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**ADAPTATION OF SATO DRUM SYMBOLS AS DESIGN FOR FABRIC  
DECORATION USING STUDIO PRACTICE**

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**Abstract**

*Fabric decoration is the process creating and preparing designs for fabric production. These designs can either be painted or drawn and then manipulated using CAD program which is computer- aided drawing program or created digitally using original art. This study focused on the Adaptation of Sato drum symbols as design for fabric decoration using studio printing technique. The study adopted qualitative research method using practice-led research technique in the textile studio. Five (5) motif designs were created using CorelDraw graphic design suite. CorelDraw graphic suite was used because of its flexibility for colour separation. The materials used are screen printing mesh, textile ink, fabrics, squeegee and exposure unit among others. The study established the possibility of producing a well decorated fabric that can be commercially acceptable and also serve as a means of documentation of our traditional drum. It was therefore recommended that textile designers should engage in studio production of our traditional motif for fabric decoration. This enhances the production of original traditional fabric print that is readily available to the end user.*

**Introduction**

Over the years, different culture and value system have thrived in Africa notwithstanding the adverse effect of colonialism on the people's cultural practices, among Africa's rich heritage is a medley of traditional Art skills that have evolved into modern day sculpture, wood carving,

metalwork, pottery, textile art, painting, and other visual culture. African art is multifaceted and sometimes occur in form of aesthetic symbols by which people record important occurrences. According to Agujiobi (1998), motif and symbols are part of culture which refers to collective experiences which may emerge to explain creation and natural phenomena handed over from generation to generation. These traditional symbols are mostly abstract interpretations of object or animals found in our environment. Before the advent of formal education, traditional symbols, motifs, and images served as a logographic means of communication, so it is common to find inscriptions on everyday utilities. Illustrations from such pictographs credited to the aboriginal people of Southern Africa were inscriptions found on rocks at various prehistoric sites in the region. Others include ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, *Adinkra* from Ghana, *Nsibidi* from Nigeria, *Via* from Liberia, the liturgical *Geez* scripts from Ethiopia and others (Kreamer, Roberts, Harney & Purpura, 2007). This indicates that African art have contributed immensely to the world of art which remain prominent in the works of contemporary artist.

Symbols are often the basis of all human understanding, and it serves as a vehicle of conception for all human knowledge. These symbols are not only used for beautification but also to maintain the cultural identity of a group of people and portray one's ethnicity. Symbols also represent objects that encapsulate evocative messages conveying traditional wisdom, aspect of life, or environment. Kwesi (2012) agreed that symbols are one of the means for supporting the transmission of complex and nuanced body of practice and belief. Symbols are used to facilitate understanding of the world in which we make judgment. In this way, people use symbols not only to make sense of the world around them, but also to identify and cooperate in society through constitutive rhetoric. Nigeria like many African cultures has a plethora of artistic heritage which results from over 300 ethnic groups within the country. These diverse ethnic groups have their

unique form of drum identification, protection, rituals, and healing, show of valour and honour or just for aesthetic appeal. Traditionally, these drums represent the soul of each community they are found in, and they are also employed as tourist attractions in various ethnic groups, promoting and exhibiting Nigerian heritage and culture all over the world.

Traditional drums are known to be the heartbeat and the soul of most African communities. Drums have been an intrinsic part of African life for centuries and for countless generations and it is seen as an ancient instrument used to celebrate all aspects of life. In Western culture, