity excluding homosexuals. She stated that feminists should not venerate certain expressions of gender, which could “produce new forms of hierarchy and exclusion” (Butler 1999:viii).

For Butler, one's gender is constructed by one's repetitive performance of gender. The performativity of gender is expressed through a stylized repetition of acts, an imitation of the dominant conventions of gender in societies (Butler 1999). However, Nussbaum (1999) is ill at ease with the universal application of the theory of gender performativity. She expressed Butler's performativity of gender theory as a misguided retreat from engaging in the real world concerns or the status quo. Butler also disregarded gender as a social institution with features of geographic space, ideology, identities and personalities and social positions and relations characterized by expectations, rules/norms and procedures as argued by Martins (2004:1256–1258).

The effectiveness and appropriation of the concept of gender in Africa have been challenged by Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997) in her book titled *“The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses”*. She conducted a comparative analysis of Western culture and Yoruba culture of southwestern Nigeria to reveal that “not all cultures necessarily organize their social world through a perception of human bodies” (1997:153). She further stated that “the fact that Western gender categories are presented as inherent in nature (of bodies) and operate on dichotomous, binary opposed male/female, man/woman duality in which the male is assumed to be superior and therefore the defining category, is particularly alien to many African cultures. When African realities are interpreted based on these Western claims, what we find are distortions, obfuscations in language and often a total lack of comprehension due to the incommensurability to social categories and institutions” (1997:318–319).

Oyewunmi who in chapter 3 argued that gender is not a significant aspect of organizing Yoruba sociality traced the emergence of gender construction in scholarly writings, especially on the Yoruba people, to the introduction of Atlantic Slave Trade which changed the Yoruba society from an age-based society to a gender-based society (See Chapter Two). She criticized the western idea

which sees gender as always apparent and a fundamental organizing principle in every society. She also pointed out the Western assumption of “woman” as an essential category that leads to the universal subordination of women. She also analyzed the Yoruba language from the pre-Atlantic slave trade to post-colonial periods; she discovered that Yoruba language and names were gender-neutral in the pre-Atlantic era.

Among the Yoruba people, gender construction is fluid and modulated by other factors such as seniority (age) and personal achievements (wealth and knowledge acquisition) (Oyewumi 2005:8). Gender boundaries are constantly shifting and constantly reconfigured through ritual performance (Drewal 1992 cited in Oyewumi 2005:8). As a result, they enable men and women to have powerful positions due to their age and seniority in a family. However, Bakare-Yusuf (2004) criticized Oyewumi’s (1997) work for generalizing historical facts from Yoruba people to Africans. She claimed that the non-existence of biological gender markers implies the absence of gender hierarchies among the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria but not generally amongst Africans.

In this chapter, I focus less on the criticisms of universality in Butler’s performativity of gender theory and non-universality in Oyewunmi’s gender-neutrality of Yoruba people because both arguments are two sides of a coin – a partial analysis of gender construction, where Butler focused on an inclusive gender performance to recognize heterosexuals and homosexuals in sexual relationship and Oyewunmi focused on gender relationship in performing family obligations among siblings and not sexual relationships. Rather, I examine the symbolic performances of women dyers in the production of alkaline water to reveal their gendered worldviews as an impression embedded in the repetitive performances of the *adire* technology.

Specifically, I shall describe in detail the alkaline water production processes to reveals the implications of sexual relationships between a husband and wife(ves)⁷³. This is essential because the study will enable the extraction of information concerning dyers' interpretation of their activities. It also allows for a comparative analysis of the metaphoric representation of the indigo dyeing process of alkaline water and dyeing with chemical dyes as a reflection of Nigeria's changing socio-economic and political environment.

In *The Changing Images and Representations of Adire Technology in Nigerian Politics* (2014), I explain in some respects that the textile dyeing technologies (comparing indigo dyeing and synthetic dyeing in Osogbo and Abeokuta) are “a metaphoric analysis of the dynamic relationship between the socio-political environment and adire technology – a reflection of cultural values and empowerment in a democratic society”. This comparison reveals that “the indigenous indigo dyeing technique shows a “greater consideration for human development” while the contemporary dyeing technique considers “popularity and wealth” to choose an electable candidate.” (2014:179–181, 194). The existence of the two dyeing techniques in Osogbo have shown the transformatory nature of textile dyeing processes and “an awareness of meaning concerning the nature of things and events in relationship with human beings” (198).

Specifically in this chapter, I suggest that the dyers are communicating the unspoken and secret discussions of sexual relationships between husband and wife(ves) through the symbolic performances of alkaline water production processes in Osogbo as well as the dynamic transformations within the socio-political environment when compared with the contemporary dyeing technique. Essentially, this chapter combines descriptive, reflective and interpretive

⁷³ As against the western idea of marriage, the concept of marriage within the Yoruba culture permits a man to marry as a many wives as he is capable of feeding and to take care in his life.

accounts to explicate the symbolic performance of alkaline production processes (which I had described in my earlier publication in 2010) with visuals. This chapter also compares the accounts of indigo dyeing technique of alkaline water and contemporary dyeing technique of synthetic dyes (as described in my earlier publication in 2014) with illustrations as a reflection of the dynamic transformation in socio-economic and political system in human society.

6.3 Performativity of Gender in Omi Eru (Alkaline Water) Production in Osogbo

Alkaline water is an essential ingredient in days of yore in several cultures of the world. According to respondents from my fieldwork, alkaline water precedes the introduction of industrial salt to prepare food – however, alkaline water was not restricted to preparing of food only. Prior to the emergence of contemporary dyeing processes which involve caustic soda, alkaline water was an important ingredient in indigenous indigo dyeing processes – it is still an essential ingredient in indigenous indigo textile dyeing in Osogbo. They reiterated that “without alkaline water solution, there can be no dyeing water in the indigenous process.”

Bartho, one of my informants in Ayekale where I obtained the *elu* (indigo) leaves emphasized the use of alkaline water as salt in the olden days, “this water acts as the alternative to salt because there was no salt then, so it is the water from that ash that they used in cooking. In those days, our fathers could give a whole human being as an exchange for a bag of salt.”

For indigo dyeing, most of the informants stated that the alkaline water is used to draw the indigo dye substance of the indigo leaves/plants to form a dye solution. And Bartho added that “though the process is painstakingly tedious, that involves the production of ash with *paadi koko* (cocoa pods) on a kiln to fill a perforated pot, sieving several amounts of water through the perforated pot into an unperforated pot to get the alkaline water; ultimately, the alkaline water makes the dye

solution absorbable by the textile to be dyed, prevents the fading of the dyed products and makes its usage last longer”.

During the collection of my ethnographic data, I reflected on Iya Ewe’s disregard of mortar and pestle symbolism as a performance of sexual act, the mother-child relationship from the discussion on *kadara* (destiny), *iwa* (character) and *ewa* (beauty) during the pregnancy period, and the male-female relationship to form a human society, and I thought children do not just emerge in a family. Children emerge from biological processes – mostly involving man and woman, either through sex or other medical means. This created the platform to reflect on the sexual symbols in alkaline water production processes.

In my earlier studies on *adire* textile production processes in some selected dyeing towns in the Southwest of Nigeria, I stated that no other town practices the alkaline water production like Osogbo (Owoeye 2010). A closer look at the Osogbo dyers during the ethnography reveals that the dyers and pattern makers in Osogbo have the technical knowledge of alkaline water production processes – most of the dyers and pattern makers could explain the production processes accurately. However, only one of the dyeing sites, Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery, practices the alkaline water in dyeing production; this process involves pots, ash, and water. As earlier stated, other dyers are either into the contemporary dyeing production processes (synthetic dyeing) or adapted a foreign ingredient – which relates to the use of caustic soda to have the indigenous *elu* dyeing water.

During the collection of ethnographic data at the Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery, Awaru, who was the Manager of the centre, explained the alkaline water production processes to me. The centre’s workshop is located along Iwo-Osogbo Expressway on almost an acre of land, with the gallery some few metres away from the workshop. There were some university students at the

workshop practicing the candle wax patterning techniques under a constructed corrugated roof while others practiced the contemporary dyeing technique and sun-drying the dyed clothes.

Awaru showed passion concerning the use of alkaline water for dyeing textiles – for him, it is a process and practice that should continue despite the prevalence of contemporary dyeing processes. Although Awaru stated that the process is tedious, the dyed products of alkaline water are more enduring than those of contemporary dyeing. It is due to the fact that the clothes dyed with synthetic dyes tear easily due to the effects of synthetic materials.

Notably, Awaru did not practically explicate the process; he only described the process briefly because of the infrequent alkaline water production at the centre. He indirectly stated that the reason for the infrequent alkaline water production is due to the difficulty in getting as many cocoa pods as possible – at least to fill a large-sized perforated pot, burn the pods on a kiln, and seive gallons of water enough to fill a large-sized pot through the perforated pot into an unperforated pot. After this process, we made the dye solution. He revealed the challenge of infrequent usage of the alkaline water while pointing to one of the pots for the alkaline water: “this one was used about six months ago or may be three months because Mama (referring to the proprietress of the centre) was here recently.”

This also confirmed his view about the tedious character of the alkaline water system of dyeing cloth – which most of the dyers at the centre avoided – preferring the contemporary dyeing to the alkaline water dyeing system. Despite the neglect of the alkaline water production process, I see some symbolic significance in the processes.

Just as I observed in my previous work in Osogbo, the alkaline water processes have three (3) major objects and or elements: two pots (perforated and unperforated pots), the *eeru abaje* (ash)

and the produced *omi eeru* (alkaline water); however, the first and most visible objects during the alkaline water process are the pots.

The process of making alkaline water starts with the purchase of two pots – a perforated pot with several small holes and the other, an unperforated pot with a large hole in its side. The pots may be purchased as a whole and perforated by the dyers or custom made for the dyers by the potters. What does pot symbolically represent in the production of alkaline water in indigo production processes?

Pots⁷⁴ are widely analogized as persons with no sexual delineation. However, reflecting on the perforated and unperforated pots with a hole by the side, one can identify the dynamics of sexual (male penis and female vagina/womb) – relationship between husband and wife in Osogbo (and generally among the Yoruba people), the heterosexual variant in particular. Symbolically, the perforations in the pot are perceived to represent the symbolic activities of men as made manifest in the use of the penis – which discharges urine and semen from the body – with the ability to ejaculate semen several times into the womb . On the other hand, the solid, unperforated pot with a hole by the side symbolically represents the woman’s vagina and womb – with the ability to

⁷⁴ Berns (1989:32) reviewed the symbolism of pots in the literature and stated that pots have been one of the oldest media of communications and a vehicle for the expression of cultural patterns especially those associated with decorations. David, Sterner and Gavua (1988) in their article “*Why Pots are Decorated*” examined the reasons for decorating pots in their research among the Mafa and Bulahay in Northern Cameroon. Although their focus was the design on the pots, they claimed that pots are widely assimilated to persons (1988:365). This argument was vividly explained by the decorated body – a decorative expression that is irreversibly transformed by fire and cultured from a state of nature into cultural entities. They concluded that pots were the first objects in many parts of the world to be produced by transformation rather than mere modification of raw materials. Notably, Berns (1993:141), in support of the creative and transformative abilities of women in ceramics to symbolize Nigerian arts, stated that “women have long served as producers and transmitters of a symbolic repertoire, participating in the construction of social and ritual meanings. That women are the artists, regardless of whether they control the contexts in which ceramics are used, makes them part of the processes whereby material symbols help negotiate meaning.” Berns (1989:35) citing McIntosh also agreed that “pots serve as an instrument of communication by making references, although only in an abstract manner with discernible realities of the social life that portrays the history of their makers (users). In other words, to understand a symbolic representation in an art (or craft) is inextricably tied to knowing the world in which it exists” (Ibid).

receive from the man's several ejaculations and keep the developing foetus in the womb until delivery period (See Fig. 25).

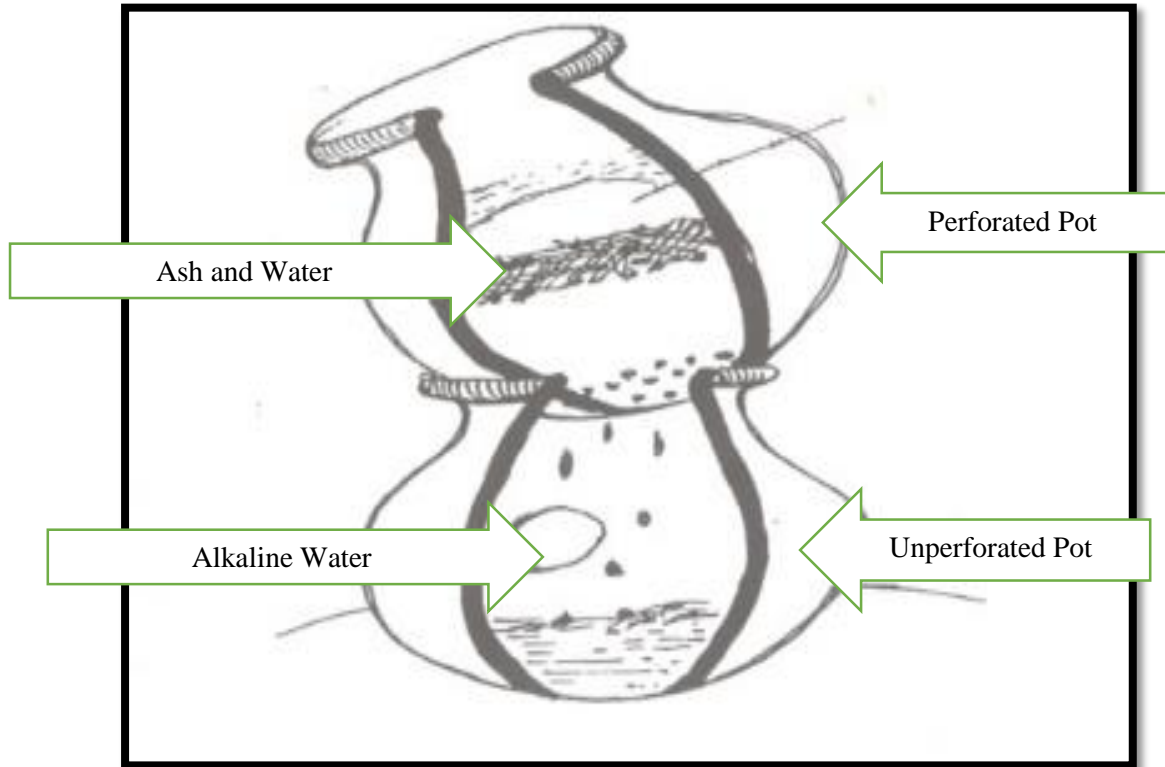


Fig. 25: The preparation of alkaline water in the pots (Owoeye 2010:81)

To commence the alkaline water production processes, the unperforated pot is cemented into the ground while the perforated pot is placed at the top of the unperforated pot. The perforated pot is filled with prepared *eru* (ash) that is produced from *paadi koko* (cocoa pods), which Awaru said were “obtained from the cocoa farmers.” Although Awaru did not provide the details about the burning procedures, I documented the procedures in my earlier article in 2010. The kiln made of mud is used to produce the ash – the kiln is usually used for cooking in the olden days before the advent of modern cooking equipment (See Fig. 26). To use the kiln to burn the cocoa pods, a sieve-like metal is placed on it, with the dried cocoa pod on it and firewood in the kiln to burn the cocoa pods – like one is cooking food (See Figs 27 and 28).

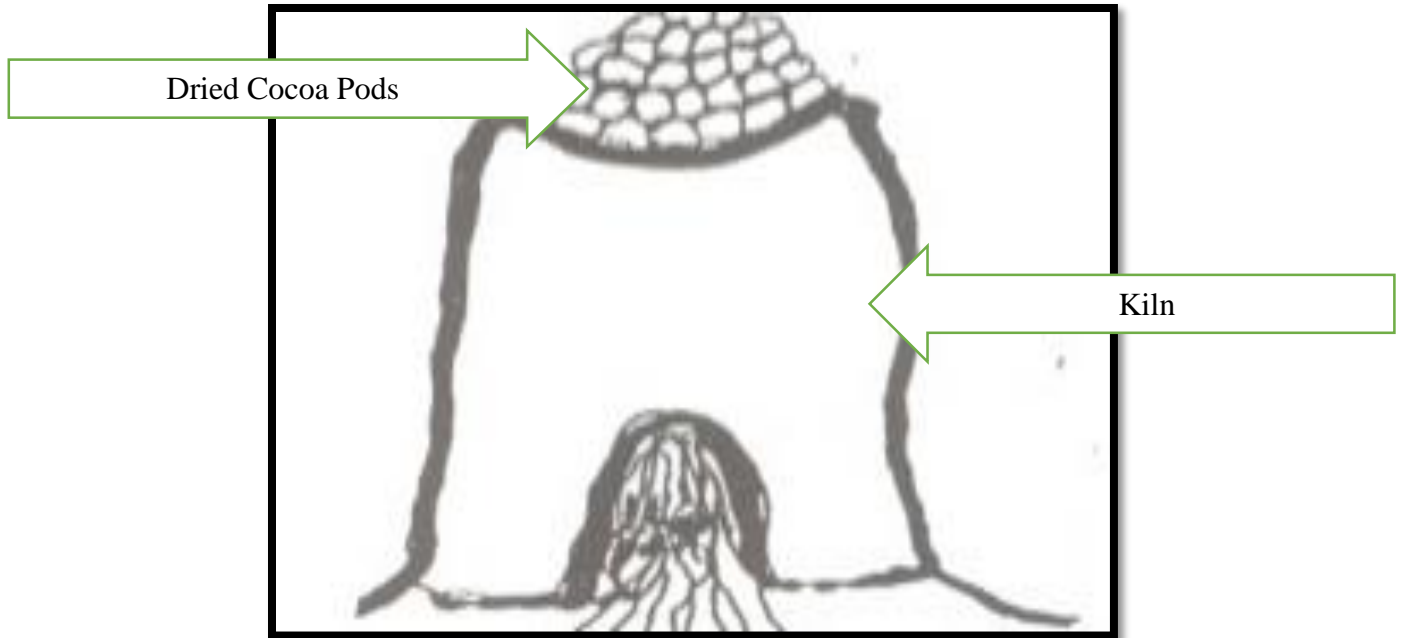


Fig. 26: Burning the Cocoa Pods to have the Ash (Owoeye 2010:82)

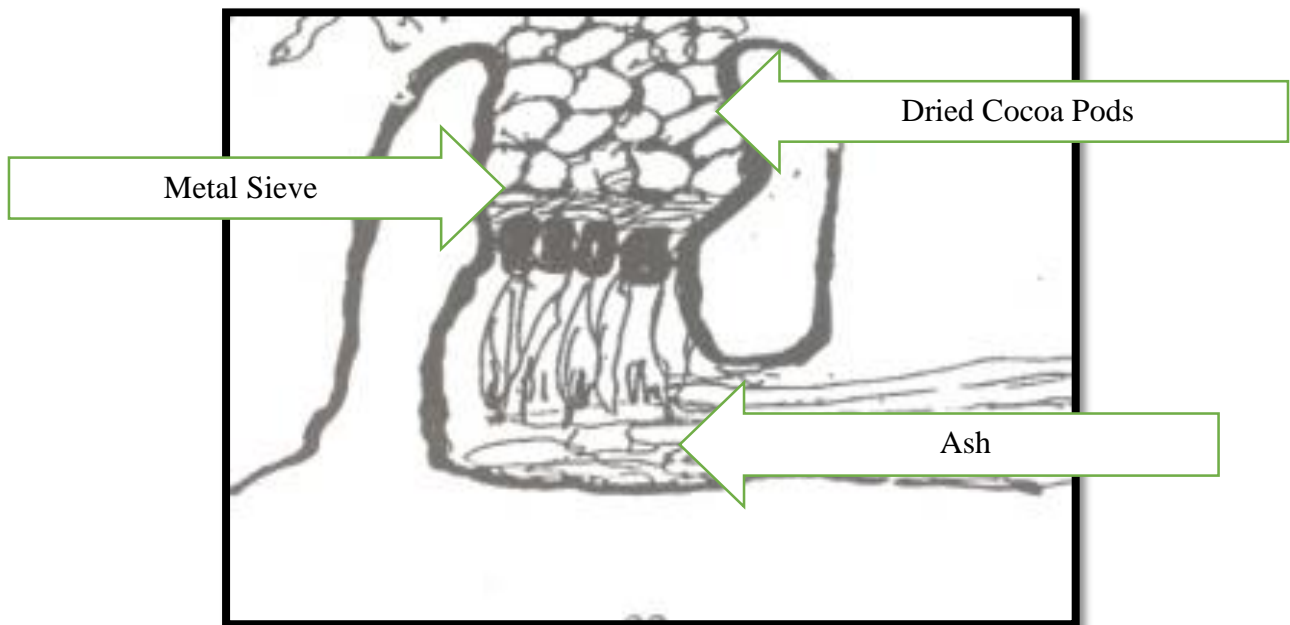


Fig. 27: Drawing showing the dissected kiln to explain how the ash is burnt (Owoeye 2010:82)

As the firewood burns, the sieve enables the cocoa pods to burn properly to ashes. The ash produced is taken out via the space used to insert the firewood, or from the top of the kiln, and later transferred to the perforated pot. This process continues until the perforated pot is filled with

the ash as seen in Fig. 28. Then, water is poured into the perforated pot filled with *eru* (ash) and drains into the unperforated pot with a hole by the side and cemented into the ground (See Fig. 29). As the water passes through the perforated pot into the unperforated pot, Awaru and Bartho idealised the process as the symbolic act of “becoming a man”. The activity of ash and water in the perforated pot (representing a man) symbolizes the production of semen into the woman (symbolized by the unperforated pot). This production of the ash symbolizes the process of transforming a boy into a man – a productive and life-enhancing process which man does through his semen.



Fig. 28: The ash in a perforated pot (Owoeye 2010:82)



Fig. 29: The hole where the alkaline is scooped from the unperforated pot (Owoeye 2010:83)

Ash is widely used in African ritual culture. Turner (1967) projected ash as symbolic of a desired state of health under the white colour symbolism among the Ndembu people and as medicine in boys' circumcision rituals. He depicted the act of treatment or healing as a white action – an act of purification from diseases. An example of this healing act among the Ndembu people was the use of ash turned salty paste in rituals to heal toothache with mouth soreness. As one of the dominant symbols and ingredients signifying death in the boys' circumcision rituals among the Ndembu people, ash is used to signify death to the life of boyhood and initiation to “erect phallus, adult masculinity, strength, hunting prowess, and health continuing into old age” (31). No wonder, Jędrej (1989) suggested ash as being symbolic of a life enhancer/promoter and also a life destroyer when he observed certain rites among the people of the Ingessana Hills at the Upper Nile in the Republic of the Sudan – he also compared the symbolic use of ash in the rituals of other African cultures such as the Nilotes and the Zulus besides other recorded ethnographies.

As a life enhancer that, Jędrej (1989) cited Berglund's (1976) ethnography among Zulu-speaking people in South Africa, where Berglund perceives a strong connection between ash, ancestral spirits, and men's semen. One of Berglund's informants made reference to the connexion between ash and incest between siblings (brother and sister). It is the belief among Zulu-speaking people of Southern Africa that the brother is "putting the male fluid into his lineage blood". It is assumed that the brother is putting ash into the blood and "making the shades (ancestral spirits) stay at home, in their own blood". Therefore, the semen is perceived as ash.

Jędrej (1989) also cited the work of Abrahams (1972), who discussed the symbolic quality of ash during twins rituals among the Labwor people of Uganda as a life destroyer. Abrahams stated that the shrines are erected for the twins after their birth and the ash ceremony takes place at these erected shrines. During the ritual, the priest smears participants and especially the twins' mother with the ceremonial ash to sustain her fertility and the fertility of the town. However, during the twin's childhood, monthly rituals are carried out. During these monthly rituals, both the twins' father and mother smear each other with ash for continued and successful sexual activity and fertility. Among the Labwor people of Uganda, Jędrej highlighted, the ash symbolism has dual life-enhancing functions: on one hand the ash represents peace and coolness to the whole society and on the other hand, between the couple ash signifies heat and potency which purifies the parents of the twin. I perceived the same life-enhancing abilities of the ash among the dyers at NCACG during the alkaline water production process as stated earlier in this chapter during the production of alkaline water, which passes through ash and alkaline perforated pot (symbolizing man and ejaculation of semen) into the unperforated pot (symbolizing the woman's womb).

However, as a life destroyer, Jędrej (1989) cited several ethnographies such as Hayley (1947) among the Lango people, another Nilotic people. He stated that whenever the Lango people wish

to remove disease and evil, they put ashes from the fireplace into potsherds and then remove the potsherd to a riverbank or crossroads (1947:147). With the ash from the fireplace being pure and potent, it loses its potency as it is frequently taken out of the fireplace to cure disease and evil in the society.

The symbolism of ash as a life-destroying element in indigo textile dyeing, is seemingly recognised in the frequent use of ash in the perforated pot. As the ash is frequently used, it loses its power and the alkaline water produced also loses its power – indicating the life-destroying aspect of the ash. This loss symbolizes the waning sexual power of a man due to use – as the man produces semen, he passes out strength and energy to produce children.

So, as the water passes through the ash, it turns to alkaline water – it drips into the unperforated pot, which symbolizes a woman’s womb. Awaru said that “after the water turns to alkaline water, it is taken from the unperforated pot cemented into the ground to the dyeing pot, and mixed with the dried *elu* (indigo) leaves in the dyeing pots ... the unperforated pot being cemented into the ground gives a metaphoric picture of a wife in a submissive manner and the emptiness of the pot indicates a wife’s womb-like nature. This symbolizes the Yoruba woman’s sexuality and ability to bear children.”

Awaru stated that the alkaline water is mixed with the *elu* leaves in the dyeing pot and covered for seven days. After the seven days of covering, he continued: “the solution turns to *omi aro* (dye solution); the dye solution is stirred, and the dyer dips h/her hand into the dye solution to know the level of sharpness of the dye solution.”

I informed Awaru that some dyers tasted the dye solution with their tongues, but he disagreed – “the person could die.” Immediately, he said “today, dyers also prepare dye solution within 2 or 3

days.” Although Awaru did not explicitly state what is used to prepare dye solution within 2 or 3 days; but, he did not deny having knowledge of the ingredients used to prepare dye solution within 2 or 3 days – chemical like caustic soda. He expounded on the use of ash: “the ones prepared in those days are difficult to wash off from the hands. However, no one is found to produce ‘*eru abaje*’ (ash) as a result of laziness today. This led to the conviction that the work of ash could also be performed by (caustic) soda, hydrosulphite, and *palomi* (also called *jellu* as described in the previous chapter) it.”

Bartho from Ayekale community during the plucking of indigo leaves commented on the tasting of dye solution by dyers. He submitted that: “if the dyers taste the indigo dye solution – they only want to confirm if the solution is strong enough as a fixative agent. The dyers only taste it to know if the fixative agent is enough or not. It is you (referring to me) that must not try it [invigorating the warning through a Yoruba proverb] – *o ni kan ti agbalagba je te ile iku, ko to so wipe, iya youn*, ‘*O nikan ti obo je te ile iku, ko to s’aju gbongbon s’olede*’ (there is something that the elder has eaten to conclude that troubles satisfy him; the monkey must have eaten something to show pride to the hunter).

Bartho argued, however, that the advantage of higher learning (formal education) makes one to be systematic and creates an avenue for the measurement of alkaline water and avoid tasting with the tongue. He drew attention that contemporary dyeing techniques are more scientific in terms of measurement, faster dyeing production (within a day or two) and makes room for mass production than indigo dyeing with alkaline water that requires almost 25 days or a month – the reason most young artists may prefer the contemporary dyeing technique with chemicals to indigo dyeing with alkaline water.

Iya Ewe, comparing the two dyeing systems, but in support of alkaline dyeing technique, referred to the effect of Western civilization and social change, which Madam Rafatu called *olaju*, as reflected in the lifestyle of impatience of the young ones today. She contended that “impatience about getting wealth quickly and indulging in lazy jobs such as 419 and the kind of parents we have today – uncaring and interested only in financial empowerment – leaving the care of their children to television filled with Western values, housemaids and dayhelps not related to them or from another country” are instrumental in the leaning towards the contemporary dyeing technique. Iya Ewe said “the change from strictly alkaline water driven indigo dyeing technique to the use of contemporary dyeing technique, which most young dyers prefer, or the use of chemical ingredients in some aspects of indigo dyeing technique practiced by Madam Rafatu, is symbolic of social changes in the human society. Specifically, it points to the way our society is structured and our children are raised nowadays”. The comparative analysis of the indigo and contemporary dyeing techniques showcasing the effects of societal changes raised by Iya Ewe was pronounced in my 2014 publication.

As stated earlier in this chapter, in my publication *The Changing Images and Representations of Adire Technology in Nigerian Politics* (2014), I compared the two dyeing techniques – indigo dyeing techniques, which involves the use of alkaline water production processes, and the contemporary dyeing technique, a metaphor for evolving democratic values in Nigeria (See Figs. 30 and 31). In the article, I argued that the indigenous indigo dyeing technique shows a “greater consideration for human development” while the contemporary dyeing technique considers “popularity and wealth” to choose an electable candidate (Owoeye 2014:194).

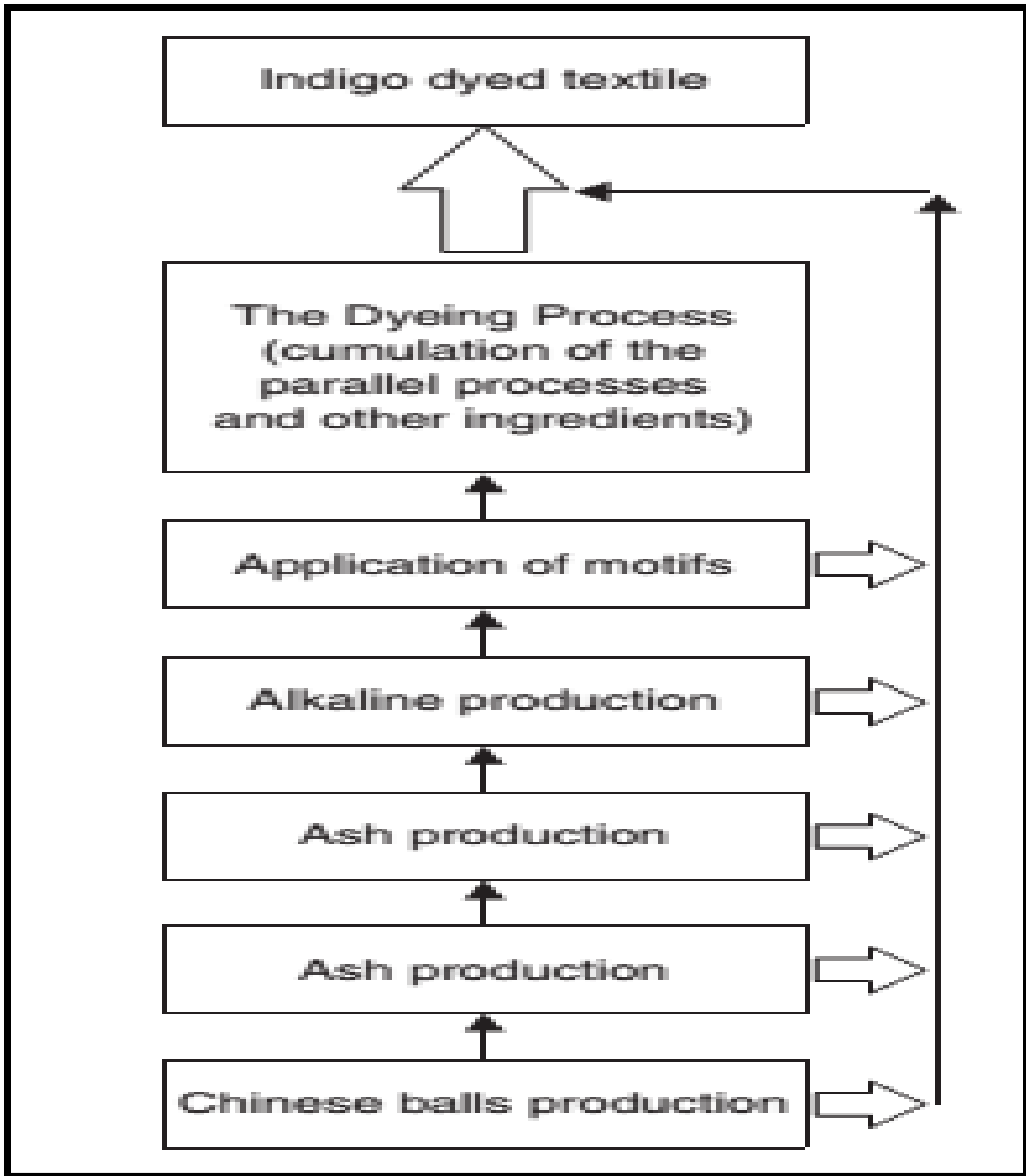


Fig. 30: Indigo dyeing process (Owoeye 2014:195)

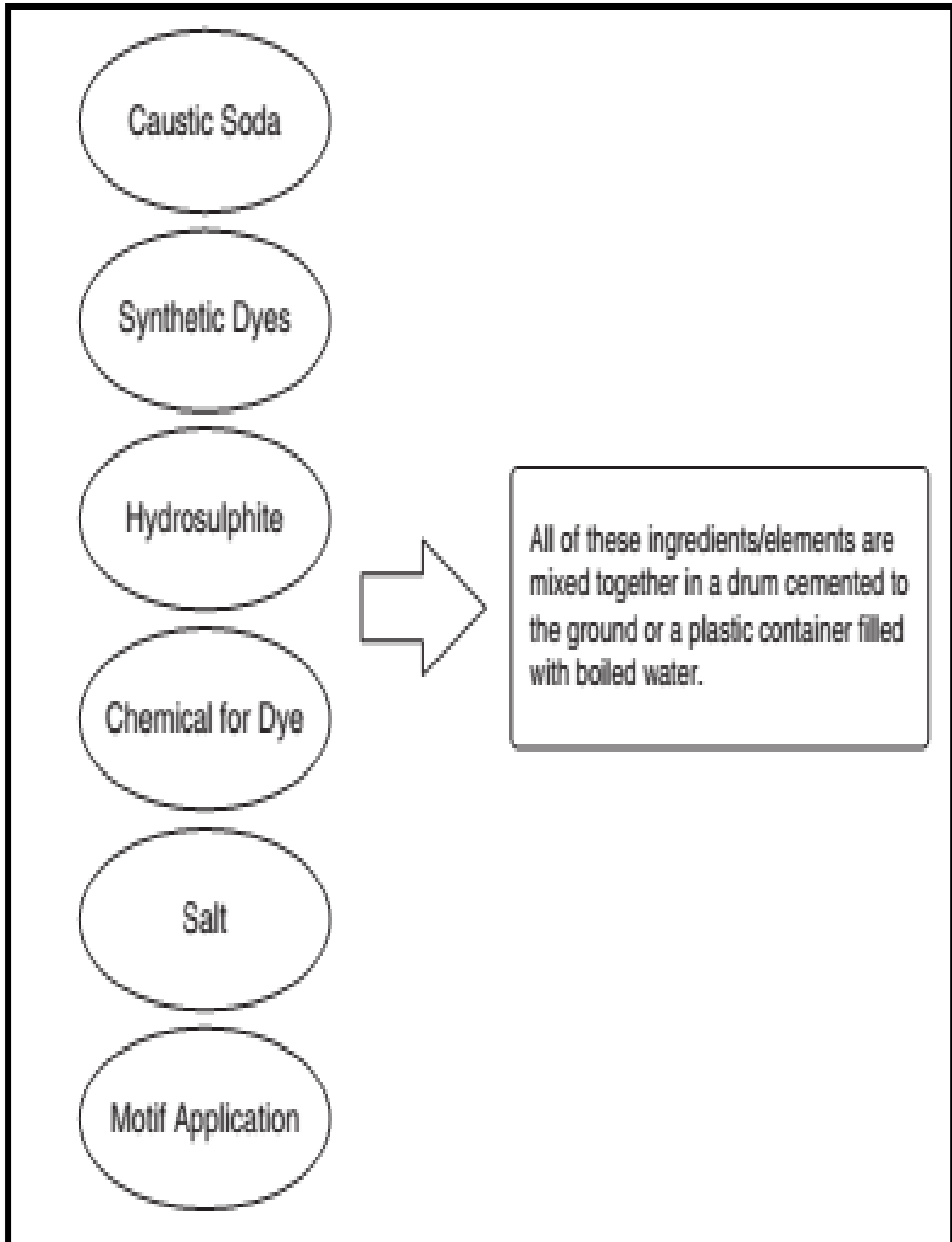


Fig. 31: Contemporary dyeing process (Owoeye 2014:196)

However, indigo and contemporary dyeing processes also projected the ideas of motherhood and nurturing of children as a reflection of the evolving manner of nurturing children several years ago as against what obtains in contemporary times. The indigo dyeing process reminds me of my teenage and early youth years in Lagos and frequent visits to my home village in Ekiti State, where there were few homes with housemaids or dayhelps employed to clean the houses and care for the children. Instead of the housemaids and dayhelps, there were family members – aunts, brothers, uncles – who stay at home to care for the younger ones – a sort of communal living where everyone cares for everyone.

The contemporary epoch is inscribed with corrupt existence, fast living and quick-fix survival strategies – a paradigm of strictly economically-driven lives, inspired by instant gratification as well as short cut to wealth. I noticed the conversion of modern parents to economic parents – seeking financial empowerment, thereby leaving the parental care of their children to crèche, housemaids and television shows. This reflects the arguments of Akiwowo (1983; 1986; 1991), Makinde (1988) and Lawuyi & Taiwo (1990) about the changes in the society which involves “the breakdown of the mechanisms of cohesiveness” in the human society as a result of increasing population and variations of sociations (Akiwowo 1991:245)

6.4 Conclusion

The reflective analysis of the symbols in the alkaline water processes has enabled a description of a seemingly universal subordination of women as argued by Ortner (1974) but from the ethnography, it points to the mutual interdependence between a Yoruba man and his wife. Although this chapter was about the women dyers’ gender view of the alkaline water production processes, it also showed the nature of rituals in textile dyeing as transformatory – a result of transformations in the human society. This transformatory nature was apparent in the introduction

of modern ingredients and chemical dyes as either additive to indigo dyeing or to completely replace alkaline water – a metaphor announcing the changing nature of the human society. The next chapter focuses on colour symbolism, texts and images on adire dyed textiles. I will examine colour symbolisms, texts and images as a metaphoric representation of the transformatory meaning of *omoluabi* in which I would compare the colours, texts and images in indigo dyed textiles and their contemporary other. This comparative analysis will further show the transformatory nature of rituals as are evident in textile dyeing production among dyers in Osogbo.

Chapter 7

Colour, Texts and Images on Indigo Dyed Textiles among Yoruba Women Dyers in Osogbo

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined the women dyers' interpretation of production processes of *omi eeru* (alkaline water) to describe the symbiotic relationship between a man and his wife in Yoruba society – a symbolism of gender performance. It interpreted the women dyers' gendered view of the alkaline water processes and the introduction of modern ingredients and chemical dyes – a symbolic representation of changing mutual (sexual) relationships between couples and the issues of motherhood and nurturing of children. Specifically, I showed towards the end of Chapter 6 that these dyeing activities are evident in the transformatory nature of rituals in indigo textile dyeing – a transformation necessitated by the changing human society when I compared the indigo and contemporary dyeing techniques – a symbolic representation of the transformations in the human society among women dyers in Osogbo. These social changes revealed the breakdown of the mechanisms of cohesiveness in the society – from the communal society to a more individualized society.

Since part of my focus in this thesis is the transformatory nature of symbols in textile dyeing and in particular, indigo textile dyeing, I was sensitive to the changes in the textile dyeing industry. One of the changes revealed in the earlier chapters is the introduction of chemical dyes, which are in different colours – a substitute for the blue-black colour of indigenous indigo dye – as well as the “changing representations of motifs in the indigo textile dyeing tradition among women dyers” (Owoeye 2014:179). In this current chapter, I examine changing colours and images in indigo textile dyeing and contemporary dyeing among women dyers in Osogbo. I also give some

analytical thought to the symbolic use of colours, images and, texts – the physical make-up of the motifs on the dyed textiles as a communicative tool in *adire* technology among Yoruba women dyers in Osogbo. Specifically, I focus on the transformatory meaning of *omoluabi* when I compare the colours, texts and images in indigo dyed-textiles and contemporary dyeing techniques.

7.2 Colour Symbolism, Texts and Images on Textile

Colour symbolism has been a subject of research for several years, with an extensive literature on the quest for universals within ritual performances – one of the aims of Victor Turner’s Symbolic Anthropology, which was adopted in this thesis and chapter. Victor Turner in his “*Color Classification in Ndembu Ritual: A Problem in Primitive Classification*” in “*The Forest of Symbols*” (1967), gave a detailed analysis of rituals among the Ndembu; which he described as a highly complicated and complex ritual. Turner gave a vivid description of colour symbolism, which he earlier observed and tried to condense to dual ritual categories evidenced in the “opposition between matrilineal descent and virilocal marriage, or the opposition between sexes” (27). Later, Turner claimed that the earlier dual colour classification among the Ndembu people is contained in wider colour categories, which are fundamentally and irreducibly tripartite” (Turner 1967; Winzeler 2012). These wider mode of colour classifications are red, white and black symbolic objects, which are used to communicate the Ndembu life-crisis rituals to young men and women among the Ndembu people.

In explicating colour symbolism as a means of communication in Ndembu life-crisis rituals, Turner explicated that several Ndembu rituals use two colours (white and red) – a binary opposition which symbolically represents the opposition between the two sexes (male and female). However, these two colours may represent the same objects; but, there is a third colour – black, which explains the tripartite classification of colour among the Ndembu people (See Deflem 1988).

Turner stated that “the relationship between the three colours begins with the mystery of the three rivers, which are among the Ndembu people: the rivers of whiteness, redness and blackness (darkness)” (61) – a metaphoric representation of the power flowing from the high god, *Nzambi*. Generally, white represents purity and goodness; red represents life and power while black stands for fertility. Specifically, among the Ndembu, Turner observed and gathered from the informants that these colours are not necessarily associated with gender (Winzeler 2012). For example, red colour in the river of redness is associated with blood which is represented in male and female activities. For the males, it is used to represent activities like hunting and warfare while among the females, it is used for menstruation and childbirth. In the same vein, colour white is also used to represent female breast milk and male seminal fluid.

Ernst (1971) criticised Turner’s analysis of colour symbolism for its restricted focus on selected bodily biological products, neglecting some bodily discharge such as urine (Ernst 1971). Importantly, Deflem expressed that though Turner was interested in colour symbolism in Ndembu rituals – how colour works in ritual, what it does in ritual, and how people handle the colour symbols; he discovered the multivocality, unification and bipolarity of the symbolism of a single colour. However, Turner’s analysis was solely on colour symbolism in the Ndembu rituals and not in relationship with other symbols, such as the focus of this chapter – the indigo-dyed textiles, which was not only transformed in terms of colour from a single-coloured indigo dyed-textile to the contemporary multi-coloured chemically dyed textile but also in terms of texts and images without doubt, the transformations have moved from representations of the foundational themes – environmental inspired patterns – to the contemporary abstract, historical and politically motivated patterns (Owoeye 2014).

Concerning patterns/motifs – images and texts – these are also constructed as tools to suggest symbolic communications on a textile. Green (2009), though referring to South American Andean indigenous woven textiles, suggested that symbols images and texts on a textile serve as a gauge for societal development. Some ancient textiles he refers to are the only surviving references to indigenous societal structures, ritual and spiritual practices, economic development and other traditional habits practiced within the society. In Africa, one of the ways images and texts are used to symbolically communicate (even on indigo-dyed textile) is the use of proverbs. An example is Kwesi Yankah, in his article *“Proverbs: The Aesthetics of Traditional Communication”* (1989), who provided one of the most captivating examples proverbs are used to communicate through textiles.

Yankah (1989) recognized the uniqueness of proverbs for communication purposes especially to the African when he stated that “whenever the issue of proverbial communication emerges, scholars look up to the peoples of Africa and their cultures” (325). He also recognized that cultures in other continents use proverbs; he however stated that, “the intensity, channels of realization, and strategies governing their use differs” (326). Yankah examined several ways Africans use proverbs in relation to textiles but with specific examples from Ghana.

In Yankah’s relational thesis on textile and proverbs, he stated that the proverbs have been creatively used in the modern textile industry and modes of clothing in Ghana to handle some contextual issues. He said that “specific names are assigned to modern textile designs – many of the textiles are imported” but, often “a local retailer – a woman – seizes the occasion to give an idiomatic or proverbial name to the design on the basis of the nearest prevailing idiom or image evoked by the cloth motif. The guiding principle in the naming process is often simplicity, memorability, and cultural appeal.” (1989:331).

Despite the invocation of symbolic image through the cloth, Yankah cited a salient point that aside identifying a cloth via its proverbial names of textile designs, it is important to understand how the textile is used within the community for “stylized communication” – an indirect mode “to convey appropriate messages in appropriate situational settings” (Yankah 1989:331). This stylized communication is termed “equivocation communication or veiled speech” by Rose Marie Beck in her articles “*Aesthetics of Communication: Texts on Textiles (Leso) from the East African Coast (Swahili)*” (2000) and “*Texts on textiles: Proverbiality as characteristic of equivocal communication at the East African coast (Swahili)*” (2005).

Beck, in her article “*Aesthetics of Communication: Texts on Textiles (Leso) from the East African Coast (Swahili)*” (2000) examined how *Leso*, a wrap cloth on which proverbial art is visually represented in writing are an object of everyday use. She gave a historical background of the cloth, “which appeared in Zanzibar around 1875 – a factory-printed cloth imported first from Switzerland (Ennenda), England (Manchester), and the Netherlands (Helmond), later also from India (Bombay), and produced locally in several factories in Kenya and Tanzania” since 1975 (105). The use of *Leso* cloth and the texts on the cloths could be images of power and powerlessness – submission and subversion – allowing women “a certain degree of self-determination, but enables them to remain part of the patriarchally dominated society” (107).

In terms of self-determination, the use of *Leso* clothes is limited to issues “considered as inappropriate or impossible to speak about openly, thus touch on culturally defined inhibitions of speech and behavior” (Yankah 1989:107). For example, “quarreling especially when it transgresses hierarchical boundaries of gender, age, or position is seen as problematic behavior” (Ibid). Hence, to remain relevant in the society, the *Leso* cloth is used from the position of powerlessness as a form of resistance against patriarchal norms.

Beck (2005) also pored on the symbolism of the *Kanga* cloth (also classified as *Leso*) from the Swahili people. She stated that metaphorical insights into the use of the *Kanga* cloth took equivocation to an affirmative and subvertive dimension. The *kanga* cloth ambiguates “not only the four elements of addressing person, content, addressee, and context”, but also “the medium; the *kanga*, which is at the core of the ambiguation processes surrounding the *kanga* cloth” (2005:131). The *kanga*, she deposes, only works in “close social relationships, crosses hierarchies (of age, descent, gender), and touches on socially sensitive topics, as is expected of avoidance-communication – it affirms and subverts rather than transforms and violates rules, expressing the arrangement of women in a patriarchal society” (Ibid).

Beck opined that to effectively communicate with the *Kanga*, it is either worn for others to see or presented as a gift, especially during certain occasions. This action allows people or other women understand the message communicated by its use. In other words, to effectively understand the content and context of communication through the *Kanga*, focus should be “on who communicated with whom, the relationship of the interactants, their individual history and position within society” (2005:132). Specifically, communication through the *Kanga* is “a reconstruction of the individual incident, drawing on the social and cultural dimensions involved, leaving out, for the moment, questions of proverbiality” (134).

From the ongoing, it is clear that both *Leso* and *Kanga* clothes are contextually used in Swahili culture; however, they are either imported or factory/machine manufactured. Notably, the factory/machine manufactured textiles are involved in indigo textile dyeing production processes; unlike the *Leso* and *Kanga* clothes, the *elu* adire dyed-textiles are indigenously transformed and produced by the women pattern-makers and dyers in Osogbo to reflect the socio-cultural, political and economic contexts of their environment within the Yoruba culture. So, this chapter examined

the views of pattern makers and dyers in indigo textile dyeing production processes on the indigo colour and its symbolism, the use of texts and images on dyed textiles as a communicative tool among Yoruba women dyers. I also examined the symbolic values and significance attached to the indigo colour among the Yoruba women dyers through some selected Yoruba proverbs as they relate to indigo dyeing or dyed clothes, the physical make-up of the motifs as a descriptive and interpretive analysis of the communicative system in *adire* technology. Specifically, I explored the colours and images in the light of the transformatory meaning of *omoluabi* in my analysis of the women dyers' narrative of colour symbolism in the use of dye-colours, the changes in the use of images and texts in which I compared indigo dyed textiles and contemporary dye among the women dyers in Osogbo.

7.3 Indigo Colour and its symbolism among Yoruba women dyers

Among Yoruba textile dyers (as with other groups), colour is recognized as a tool of communication – to symbolically communicate meanings in various contexts through colour-object association. Women dyers in Osogbo commonly described indigo textile dyeing (and the contemporary textile dyeing) as “*ise ona*”(a craft), “*nkan at’inu da*” (intuitive art) or “*a ti okan lo ti wa*”(a creative art); a description that points to the creativity involved in textile dyeing, which I perceive includes colours – although, a neglected aspect in *adire* dyeing production among women dyers in Osogbo.

During the ethnography, on a sunny afternoon, I visited Yabotech Dyeing Centre in Osogbo to observe the production of the contemporary dyeing technique by the proprietress of the dyeing centre, Iyabo. During the observation, I raised the issue of colour symbolism. As we discussed the issue of colour symbolism at Yabotech Centre, initially it seemed Iyabo had limited expert knowledge about colour symbolism but I observed she had a different understanding of coding of

colour symbolism. She discussed colour symbolism in relation to the colour preference of people according to their nationality (country) when she stated that “if you want to work with the Brazilians, they don’t like navy blue – they like red and orange. They like brighter colours.” I inquired of the colours most preferred by Nigerians. Iyabo said “in Nigeria, some people like You know white, green, white is our colour Green, white, green is our colour.” – reaffirming her claim about the symbolic connection of colours to the concept of nationalism and patriotism as Firth (1973) discussed in the interplay between the country flags’ colour and an individual within the country.

She continued shifting her focus away from nationalism when she said “Yoruba people like blue and different shades of blue, like navy blue and indigo, popularly called blue-black colour among dyers... and, today, when people celebrate wedding or other things – you know they will say they have a desired colour probably orange and blue – depending on the colour in vogue that year.” Iya Ewe and Bartho also discussed exclusively and more intellectually the concept of colour symbolism in textile dyeing from the views of individuals at Ayekale during the search for *elu* leaves.

Bartho, referring to elements of good designs on textiles, stated that “individuals chose whatever clothes they like, which shows individual differences”. He continued that “if there is no variety, you may not like it. The angels wear white; they may have become boring sef. But, we see someone wearing black, another red but with creative arts on the clothe. And then individuals choose cloth based on colour and design. This is what we call doing ‘ara’ (to beautify). We also do ‘ona’ (creativity) for history, to tell stories and to differentiate one deity from the other; this is a male deity and this is female. Then, colours go along with textile.”

As Bartho mentioned the essence of colours on textile, I asked him to enlighten me on colour symbolism in *adire* textile dyeing and among the Yoruba people of Osogbo. Bartho started his explanation with his experience in the art school. He said that “philosophically, the colours as I learnt in school tell who a person is. For example, if a person is fond of wearing red colour among the indigenous Yoruba people, the person can be taken for a Sango worshipper. I read in one of the Jehovah Witnesses’ books that the person wearing red colour could be a proud, aggressive, and a hot-tempered person. However, some people or cultures also believe red is flawless, it is power and also a sign of danger. And now, that same red in India once smeared on someone’s forehead indicates love for that person. But in Yorubaland, anywhere you see red, it signifies danger.”

Bartho cited with an example of colour symbolism among the Yoruba people: “in Yorubaland some things are kept together with a cloth marked red or anything red on it – if you take it or steal it, trouble may visit that person. Especially in the interpretation of dreams; if someone dreams and sees red pepper, the person is likely to be poor if care is not taken. That is colour. Green stands for something that does not go into extinction and also agriculture. White for instance, if you dangle something white in front of an elderly person (Iya Ewe interjected “it is peace”), fear grips the person – because the elderly will think that will be the last thing or type of cloth he/she will wear last to the grave.”

As Bartho narrated the Yoruba colour symbolism, he explained that “Yoruba people have just three colours: red, white and black”, echoing the response of other informants during the fieldwork – “the rest of the colours are creative imagination the white men” Bartho said. He continued that “*red colour is called jojo*” and Iya Ewe said a variant of red is also wine, called “*aso aluko else*”. Bartho explained the factors that were responsible for the limited number of colours among the Yoruba people: “we do not have many colours among the Yorubas. But, as we lose aspects of our

language or as aspects of our language go into extinction and Western cultures and ideas creep into our culture, we also lose the names of our colours. We have ‘pupa’, which is red. The ‘*oloogun*’ (herbalists) use red; it is also called ‘*osuu*’ (Iya Ewe said *osuu* is also wine). The colour of egg yolk is ‘*ofeefee*’ (yellow) or ‘*olomi osan*’ (orange), *eleru* is ash.”

Bartho observed that though the indigo colour and black colour are dissimilar, the Yoruba people classify them as belonging to the same colour family when he said “...indigo is not black colour; it is a mixture or a version of blue but blue is classified as black colour.” Iya Ewe, trying to give added information, said “even when something is green, Yoruba says it is black. If you cook a green vegetable in Yoruba, they will say ‘*o dudu werewere*’ (it is shining black)”. Bartho tried to clarify Iya Ewe’s response when he stated that “*Yoruba people do not differentiate between green and black*. From the dyers’ commentaries about colour, it is clear that the Yoruba people of Osogbo (and generally) recognize only three traditional colours – white, black and red – a tripartite, until the introduction of other colours as a result of the interaction with the other cultures especially the Western cultures.

Turner (1967) discussed the tripartite classification of colours – white, red and black – amongst the Ndembu and a wider comparison amongst similar traditional cultures in Africa, and around the world. Although the Yoruba society was not mentioned, it was evident from the informants that the tripartite classification of colour recurs with either the same meaning except for black – which is valued in some places and not in others. Agboola, the Ifa priest, affirmed Turner’s claim of tripartite colour classification and multiple meanings for black when I interviewed him at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Staff Club. Agboola stated that “black is a spiritual colour in Ifa religion that symbolizes knowledge”. He said “no wonder every good that will happen seems to happen after a black and dark situation – this is evident in the Yoruba aphorism *inu ikoko dudu*

ni eko funfun tin jade (A white pap comes out of black pots)”. Agboola concluded his comments on the symbolism of the black colour by expressing that “the most powerful thing in Ifa is *Orisa Odu* (god of Odu⁷⁵), who operates in the dark.” He pointed out that during a communion with the god of *Odu* “the Ifa priest locks the doors and windows of his house for darkness to exist in the house.” After all the entrances to the house are locked to have darkness in the house “the Ifa priest reaches for the power of *Orisa Odu* in the pot which becomes white when it is out of the pot.”

The publication by Lorenz (2006:4) on “*African Shapes of the Sacred: the Yoruba Religious Arts*” echoes the narratives of Bartho and Iya Ewe that “the Yoruba artists (dyers and pattern makers inclusive) possess a strong colour philosophy”; although this strong colour philosophy was not evident during my participation in the dyeing processes with the dyers and pattern makers in Osogbo. It was however clear from the interaction I had with the informants in the field that Yoruba women dyers use colours as symbols of individual emotions and personalities.

With respect to evoking emotions and personality by colours, Omatseye & Emeriewen (2012) in their article “*An Appraisal of the Aesthetic Dimension to the African Philosophy of Cloth*” examined the use of the African cloth as a metaphor to help define concepts of the people and their culture, social relationships, beliefs and their understanding of human existence. The authors focused on the general viewpoints of Africans about colour and clothes, specifically on the use of colours to evoke emotions and describe personality – an indirect reference to *adire* textiles, but not a detailed description. Omatseye & Emeriewen also claimed, like other scholars and informants, that black, red and white colours are prevalent and significant among African cultures. They stated that the colour of the cloth and its usage complement one another, and that colour

⁷⁵ *Orisa Odu* is a god in *Ifa* religion, which is usually kept in the pot. The god is summoned only when one needs a revelation or knowledge of any secret or hidden issues.

symbolism in Africa is better understood in the cloth usage and association. The authors seem to neglect indigo dyed-textile colour symbolism in their analysis – their justification for the neglect was the “inexhaustibility of colour symbolism as it pertains to cloth in the African culture”, and clothes have more value due to their visual effects and symbolic meaning (2012:65).

As I further engaged Iya Ewe and Bartho about colour symbolism as it relates to personality description among women dyers in Osogbo, Iya Ewe revealed that indigo colour is used in proverbial expressions to describe actions and consequences of human actions, personality and character but not necessarily used in textile dyeing. She cited some Yoruba aphorisms, which share relationships with indigo colour such as “*afefojiyán di imú re ládirẹ*” (A person who eats pounded yam with vegetable stew makes indigo dye of his/her excrement) (See also Owomoyela, 2005:457). Iya Ewe explained that this proverb refers to the consequence of human actions, just as the indigo colour is a consequence of certain production processes. She symbolically stated that “as regards human behaviour and the production process of indigo textile dyeing, every action has its own consequence.”

Bartho interrupted Iya Ewe, he said: “with specific reference to the indigo colour, it symbolizes royalty because the kings and their families as well as the chiefs and nobles among the Yoruba people are permitted to wear indigo dyed-textile”. Bartho emphasized the reference to royalty and pre-eminence with a Yoruba aphorism: “no wonder the saying “*aró mbe l’Óşogbo; àtátà èèniyàn mbe n’Íbàdàn*” (indigo dye is prevalent in Oşogbo; numerous and illustrious people are prevalent in Ibadan). Bartho indicated that the symbolic comparism of indigo dye and nobles showed the colour symbolism of indigo with royalty. It is noteworthy, to affirm that the indigo dyeing craft existed prior to the separation of Osun State (with Osogbo as the capital) from Oyo State (Ibadan as the Oyo State capital). It also showed Ibadan as the home for the nobles and the centre for

Yoruba politics in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods just as Osogbo was also the home for indigo dyeing craft and its production centre, which nobles from Ibadan crave to wear as symbol of a proper Yoruba person (as discussed in chapter 5). Bartho's connection of indigo with royalty accentuates the earlier argument that relates colour symbolism to personality of individuals, a group, as well as attributes of human character among the dyers in Osogbo.

Beier, Abiodun & Pemberton (2004) explored the symbolism of colour in *adire*, evident in the expression "cloth only wears to shreds". Aside describing the indigo market as a sea of indigo, they also point to the symbolic representation of indigo colour as representing royalty. Lisa (2004) in the review of Roland Abiodun's chapter in the same book by Beier, Abiodun & Pemberton (2004) submitted that "while cloth, specifically *adire* cloth, may deteriorate, but its deep associations with royalty and divinity lives on forever" as evident in the "divine (and environmental) imagery, which inspired the patterns on *adire*." Heidi J. Nast's article titled "*Women, Royalty and Indigo Dyeing in Northern Nigeria, Circa 1500-1807*" (2008) clearly explicated the indigo colour symbolism as it relates to the royalties in and near the ancient city-state of Kano in Northern Nigeria in Anne Walthall's book titled "*Servants of the Dynasty: Palace Women in World History*" (2008).

Nast stated that the indigo-dyed cloth and the patterns produced from the palace was initially produced for royal needs or circulated exclusively among royal circles – asserting the fact that indigo-dyed clothes are symbolic of royalty. On the other hand, she also explained that as a result of royalty's desiring to increase the exchange value of indigo-dyed cloth in Kano in the 16th century, the royalties encouraged the production of non-royal patterns and the capitalization of an industry catering to markets beyond royal confines. She concluded that the royalties also desired

to encourage the production of exclusively royal patterns that would allow political-spiritual values to persist (Nast 2008).

However, most of the informants in my ethnographic study stated that the transformatory nature of colour symbolism in indigo dyeing and in particular textile dyeing is apparent from the emergence of different colours in contemporary textile dyeing in Osogbo. The transformatory nature in textile dyeing symbolically represents the transformative meaning of *omoluabi* among women dyers in Osogbo. Madam Rafatu commented on a situation report from the news on the radio that concerned the new committee set up by the government of Osun State to restore discipline in secondary schools. Madam Rafatu said “it was the same government that pronounced no should be beaten in schools again, you see the consequences now – students beating teachers, bringing sharp objects like knives, cutlasses to secondary schools to harm other students belonging to opposing fraternities”. She continued: “those students are something else now – some of them wear charm rings to school, take cutlass to school. If you witness what the students did yesterday in Osogbo, it was their teachers that called the police to come to their rescue. They tear gassed some schools yesterday and they had started three days ago. They also dealt with their teachers... to them that is the contemporary meaning of *omoluabi* – being able to fight and conquer other people in every area of life with whatever means you possess”

Iyabo gave voice to Madam Rafatu’s comments when we were observing the mixture of contemporary dyes at her workshop, Yabotech, in Osogbo. She described contemporary textile dyeing as an evidence of the changing meaning of *omoluabi* among Yoruba people. She said “*omoluabi* in the contemporary times is evident in different (and complex) personalities of individuals in the society, just like the *adire batik* (contemporary dyeing). The contemporary dyeing has several colours such as yellow, grey, dark red and many others; other colours can be

developed as the dyer mixes two or more colours together – depending on the dyers’ deep knowledge and understanding of colours, colour mixtures, and colour symbolisms”. Iyabo expounded the *omoluabi* character as made manifest in a song by a popular Fuji genre artist, King Wasiu Ayinde Marshall 1 (KWAM 1):

<i>Baby mi show colour re</i>	My Baby please show your colour
<i>Ka jo ma rocking</i>	So that we can rock together
<i>Baby mi show colour re</i>	My Baby please show your colour
<i>Ka jo ma rocking</i>	So that we can rock together
<i>A jo ma lo’gba yi pe oo</i>	We shall spend the good lifetime together
<i>Lo’gba lo’gba</i>	Spend the time, spend the time

This song encourages everyone in the society to show their true colours – in the case of *omoluabi*, their true characters – without reference to any societal value or being distracted or demotivated by societal values. My earlier publication in 2014, which I adopted in chapter 6 to discuss the transformatory nature of textile dyeing – comparing indigo textile dyeing and contemporary textile dyeing to show the changing nature of the *omoluabi* concept among the Yoruba today – puts in perspective the disintegration of social cohesiveness in collective living into individualistic living among the Yoruba people (Akiwowo 1983:1986).

Akiwowo (1991) reflected on societal changes among the Yoruba people from the macro to micro society – specifically, individuality and communality as forms of living after the communal are broken due to increase in population. He stated that through the societal changes from communality to individuality, individuals are permitted to exchange ideas, and feelings, and it seems the real disposition of individuals in the society emerges from these societal changes. Thereby, based on these explanations, it is incontrovertible that personality and colours go together in the changes experienced in techniques of dyeing textiles in Osogbo. Specifically, it reflects the

societal change from a mono-coloured indigo-dyeing system to a multi-coloured synthetic cloth-dyeing. However, most of the women dyers were of the view that these changes are not limited to colours only but that they are also prevalent in the patterns created on dyed-textiles.

7.4 Texts and Images on Indigo Dyed Textiles among the Yoruba Women Dyers in

Osogbo

According to pattern makers and dyers, patterning making in *adire* and textile dyeing generally has also witnessed some transformations. During my ethnographic research, both pattern makers and dyers have one or more things to say about the texts and images on indigo dyed textiles. However, it is essential to note that most of the issues concerning pattern making and the materials for making motifs have been described in the earlier chapters (See Chapters 4, 5 and 6), especially the making of the cassava paste to design the motif on the textile. In this section, I focused on the images and texts on the dyed-textiles as well as the general transformation of the images and texts in textile dyeing.

Prior to the cloth pattern making with cassava paste with Mama Olugun; the pattern maker from Faleke's family compound – an Ifa divination family in Olugun, not far from the King's palace in Osogbo, there was the contentious issue of compensation (see chapter 1). After it was resolved, we re-established rapport to commence the pattern making. Mama Olugun commenced the patterning by making a 2 inch fold at the tip of the textile (Figs 32-34). She stated that the 2 inches folded part enables the dyer to pick the textile during dyeing; I also observed from my previous publication in 2010 that the folded 2 inches section serves as the part where the dyer stamps her signature. Thereafter, she later folded the whole cloth into a rectangular shape before starting her pattern making.



Fig. 32: 2 inch folded part of the textile



Fig. 33: Folding the whole textile for patterning



Fig. 34: A folded textile for patterning

After the folding of the textile for patterning, Mama drew 4 vertical lines and this continued to form 4 different spaces for a section of each fold (See Fig. 35 for the vertical and horizontal lines). I observed Mama Olugun drawing in some places 2 lines, some 4 lines and the top had 3 lines. I inquired about the basis for such unequal numbers of drawn lines. Mama Olugun replied that “everything is going to end up as 4 lines each”. I was curious to know about the symbolic representation of the lines and especially the 4 lines. I wanted to know why the lines should be 4 and not 5 or 6. This is because I assumed that numbers have symbolic meanings, bearing in mind, however, that the symbolic meaning may vary from one context to another.

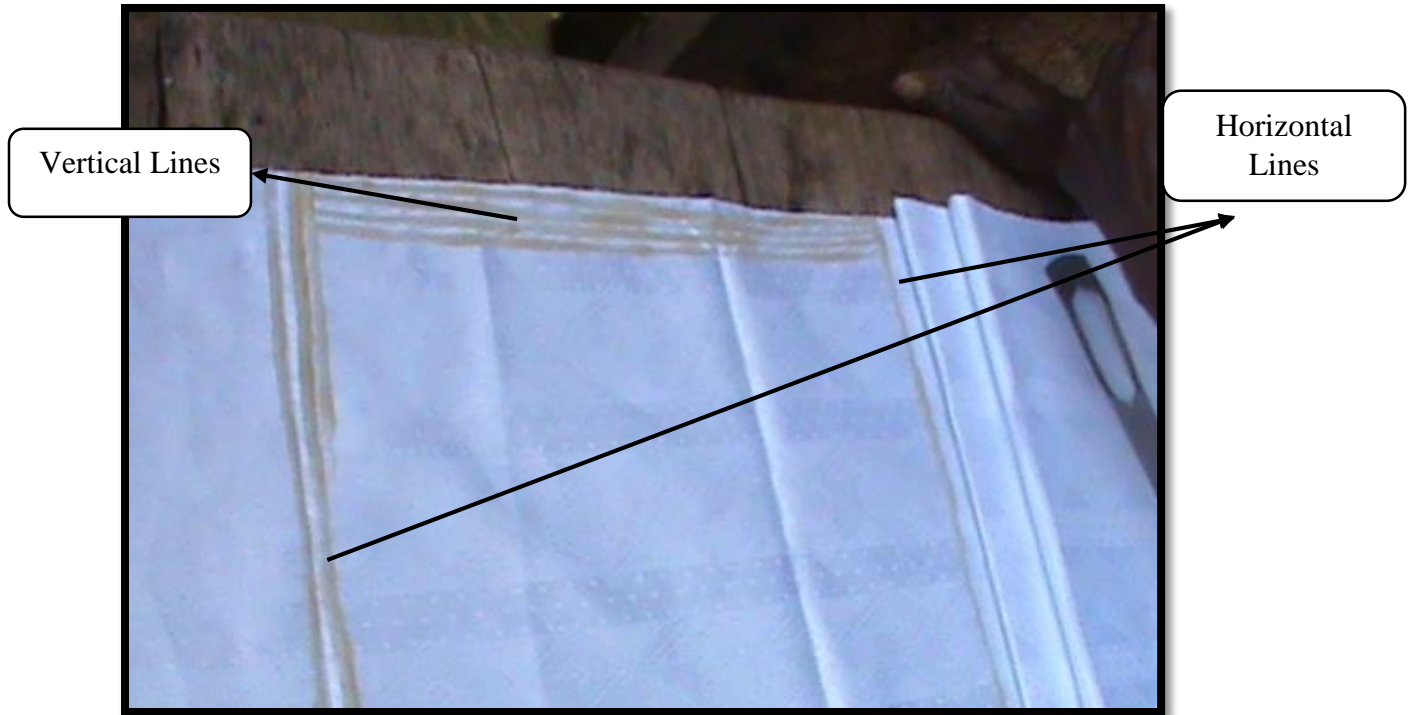


Fig. 35: Vertical lines on each fold on the textile

Mama Olugun described the lines thus: “if we want do ‘*obotere*’ (design in a square), it is one design. If it is only one design, once we have the horizontal line, there will be no more marking out in square again (See Fig. 36 for a square). On the other hand, the squares with two or three separate designs need to be marked out with line like this (pointing to the lines) while Fafunke, Mama Olugun’s granddaughter, Fasina, Ifa Priest and other children from the Faleke’s compound were gazing at the patterning. If it is only one design, once we have the horizontal line, there will be no more marking out in square again. As we design on, it will be one ‘*obotere*’ (motif or design) throughout. But, we mark out squares to avoid mixture of designs. We can call this motif *ore meji* or *ore merin* (two friends or four friends)” (See Fig. 37).

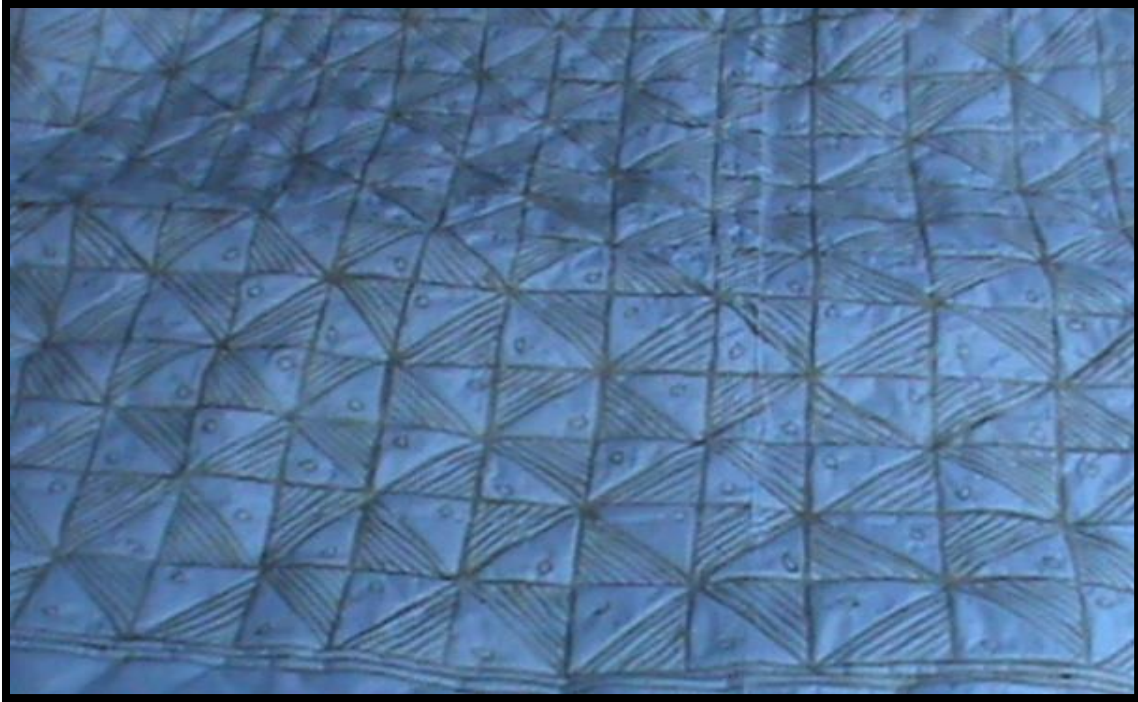


Fig. 36: A single design pattern called one Obotere

Mama Olugun also clarified that patterns like *ore meji* (2-patterned cloth), *ore meta* (3-patterned cloth) or *ore merin* (4-patterned cloth) (See Fig. 38), can also bear a specific name aside multi-patterned descriptions. But, I was not satisfied with Mama Olugun’s response to the symbolic representation of the number of lines on the patterned cloth. I had some reflective moments during the interaction about the symbolic meaning of the 4 lines and square among the dyers and pattern makers in Osogbo. I inquired about the lines and squares again; but, this time I voiced out my thought through a question that, as an elderly person, what does the number 4 have to do with the Yoruba statement “*igun merin agbaye*” (the four corners of the world)? I said “is it that women dyers are trying to interpret a particular worldview among themselves in Osogbo.” My reflective thought seems to reawaken the sleeping information giant in Mama Olugun’s heart. She exclaimed “*Yes o, Yes oo; that is the four corners that bounds the world*”.

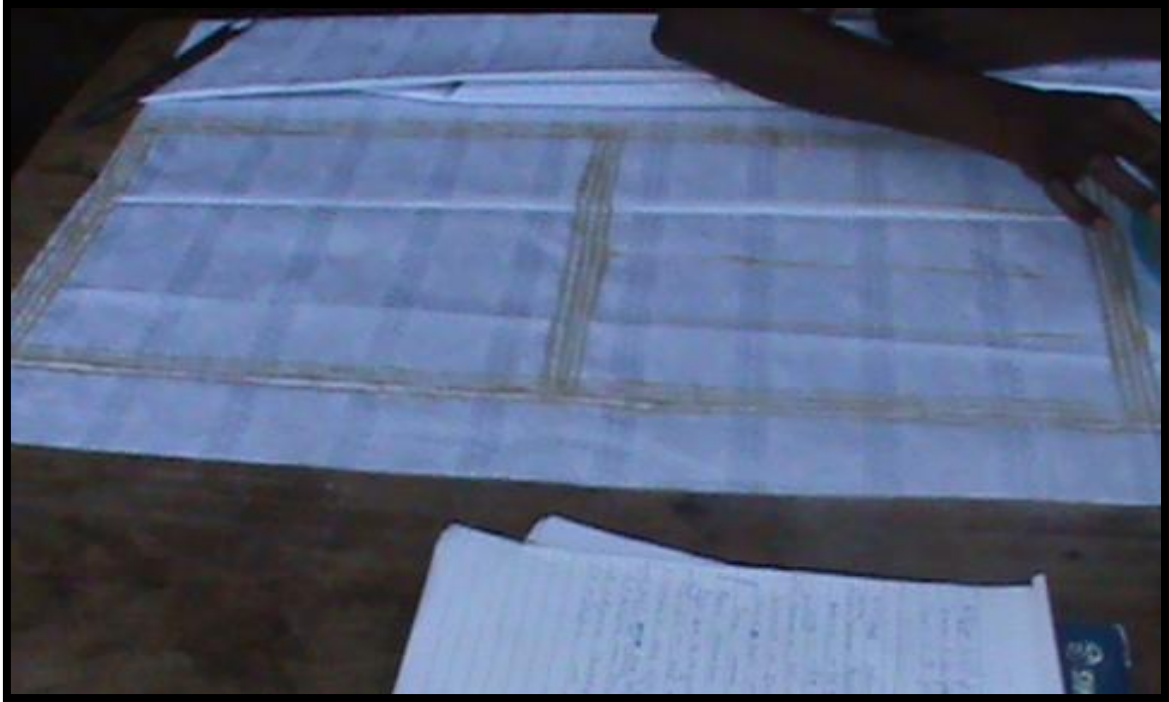


Fig. 37: A picture of two or more Obotere (separate designs in each square) in indigo textile patterning



Fig. 38: The full design on a textile called *Ore Meji* (Two-Patterns Dyed Textile)

Women dyers of Osogbo believe that the world is a four-cornered space and embedded within these 4-cornered locus is a space to insert the constructed worldview of a particular society or

cultural system – making it 4 cornered world and a spatial world (See Fig. 38). This could be likened to the four major cardinal directions of a compass: North, South, East and West, used to measure the direction of wind – a Western concept. However, this Western concept of 4 cardinal points are different from the Yoruba worldview, because the Western compass has ordinal or inter-cardinal directions such as Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and Northwest. Women dyers perceive the 4-cornered squares as a trajectory to their worldviews; in addition, they likened the changes in the world’s trend and worldviews to the changes in the direction of the wind – evidenced in the Yoruba aphorism “*biyi biyi laye yin; to ba yi s’otun ati yi s’osi*” (the world turns around; it turns right and it turns left).

The concept of worldview⁷⁶ – “an important concept in philosophy, philosophy of science and anthropology – one of the fascinating and frustrating concepts that have gained scholars’ attention and filled with ambiguity in its study and consequentially, has much confusion and misunderstanding – I call it multiple perspectives.” (Hiebert, 2008:13 and emphasis mine). One of these perspectives is that of Micheal Kearny in his book *World View* (1984). Wilk (1985) described Kearny’s work as a “serious and ambitious... attempt to summarize and contribute... to the thinking of worldview within the purview of three questions: What are some world-view universals that will serve as a basis for cross-cultural description and comparison? What are the forces that shape world views? What influence does world view have on behavior?”

For Kearny, he defined worldview as a “culturally organized micro-thought: the dynamically interrelated assumptions of a people that determine much of their behaviour and decision-making as well as organizing much of their symbolic creations ...and ethno-philosophy in general”

⁷⁶ Biene (2010) noticed that among the scholars (and in the literature), there is inconsistencies about whether the correct rendering is worldview(s), world-view or world view. As Biene (2010), I also choose the worldview for consistency in this chapter.

(1984:1). He sees it as a set of peoples’ “way of looking at reality. It consists of basic assumptions and images that provide a more or less coherent, though not necessarily accurate, way of thinking about the world” (1984:41). Like other scholars that have attempted to resolve the ambiguity in the concept of worldview, Kearny’s perspective according to Biene (2010) is critiqued for its need to account for the concerns for essentialism – which contemporary scholars recognized as its limitation. Despite this limitation, the concept of worldview has remained a fruitful construct and effective analytical framework that serves to organize a wide variety of sentiments, from material culture to political behaviour.

Also, Kearny’s analysis of worldview “has little place for change and conflict as essentials in human life” (Hiebert 2008), which women dyers refer to in the aphorism “*biyi biyi laye yin*” (the world is dynamic and transforming – never static). In the interview with Agboola, the Ifa priest in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, in chapters 3 and 4, indirectly explicated the Ifa religion’s view about worldview in the *Ona* (patterning) concept – a contextual meaning of the cardinal points among Yoruba people. He said “*we (Yoruba people) have 5 cardinal points as against the 4 cardinal points of the Western world: “the North - Iwaju Opon, the South - Ehin Opon, the East - Olumuru L’otun, the West - Olukanran L’osi and the Centre - Aarin Opon.”* Therefore, with respect to the transforming nature of worldview and patterns on dyed-textiles, women dyers and pattern-makers assert that the fact that patterns within each square or combination of squares are used to communicate worldviews points to the changing views during interpersonal relationships – shaped and changed by the changing and different responses to the changes in the environment. The transforming nature that is existent in patterns and patterning styles in textile dyeing is evident among dyers. For example, during the study at the Faleke family compound, aside the free-hand cassava paste designs, Fafunke (one of Mama Olugun’s granddaughters) said that “there are

contemporary ways to pattern your clothes such as the use of constructed patterned woods or Aluminium” (See Fig. 39 for the sample of the Aluminium pattern and Figs. 40-42 for the demonstration and outcome of the patterning). It seems this creative way of patterning *adire* textiles emerged as the dyers and pattern makers desired a higher production rate, hence mass production and higher income rate.



Fig. 39: The Patterned Aluminium Design of Mama Olugun



Fig. 40: Mama Olugun patterning with the aluminium style



Fig. 41: Supporting Mama Olugun during the use of aluminium patterning style

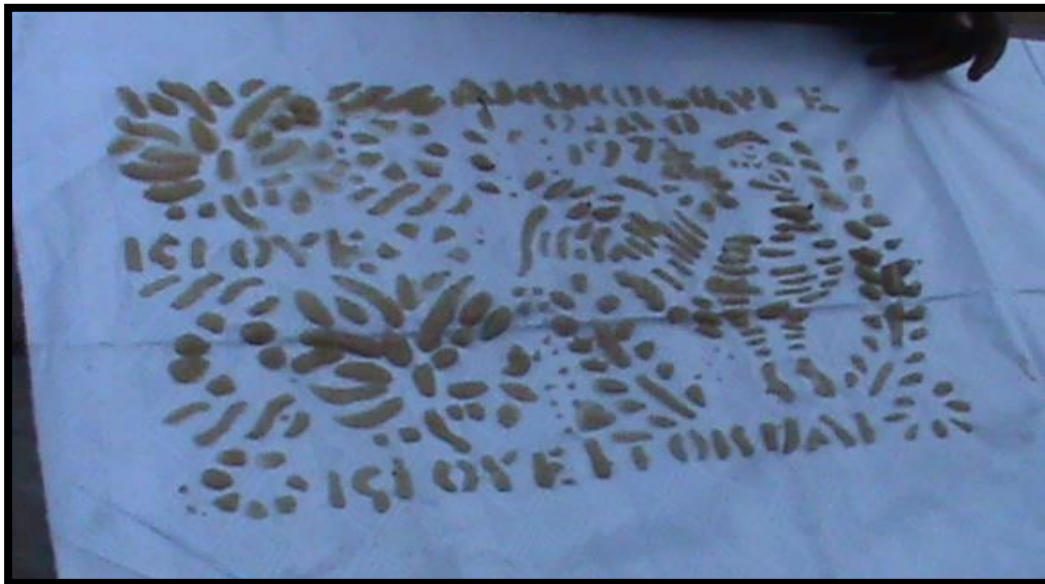


Fig. 42: The outcome of the use of aluminium pattern style

Fafunke contended that the old Aluminium pattern making style is better than the woodstyle design of the furniture makers for contemporary dyers – dyers using the chemical dyes (See Fig. 43). She said “the Aluminium pattern making instrument is 1.6k, this old pattern *‘jowo’* (brings in money) more than the wooden pattern type. This old one is more recognized than the new ones”. Recognition is given to the Aluminium patterns because it is better and stronger than the wooden

type. This makes Mama Olugun to appreciate it – especially for financial purposes. However, Mama Olugun complained about the loss of her Aluminium patterning instrument. She complained “I hung seven (7) of these Aluminium pattern tools on the wall – I can only see two... inhabitants of the family compound only have play around and do not care about it, because they do not know its value.”



Fig. 43: Wood patterned designs

Most of my ethnography respondents showed some of the Aluminium patterned styles in their workshop (See Figs. 44–45) except Awaru at the NCACG, who never showed or stated anything about these contemporary ways of patterning – at the centre I observed all the patternmakers use the free-hand indigenous patterning style. However, I realized he may know these contemporary patterning styles and also use it in patterning clothes but they may not be publicly encouraged at the centre to discourage laziness and to promote the indigenous patterning free-hand style.



Fig. 44: Aluminium pattern from Madam Rafatu of the Aka Family

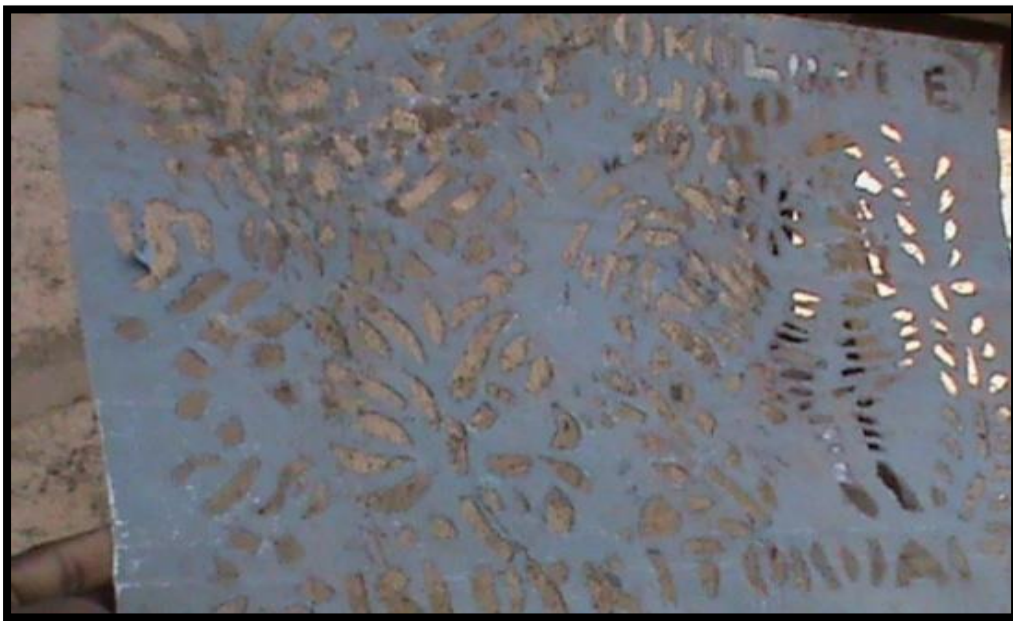


Fig. 45: Aluminium pattern of Bartho at Ayekale area of Osogbo

The use of these different patterning styles indicate the changes in Osogbo and its environment – socially, politically, and economically, which is also reflected in the motifs and its names (invariably the name of the dyed-textile) that I compared with Abeokuta motifs in my 2014

publication. In the *adire* communication power section of the paper, I showed that the differences in the dyed-textile products from Osogbo and Abeokuta lie not only in the prevalence of contemporary synthetic dyers but also in their decorative motifs and descriptive designs with their symbolic meanings and names.

In Osogbo, “the dyed-textiles are not just patterns, but representations of the environment and neglected things of life – the foundational themes for the Osogbo dyers” – such as *aarin omo* (in the midst of children), *adan* (bats) and *eye n’joka* (birds eating corns) (See Owoeye 2014:184-190). In Abeokuta, I observed their designs represent more of historical and political/socio-cultural events in a town or in the country – they may be abstract except explicated by the pattern-maker such as *Alake Waja* (Alake is dead), Senator Ibikunle Amosun, *Koko Below* (A dance style) and *Aso Ija* (cloth of fight) (See Owoeye 2014:190-194). The situation in Osogbo reflects these findings except that the old motifs are contemporarily renamed. *and events (political/socio-cultural) are different in each area.*

For example, Iyabo during our discussion on names of motifs at Yabotech centre highlighted some of the design names like “*Ibadan dun* (Ibadan is Sweet), *Idi Ileke* (Beaded Buttocks), eh, *Kojusoko* (Face the husband), *Alaari* (Big Comb for traditional hair weaving) and *Onigbako* (a culinary tool used to scoop staple food like *fufu*, a cassava paste food).” Iyabo made specific reference to these transformations when she said “when I looked at this pattern (pointing to *onigbako*) (See Fig. 46), I call it Coil, those old women dyers don’t know it as coil, they call it *Onigbako*. They use it to “scoop *amala* (a type of staple food common among Osogbo people) that is, to make into a round thing, the reason they call it *igbako*.”

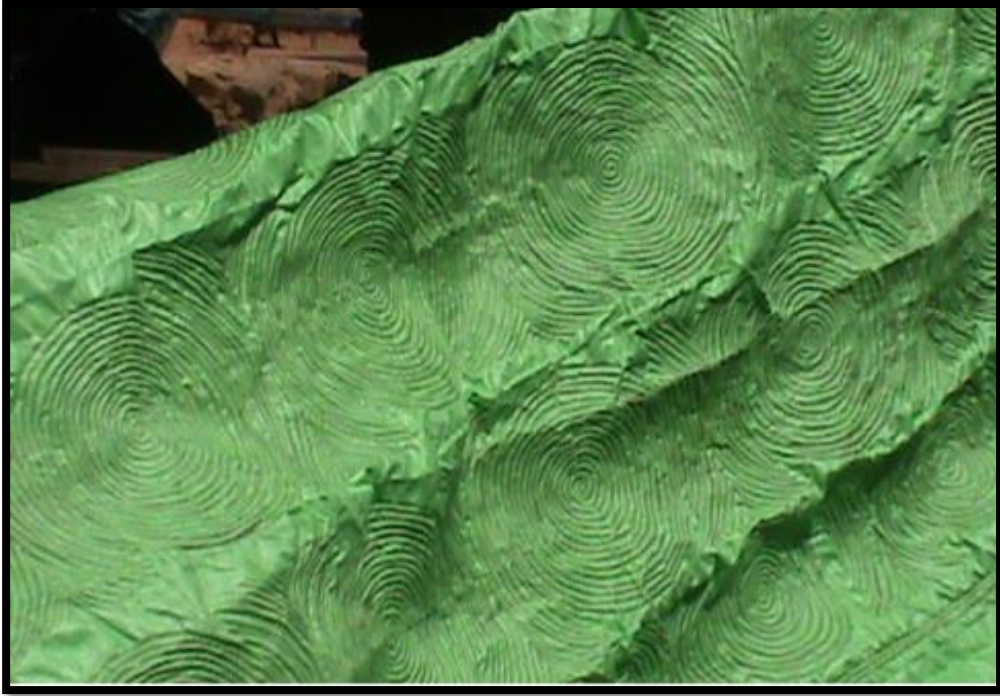


Fig. 46: The pattern called “Onigbako” (Scooping Wood) by the Old women dyers and Coil by the contemporary dyers.

However, I said Mama Olugun called it “plate or record of the olden days.” Iyabo agreed that if we comparatively examined the two motifs *“it goes with Coil or we can say it goes with Record too – those are the two that it resembles.”* Iyabo showed that the contemporary textile dyeing is like the indigo textile dyeing except that it is not limited to indigo colour only – it mixes several colours because *“onakan o wo oja, iriri aye pe orisirisi”* (just like there is no one in-road to the market, there are different experiences and worldviews in the world).

7.5 Conclusion

From this chapter, we discovered that the symbolic explanation of the indigo dyed textile involves not only the production processes but also the colour (indigo and other contemporary colours) and designs, which are important aspects of indigo textile dyeing processes. Although the concept of colour symbolism was not treated directly by Umberto Eco and even in the fieldwork, most of the

respondents shared personal experiences of colour symbolism. These experiences range from the profiling of colour likeness along ethnic or country positions to individual colour preferences. The relevance of the works of Beier, Abiodun & Pemberton (2004) and Nast (2008) was instructive in the metaphoric representation of indigo with royalty by the Yoruba in markets and women in the palace in Kano respectively. Therefore, this analysis evinced that colour and the pattern (and pattern names) reflect the behaviour, attitude and character of the cloth wearer or patron. Notably, these pattern names and meanings are not only different from one dyer to the other but they also points to the changes in the society such as technological, political, social-cultural, economic and environmental changes.

The concluding chapter, the next chapter of this thesis will be the major findings of my research, an ethnographic account of the politics by producers during the 2015 annual Osun-Osogbo festival and its implications on the production processes because, it is assumed in this research that production processes without consumption is an incomplete production chain. So, with specific focus on the effects of political economy of indigo-dyed textiles during the 2015 Osun-Osogbo annual festival – a festival believed to aid the production of adire-dyed clothes in Osogbo annually – I will address the effect of the political economy in Osogbo as well as strategies some women dyers use to promote their products during the festival. Finally, the last chapter will also address the significance of my research to the anthropological study of symbols and anthropological study of indigenous textile.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I present a summary of the main arguments in my research and its significance to the anthropological study of symbolism and anthropological study of indigenous textile. The concern of this thesis is to provide a “perspective projection” of the production processes of indigo textile dyeing as a way of constructing a symbolic meaning that will illuminate the indigenous conceptions in the art of textile dyeing among Yoruba women dyers in Osogbo, Southwestern Nigeria and what those symbols mean, particularly the transformatory nature of symbols and their colours in the production processes in Osogbo. The transformation of textile into indigo dyed-textile takes place within and through series of separate rigorous and multi-production processes involving the systematic production of the major raw material, indigo leaves popularly called *Elu*.

Beyond these transformations and the symbolic communications of dyed-textiles among the women dyers, I also explored the potential implications of my research on the revival of indigenous craft (informal) economy and creation of alternative sources of income to crude oil, the mainstay of Nigerian economy, for the revival and survival of the economy of Nigeria as well as the implications of the symbol-ridden adire-dyed textiles in the global world.

This thesis captures the narratives of women dyers in Osogbo and argues that the anthropological study of sociality aspects of most indigenous textile especially *adire* dyed-textile production processes has been on the margins for several reasons, some of which are the emphasis on archaeological artefacts and prehistoric technologies as well as the focus on sculpture due to the accrued economic advantages from archaeological artefacts being displayed in museums (See

Chapters 1 and 2). Though scholars were aware of the cultural importance of the adire-dyed textiles, the art form was classified as a minor art form focusing on descriptive aspects in comparison to other artistic expressions (Beier, Abiodun & Pemberton 2004 and Renne & Agbaje-Williams 2005). In this regard, this thesis challenged scholars on indigenous textiles because many works lacked an in-depth study on the indigo textile dyeing activities as a symbolic process of communication.

Research into indigo dyeing production have shown that symbols in the form of motifs or patterns mostly represent indigo-dyed textile products. These motifs may be highly symbolic either as social or political signposts, communicating events and the social world of the dyers (See Owoeye 2014). Since most of the dyers are women, I argued in this thesis as Gilman (2002) did in her publication that gender creates a distinction and acts as a modifying force in textile production and production processes in every society. The ethnographic evidence in this thesis clearly indicates how women dyers negotiate their positions in society, communicate their experiences of life and contribute to the conceptualization of indigenous knowledge creation with symbols.

Symbolism enables humans to make abstractions from aspects of nature to foster polysemic systems of meaning which reach beyond the boundaries of verbal discourse (Ellul 1978), it is ambiguous and arbitrary. In this ethnographic study, I have shown that though assigning meanings to symbols is arbitrary, they are fixed in their different contexts, showing that meanings are context and culture-specific; that is, the meanings of symbols are determined by cultural contexts; that is, determined by a people to suit their own particular cultural ends among these women dyers in Osogbo; they have shown certain cultural meanings such as the concept of *omoluabi* (a good and cultured person with socially acceptable character) – which points to Firth’s description of a

symbol as an instrumental value with an end in view (1973). In this regard, I used the perspectives of symbolic anthropology to understand how the social processes and structure are symbolized as evident in Victor Turner's work among the Ndembu people. I also used the narratives and humanistic anthropology adopted from Andrea Heckman's work among the Andeans in South America to reflect on narratives of the women in the indigenous *adire*-dyed textile technology(ies) as a dynamic social phenomenon examined as a process enacted through an agency, practice, and performance (Heckman 2003).

Furthermore, I specifically argued that scholars historically regard Yoruba women dyers in the context of their artistic contribution to the general discourse of the status and economic contributions of women within the political economy of Nigeria (Sudarkasa 1986:91-95). Yoruba women dyers mostly the aged, who are widows and uneducated, negotiate several eras within the political-economic history of Nigeria – the pre-colonial, slave trade, colonial, postcolonial, independence and post-independence periods. During these periods, women dyers and their craft went through unstable times – craftswomen depleted and the apprenticeship system disrupted. At other times, the craft appreciated in value, and then, the turbulent political economy affected the women dyers and the dyeing industry. Despite the neglect and turbulence in Nigeria's political economy, Yoruba women dyers and the art of indigo textile dyeing continue to exist – the women bringing out different motifs and designs (Chapter 2). The existence of indigo dyeing craft in the unstable political-economic history of Nigeria is linked to the Osogbo oral history in the myth of the goddesses of Osun-Osogbo and Iya Mapo which reveals the nature of symbols in the textile dyeing production processes – the symbolism of motherhood and its connections to patterning of a child's destiny during pregnancy – a symbolic representation of the patterning of a cloth prior to the dyeing performances of the *adire* dyeing production processes (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4). Re-

modelling the *adire* dyeing processes showed that the dyeing process is a symbolic representation of the social process of nurturing a child to have *iwa* (behaviour) and *ewa* (beauty) as very pronounced in the concept of *omoluabi* (a cultured and good person with socially acceptable character) in Yoruba thought system (Chapter 5).

In Chapter 6, I extended the symbolic process in *adire* textile dyeing as I argued that gender is a performing act in indigo textile dyeing – specifically, in the description of the alkaline water production processes – to reveal the implications of sexual relationships between couples – usually an unspoken and secret discourse among Yoruba women dyers in Osogbo. However, the transformatory nature of *adire*-dyed textile production processes forms the comparative analysis of the symbolic representation for the co-existence of the indigo dyeing process of alkaline water and dyeing with chemical dyes; a reflection of the transformations in Nigeria’s socio-economic and political environment. Still continuing with the transformatory nature of the indigo textile dyeing processes, Chapter 7 focused on colour symbolism, texts and images patterned on the *adire* dyed textiles. Specifically, the chapter explicated how changes in the use of mono-indigo colour to multi-colours in contemporary dyeing and the changing physical make-up of the texts and images on dyed textiles point to the metaphoric representation of the transformatory meaning of *omoluabi* among the Yoruba people. In the following sub-headed titles, I gave an ethnographic account of the politics involved in producers during the 2015 Osun-Osogbo annual festival. I also examined the possible implications of the symbolic communication of the *adire*-dyed textiles from the findings of the ethnographic study presented in this thesis in the present day Nigeria and global world.

8.1 An Ethnographic Account of the Politics among Producers during 2015 Osun-Osogbo Annual Festival

Whilst conducting my ethnographic research, I reconfirmed that it was in 2005 that the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared Osun-Osogbo grove as a World Heritage site. This declaration brought the annual Osun-Osogbo festival into the limelight; the festival attracts indigenes, visitors and tourists to the city of Osogbo every year in the month of August (often the third week of August) to celebrate the Osun-Osogbo annual festival. And during this period, most of the *adire* dyers are filled with joy because it is their period of high sales and patronage.

During the 2015 Osun-Osogbo festival, dyers complained bitterly because of the low-keyed celebration in the previous year (2014) as a result of the Ebola scare. The fear of the spread of the dreaded Ebola virus led the Osun State Government to restrict movements of non-indigenes and foreigners/tourists during the low-keyed celebration of Osun-Osogbo festival. The restriction on movement disrupted my ethnographic research and I had to wait for a year to conduct the ethnography (See Chapter 1). There was also a ban order on commercial activities during the restriction period such as the sales of dyed textiles, food stuffs and other items during the festival.

Despite these bans and restriction orders, some commercial activities held especially in shops situated at the front of residential houses, and several newspapers reported that the necessary annual rites and sacrifices were performed. There were medical experts at the ritual venues conducting medical screening for the devotees and attendees – distributing hand-wash liquids while security personnel barred those without gloves to enter into the grove.

Some devotees showed their displeasures to the policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria that suggested the cancellation of the festival for 2014 and the Osun State Government to cut short the

pomp accompanying the festival without any due consultation. According to the annual Osun-Osogbo Chief Festival Consultant, Mr. Ayo Olumoko in a Newspaper interview: “the Federal Government cannot cancel or put Osun-Osogbo festival on hold because of the issue of Ebola”. He complained about the insincerity of the political leaders at the Federal and State level, when he contended that “President Goodluck Jonathan was here (in Osun State) a few days ago to campaign for the Governorship candidate of Peoples’ Democratic Party, and the Osogbo City Stadium was full of people, without anyone talking about the spread of Ebola. Similarly, the State Governor who was also the candidate of the All Progressive Congress had his campaign at the same Osogbo City Stadium, and they were not considering the spread of Ebola there, despite the massive crowd that attended the rallies” (informationng.com 2014).

These political actions by the political parties under the guile of both the Federal and State governments’ policies represent transformations in the society from communal living to individualistic living – tilting towards personal gains than group gains. Akiwowo (1986) explicated this transformation as the breakdown in the mechanisms of cohesiveness and cohering in the society, which became inoperative in individualism and communalism – the cause of relativism in the concept of *omoluwabi*. For example, the adherents of Osun-Osogbo festival perceived the politicians and their gatherings for a political campaign, despite the restriction on human movements as lacking the attributes of *omoluabi* – disrespecting the traditions of the people and truncating the self-actualization processes of the adherents of Osun-Osogbo annual festival. However, the politicians actualized their purposes because there were no policies restricting movements of people or gathering of party supporters for the campaign rallies.

In 2015, as I prepared for the Osun-Osogbo annual festival, indigenes and especially *adire* dyers were in joyous mood for there were no crises to restrict movements of people during the festival.

I visited every ethnographic site, I noticed they were busy producing dyed-textile for sale at the festival ground. At one of the dyeing sites, Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery (NCACG), Awaru (the manager) stated that “we do not exhibit our arts and adire-dyed textiles anymore at the art exhibition ground organized by the Ministry of Arts and Culture either of Osun State or the Federal Government since we have a beautiful and welcoming gallery. Moreover, the centre is also involved in facilitating tourists into the country particularly for the annual Osun-Osogbo festival.” On the other hand, at the Yabotech Gallery, Iyabo submitted that “as members of adire-dyed textile association in Osogbo, it is the time of year that we dyers have *adire* exhibition at the Osun-Osogbo grove.”

Some weeks to the festival, as Iyabo (the owner of Yabotech Dyeing Centre) prepared her dyed-products for the art exhibition during the Osun-Osogbo festival, she was informed by some members of the *adire* dyers’ association in Osogbo of the change of venue – from the Osun-Osogbo grove to the Freedom Park in the Osogbo Railway Station – about 3 kilometres from the Osun-Osogbo Grove. The change in venue displeased the dyers. Iyabo angrily asked “how do they want the tourists and patrons of their dyed products to come all the way from the groove to the Railway station – it is unfair?”. Since the policy was by the Osun State Government, they had no choice but to abide by the policy.

As we walked to the exhibition ground, I approached one of the canopies which had the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) banner while Iyabo went to discuss with one of the members of the Osogbo Textile Dyers. I noticed that NCAC collaborated with the Osun State Government to have the exhibition named Nigerian Ethnic Fashion Fair – Osun-Osogbo. Coincidentally, the Fashion Fair is also to celebrate 40 years anniversary of establishing the NCAC institution.

The NCAC workers stood within and around the NCAC's exhibition canopy – directing and explaining to the tourists and exhibition attendees the use and purpose of some of their displays. Most of the displays were indigenous textiles such as *Aso-oke* (Yoruba hand-woven clothes) and some *adire* dyed-textiles. The Centre also had sculpted woods, wall art paintings, carved wood game like *opon-ayo* (an indigenous game made from wood), woven bags, ivory carved earrings, calabashes, some *adire*-dyed textiles, old pictures commemorating the annual festival and beads of different forms (necklaces and crowns) from different parts of Nigeria.

While observing the Council's exhibition stand, some of the Council's staff gathered to appraise their preparation for the exhibition. Most of the staff complained about the Council's lack of organization and preparation for the exhibition. The inadequate information concerning the exhibition venue caused some confusion among the Council's staff at the exhibition stand at the Freedom Park – some thought it would hold at the premises of the Council along Osogbo-Gbongan expressway while others had no clue of the venue. However, I overheard one of the Council's staff informing others not to bother themselves going to the Council's premises because “*it is a dry place and no one is there exhibiting anything*”. As I left the NCAC exhibition stand to meet Iyabo, I noticed most of the *adire* products' exhibition stands had no displayed banner like that of the NCAC for identification.

We (I, Iyabo and my Research Assistant) went to the other exhibition canopies, starting from the canopy close to the NCAC near the park's entrance gate. Without any doubt or words expressed, I witnessed low sales and patronage of *adire* dyed-textile at the exhibition ground during the Osun Osogbo annual festival. The declining sales and patronage of dyed-textiles during Osun-Osogbo is obvious in Chapter 2, where I discussed how the changing political economy in Nigeria has affected the clientele of *adire* dyed-textiles. In the current political economy, there is low income

due to the Federal Government of Nigeria's, heavily reliance on crude oil sales, but the glut in the world's crude oil business has disempowered the citizens as a result of late or no payment of workers' salaries. Because cities, as an important aspect of the political, are highly classed along the rich and poor dichotomy, prices of dyed textiles differ from place to place.

For example, an *adire* exhibition stand owned by Ayo (not real name) – richly dressed in one his art designed shirts – an indigenously sewn black armless shirt and a jean trouser. Ayo is an indigene of Osogbo; though he resides in Osogbo and displays his *adire* products every year, he travels to any part of Nigeria that hosts annual cultural festivals like Osun-Osogbo. His stand had wall paintings and *adire* products. Ayo explained that the prices of his displayed *adire* dyed products differ from one state of the country to another. The price difference from one state to another became the subject of discussion – I thought the prices of the *adire*-dyed products could deter consumers from patronizing the exhibition ground. Ayo pointed to one of his displayed art paintings and said “I sell these art paintings as high as six thousand naira (#6,000), seven thousand naira (#7,000) in Abuja and Port-Harcourt; although it was framed – the framing costs just a thousand naira. In Osogbo, the same art paintings without frames go for two thousand naira (#2,000).” I exclaimed, “ahhh, it is the wealthy that reside in Abuja and Port-Harcourt.” We both laughed, and I asked if he stays in Osogbo permanently. He said “I move from one place to another with my art products. You cannot compare the economy and people of Abuja with Osogbo – what do we have here in Osogbo? There is nothing here. Osogbo people cannot buy these products at the price sold in Abuja and Port-Harcourt due to the existing political economy in the state.”

The comments of Ayo show some common characteristics with the political economy of sari – the indigenous Indian women's cloth documented through ethnography by Malikuka and Miller (2002). Both indigenous textiles are common and familiar to the people in the society, which

communicates the prevailing political economy in the society. Also, the sales of sari and dyed-textiles at the market and the Osun-Osogbo annual festival respectively are determined by the political economy prevailing in both societies. The prevailing political economy is a function of the political class of the wearer and the familiarity of the products. The authors shed light on the familiarity of the sari wearers, which is strictly for Indian women and it moves between urban and rural contexts – irrespective of the your position or class – rich or poor in the society. Despite the seemingly classless view presented of sari wearers, the quality of each sari evidently points to the political class the wearer belongs in the society. To Ayo in Osogbo, the commercial hub status of the Abuja and Port-Harcourt in the north-central and south-southern parts of Nigeria makes the residents to purchase the adire-dyed textile at prices higher than Osogbo people. Notably, the sales of both textiles occur all year but the adire-dyed textile sellers have high sales during annual traditional festivals like Osun-Osogbo.

Concerning the *adire* market in Osogbo, especially during the Osun-Osogbo annual celebration, Ayo affirmed that “the consumption level of patrons is not as high as that of Lagos, Abeokuta and Abuja. The Osun-Osogbo period is sure the best season to sell adire dyed products and other art forms in Osogbo – artists have more sales in this period.” He continued that “this is the first time the art and adire-dyed textiles exhibition will hold at the Freedom Park in Osogbo. We usually exhibit at the NCAC office along Osogbo-Gbongan Expressway.” This statement differs from Iyabo’s information which had it that “the Osogbo dyed-textile association usually exhibits their dyed textiles at the Palace of the King of Osogbo.” Although a slight disagreement between Ayo and Iyabo ensued, it was resolved immediately when they both perceived that they belonged to different groups which had the permission to hold exhibitions in Osogbo.

Ayo specifically stated that he does not belong to the Osogbo Textile Dyers Association because he stopped his membership of the association several years ago. He said, “I stopped being a member of the Osogbo Textile Dyers Association when I realized the elders in the arts were hypocrites, cheated the younger ones and refused neither to mentor, give aid nor use their networks to aid young artists.” He explained how the elders cheated the young artists when he alleged that “they (the elders in the Dyers’ Association) will collect one's art work and dyed products pretending to do you a favour, sell it on your behalf and refuse to give the returns to the young artist.” Iyabo also confirmed the corrupt incidences and experiences; then, Ayo added: “every good thing that comes to Osogbo is hijacked by those elders – as you see them” – he hissed and made a gesture showing condemnation of the elders.

Aside the corrupt practices of the elders, Bartho during the ethnographic study which involved the search for Elu plant at Ayekale, reiterated the situation when he showed his anger toward the elderly artists who he said lack vision and use their influence in Osogbo to amass wealth through the association for their selfish interest. He cited the selflessness of artists like Bruce Onobrakpeya, who established an art village in Benin. Bartho continued that “the former King of Osogbo, (may his soul rest in perfect peace!) gave the Osogbo artists some hectares of land to develop into an artist village, but the elders have used that opportunity to enrich themselves – took money without developing the site.”

The allegedly inconsiderate attitude of the elderly artists and the younger artists’ experiences seems to underpin a clash of values among the artists in Osogbo. Lawuyi and Taiwo critiquing the assumption of Akiwowo in “*Ajobi and Ajogbe: Variation of Sociation*” that every group or society sociate [sic] or coexist [sic] for a purpose. Lawuyi and Taiwo (1990) that “individuals coexist when they join a bus (an association or group) but that does not suggest that they coexist for a

common purpose”. This clash of values between the young and elderly artists in Osogbo was attributed by Akiwowo to the increasing population and sociation in the society. However, there exists some form of class struggle based on material issues among the artists in Osogbo.

Against the background of this clash of values, the comment of Ayo about the low sales experienced at the exhibition ground and location asserts the importance of location in the sale of goods. The decision on location for any business “has a direct effect on the production cost and the business ability to serve the customers (consumption)⁷⁷. Most business owners seem to be aware that location contributes to the profit or loss during their sales. However, government executes policies that affect the location of businesses or the operational pattern of an existing business. And these policies are executed for several reasons: as a catalyst for the market and to change the social behaviour in that area, to stabilize the polity, to influence government spending, interest rates or trade regulations.⁷⁸

In the light of Osun-Osogbo annual festival, the State Government policies according to some government officials at the exhibition ground was as a result of security reports that some terrorists planned to attack specific areas during the celebration. Hence, the policy to decongest some of the market places, especially moving the art exhibition from the king’s palace in Osogbo to some kilometres away from the arts’ consumers and patrons. The policy annoyed art exhibitors especially the dyers and dyed-products producers because it caused a low turnout of patrons, hence low sales and low revenue for the art exhibitors during the festival. However, on the final day of the celebration, Iyabo and another dyed-products seller from Ilorin got sales stands by the Osun-Osogbo Grove Museum.

⁷⁷<http://www.tutor2u.net/business/reference/business-location-introduction>

⁷⁸<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/effects-government-policies-businesses-65214.html>

On the grand finale day, the street to the grove was jam-packed with cars and buses: several buses with Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC)⁷⁹ banners were packed along the street; so, there was a high traffic – okada⁸⁰ drivers hooting their horns, car drivers blaring sounds from their sound systems – cars of dignitaries blaring siren for the traffic to move faster. Traditional drummers provided music for the Osun goddess adherents and those walking on foot jostled for space on the road – all moving towards the groove with little room to manoeuvre on the road. Also, along the road to the grove were food vendors and petty art craft merchants on both sides of the road. Noticeably, there were some traders selling white plastic kegs (mostly 5 litres) for those who desired to take some of the Osun water.

As I approached the path to the grove, I noticed a police anti-riot tank, with some security personnel in it by the junction to the road to the grove. This confirmed the terrorists' threat – the reason for the government policy to hold the art exhibition some kilometres away from the grove or the king's palace. And besides the police riot vehicle, I noticed Osun goddess's adherents along the grove's path; they were in white attires – mostly *buba* (blouse) and *iro* (skirt) (the Yoruba traditional female dress – top and wrapper) and white coral beads attached to their hairdos. They sang praises to the Osun goddess and danced towards the grove. Some passers-by and onlookers stayed with these Osun goddess adherents, enjoying their performances. However, I had to leave the group to move quickly to the grove side where my research consultant (Iyabo) displayed her adire dyed textile products. And as I walked towards the grove, I called my research consultant,

⁷⁹The OPC is a Yoruba nationalist or a pan-Yoruba group in Nigeria formed by a group of Yoruba elites led by Dr. Fredrick Fasheun to actualize the annulled mandate of Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola (the assumed winner of the cancelled Presidential election results of June 12, 1993). In 1999, a faction led by Chief Ganiu Adams separated from the mother organization led by Dr. Fredrick Fasheun.

⁸⁰Okada is the a mode of transportation in Nigeria through motorcycle.

Iyabo, for direction. She sent one of her apprentices to lead me to her sales store at the grove's main entrance.

At the grove's main entrance, I saw Iyabo dressed in an *adire* dyed-cloth. She was instructing her apprentices to display her dyed products in a certain way beside the Osun-Osogbo's grove Museum. I inquired how she acquired a sales stand at a lucrative and privileged location – where all other persons for the festival were not opportune to do – beside the grove's museum. The woman dyer from Ilorin (about an hour drive from Osogbo) displayed her dyed products on the street in front of the grove's museum. She replied that “it is all about your connection and network... we are a family in Osogbo.”

As adherents of the Osun goddess and participants at the annual festival awaited the coming of the *Arugba*⁸¹ of the Osun goddess, people moved to and fro the grove. While I was observing the crowds, I also spared some glances for Iyabo's sale of the *adire* dyed products, which she displayed on the museum's wall. After a long period at the grove, I noticed that Iyabo had no sales even after the *Arugba* and the King of Osogbo had left the grove. Suddenly, a man came to Iyabo's stand and bought a ready-made *adire* cloth (shirt) which cost #2,000. The low sales infuriated Iyabo that she complained about the non-payment of salaries by the Osun State government, the general economic hardship in Nigeria as well as the new government led by minority party to the ousted political party, she said: “it was God that punished the people of Osun State when they voted a crazy person as their governor.” I said, “is he not your governor too.” She said “Noo, we do not belong to the same party oo – he is APC, and I am PDP – even the PDP people too are not serious *jare*.”

⁸¹Arugba is the virgin girl, which carries the Osun's big calabash and sacrifice to the River Osun. The Arugba is usually a virgin girl who may have been appointed as the *Arugba* as early as 5 or 6 years old.

In the same vein, the *adire* dyer from Ilorin walked towards us and started to complain about the economic downturn and lack of sales during the Osun-Osogbo festival in 2015. She said in a frustrating manner that “imagine, I came all the way from Ilorin in Kwara State, thinking I would make enough sales during the Osun-Osogbo festival, and here I am without a sale of any *adire* clothes.”

Iyabo referred again to the situation of civil servants in Osun state – non-payment of almost eight months’ salary and the alleged plan to retrench workers, especially teachers. I noticed that the political-economic situation had affected the *consumption* of *adire* in Oshogbo due to non-payment of salary. This points to the effects of wealth and poverty on the abilities of consumers to deal with their different forms of consumption. For example, Selby, Murphy and Lorenzen (1990) cited in Miller (1995) stated in their study among the Latin American living in slum households that in the times of high inflation and falling income period, consumption decisions were salient and exposed the processes.

However, a significant incident I noticed during the ethnography on the last day of the festival was the passion of the adherents and participants to collect the Osun water from the Osun river. I looked on as multitude of people move to the river with their 5 litres white plastic kegs because myth has it that the Osun river has power to heal, to enable women, especially barren women, to have babies and the power to make one to prosper. This suggests that most political economic analyses neglect discussing the structural weaknesses of non-Western communities or developing countries that experience more poverty than other developed countries. Aside the neglect of the structures of non-Western communities, the political economy fails to incorporate culture into the analysis of the political economy, which the political economy of consumption accurately pointed out in this chapter. Some attendees focused on the getting water from the Osun river, some other attendees

were attracted to the tourist aspects of the Osun-Osogbo festival, specifically organized by Nike Okundaye-Davies.

Though I never had the opportunity to meet face-to-face with Nike Okundaye-Davies during the Osun-Osogbo festival, I observed that the Nike Okundaye-Davies' gallery seemed to be the only *adire* dyer that attracted high social activities despite, the apparent downturn in the economic situation. Her gallery, NCACG has turned the Osun-Osogbo annual festival to a tourist attraction and leverage on the festival to facilitate tourists to experience the Osun-Osogbo festival. While they tour the cities in Nigeria, they patronise her galleries in Lagos, Osogbo, Abuja and Kogi States. Awaru, the manager at the Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery (NCACG) that several performances such as traditional dances, textile dyeing performances, bead making and the tour of the art products in the gallery are conducted for the tourists – these performances create a cultural celebration atmosphere for the tourists and dyers at the centre.

After the exhibition and fanfare of the Osun-Osogbo festival, everyone relived its memories . For the women dyers, they await another Osun-Osogbo festival with high hopes that the political economy will be better, encouraging and favourable to them. By understanding the political economy around the production and consumption of *adire*-dyed textiles during the 2015 festival, this ethnographic account has highlighted the inherent logic underlying the belief that production is not the only key aspect of any economy – production without consumption is void in any political economy. In the next section of this concluding chapter, I examined the possible implications of the symbolic communication of the *adire*-dyed textiles from the findings of the ethnographic study presented in this thesis in the present day Nigeria and global world.

8.2 Re-examining Adire-Dyed Textiles in the Global World: A case of Decolonization of

Knowledge

During my stay in my friend's house, he tuned the television to the Cable News Network (CNN); fortunately, a documentary titled "*Explore the Culture of the Yoruba*" on the station's "Inside Africa" was being aired. The focus was Osogbo town – my ethnographic study location. The documentary had two series: "*On the Brink: Inside the project to Save Osun Osogbo*" (Purefoy 2016b) and "*Centuries-Old dye tradition makes a comeback*" (Purefoy 2016a).

The first series "*On the Brink: Inside the project to Save Osun Osogbo*" was an eleven minutes documentary that projected the Osun-Osogbo shrine as a pivotal and spiritual place for Osun goddess worshippers to pay tribute – through their prayers and sacrifice in order to achieve any of their desires. However, the focal point of this particular section of the documentary was Susanne Wenger's arts in the grove – which faces the threat of decay or dilapidation. The documentary recognised Wenger's (also called "Adunni Olorisha") contributions to the Osogbo arts (See Chapter 2 for her influence on Osogbo arts). It also recognized how her legacy around the grove is one of the elements that kept Osun-Osogbo grove standing and recognized as a World Heritage site in 2005. However, the death of Susanne Wenger in 2009 made the "shrines and sculptures to feel the effects of nature and time" because few people are involved in the restorative process. The few involved in the restorative efforts are also on the decline as most of the team members that maintain the grove "are aging and their successors are too few." In this TV documentary, I was captivated by the statement of Robin Campbell (a member of the Susanne Wenger Trust) who stated that "most of Susanne Wenger's art speaks to people in different ways" and he called the art "a model representation of (African) Modernism" on the continent of Africa.

The concept of “Modernism” brought to the fore the decolonization of knowledge or the concept of knowledge decolonization, which underlay my thinking as the second part of the series “*Centuries-old dye tradition makes a comeback*” was being transmitted. This part focused on indigo textile dyeing in Osogbo – a “fashion that is over a century year’s old makes a comeback”. The documentary focused on Nike Okundaye-Davies, the proprietress of one of my study sites, Nike Centre for Arts and Culture Gallery (NCACG). Nike’s workshop in Osogbo “is one of the few places in Nigeria that *adire* is thriving” in Osogbo and Nigeria. In the documentary, Nike reiterated the communicative power of the *adire*-dyed textile by (women) dyers, and she stated that the *adire*-dyed textile “is not just an ordinary textile, it is a way to communicate to the government, society and your whole family” – decolonizing the knowledge around *adire*-dyed textile as an ex-centric site – “a part of the current theoretical moment conditioned by an expansion of space and multiplication of sites where various forms of theorizing takes place and are being acknowledged as such” (Harrison 2016:Abstract).

Concerning knowledge decolonization, I was a panel member with Faye Harrison in 2015 during the 114th Annual Conference of American Anthropologist Association where she spoke extensively about defamiliarizing collaborative projects and specifically on the need to decolonialize knowledge. She stated in her recent article that “theory-formulation landscape has been restricted” in anthropology by the familiar, one-directional and colonial interaction of the West and the Global South, which has led to the neglect or disvalued indigenous knowledge foreign to the Western countries (Harrison 2016:161). She argued that scholars need to “trouble the boundaries of the established tradition by daring to envision anthropology becoming a vehicle for decolonizing knowledge and its applications in the world” (Harrison 2012:50).

In this thesis, the decolonization of knowledge movement has enabled me to “claim space within anthropology” (Harrison 2016:168) for Yoruba women dyers to speak for themselves – using the processes of indigo textile dyeing as a metaphor for the concept of “*omoluabi*” rather than for the western scholars (Ulli Beier and Susanne Wenger) who contributed in a mostly descriptive way, constructing the process without indigenous meanings. The basis for adopting the humanistic anthropological perspective in this thesis views the social actions of the women dyers’ agency, practice and performance as part of a movement towards the decolonization of anthropological knowledge. This movement also calls for the “democratization and decolonization of epistemic space” (Harrison 2016:161), which is necessary so that “the historically-peripheralized voices can also participate in conversations that shape the directions of theoretical formulations” and “optimistically envision an anthropological universalism of all voices...not a universalism under restrictive hegemony” (Ibid 2016:168).

As the same broadcast was coming to an end, Nike showed that the *adire*-dyed textile is a patterned cloth capable of communicating some messages in the society (See Owoeye 2014) but she also expressed her passion which goes beyond the communication function of the dyed clothes – a passion to address the disparity and inequality in the society by empowering the disadvantaged women in the society through the *adire*-dyed textile production and to “revive the practice and production of the ancient craft of *adire*”. In other words, Nike empowers women through the symbolism and communicability in *adire*-dyed textile because she believes the foremothers in the craft used it and other indigenous crafts to sustain their families’ economically. And, neglecting these crafts suggests the disempowerment of Yoruba women especially those with no formal education. So, these stimulated her desire to revive the ancient craft of *adire*-dyed textile by

creating awareness amongst the younger generation and an understanding of decolonized knowledge of the dyed textile among Yoruba women dyers.

The ability to rethink and engage through this thesis the symbolic power of *adire*-dyed textile indicates that there is no denial of the persistent power of the *adire*-dyed textile and women dyers' creative instinct to negotiate different eras in the history of the world's political economy. Probably, this has shown us (as human beings and Africans), the power of the culture of a particular people and the power of women as keepers of heritage and cultures. As Nike said, "I am doing this (*adire* dyeing) because it is our culture, it is our heritage, and we should not let it die – not to depend on the modern style of using chemical (synthetic) dyes". In other words, as long as indigenous craft and their narratives are viewed as a process – a transformatory process – a dynamic social phenomenon through the power of agency, practice and performance, then humans will be proud as Nike and other women dyers were proud to say "my history is my heritage."

Appendix

Appendix A: Yoruba myth of Osun amongst human beings

1. According to Beier (1969), Osun was one of the wives of Sango, a king in Oyo Ajaka in the 17th Century. When Sango was banished from Oyo because of his high-handedness which eventually led to the rebellion against him, he took his wives, children and followers with him while leaving. On getting to Koso village, he was deserted by many of his wives and followers, leaving only Osun with him. Sango consequently, hanged himself on Ayan tree and Osun was said to have changed into a river in Osogbo, where she was deified because of her support and loyalty to her husband. She had since then been worshipped as a goddess of fertility.
2. Another myth about the origin of the river also claims that Osun was the wife of Sango, the powerful Alaafin of Oyo. It was then the common practice in Oyo that the Oyomesi (the king-makers) were feasted by the Alaafin during meetings. Since the King's wives were accorded the duty of preparing the various dishes, Osun and Oba were responsible for the preparation of the food. As the custom was and still is, in Yoruba land, the King's wives prepared the food in turns. However, it was discovered that whenever Osun prepared the food, the Oyomesi would eat just a little, because the food was not palatable. But when Oba prepared the food, it used to be finger-licking. Osun's action was not only embarrassing, but shameful because of her status as the senior wife of Sango. Hence, she put the shame aside and went to Oba to teach her how she used to prepare her food. Oba seized this opportunity to discredit Osun and told her a lie that whenever it was her turn to prepare the food, all she used to do was to cut a small piece of her ear and cooked it with the soup. Osun believed her story and when it was her turn to prepare the food, she cut a small piece of her ear in the soup. When the meal was served, the Oyomesi (the king makers) saw the pieces of human ear in the soup, and they mistook it for poison. There was pandemonium in the palace as they turned the food upside down. The shame was too much for Osun and she committed suicide by turning herself into a river after declaring her enmity with Oba who also became a river after the death of Sango. The myth proves the enmity between these two rivers to this day and hence the song: *O da 'ye ojo miran k'a to f'omo Oba f'Osun* (It is only in another life time that Oba's child can be betrothed to Osun's child).

Appendix B: Yoruba Myth about Osun at creation of the earth

3. When ‘Eledumare’ (God) started sending people to earth, Osun was among the first 16 ‘*irumales*’ (gods) – 15 men and Osun was the only female, whom God gave powers to make the earth. They left heaven for the earth, but the men conspired against Osun saying why should they invite or discuss crucial issues with a woman; so, all that the men did became successful. However, Esu (Satan not the Christian Satan) noticed the conspiracy – decided to pay Osun a visit because he was sympathetic towards her. Esu made Osun realise the potent power she possessed in her body (vaginal menses) that could make unsuccessful the plans and actions of the 15 men. He told her that whenever the men sacrificed at any junction, she should use the vaginal fluid – the female authority and power within her body upon the sacrifice to destroy it and make their sacrifices unacceptable to God. So, Osun discharges her vaginal menses to make the men’s sacrifices ineffective – disrupting, disorganizing and causing chaos on earth for the men. So, the gods went back to God to complain about the disruption on earth. God asked them how many were sent to earth? They replied 16. God said where is the female and they said in derision ‘*obirin ateyin to*’ (female that urinates from the back and stains their thighs unlike the men), we never consulted her. God said ‘*Ahhh, e lo fi imo je t’osun ki e le ri ile aye se*’ (Go and seek wisdom from Osun so you can live purposefully and effectively on earth). So they pleaded with Osun and consulted her before any action was taken. So, whenever the men wanted to do anything, they worship or praise her to seek counsel from her. The reason *ifa* priest says “*ni gbogbo a wa ti a pe ni imo, a fi imo je ti osun*” (among all wise people gathered here, we recognize osun’s wisdom). More reason for the *Ifa* priest to praise Osun after his *ifa* incantations, they praise Osun too because without it the *Ifa* oracle won’t be successful. So, they realized that God also gives them power to do well and achieve on earth as one of the 16 gods sent from heaven.

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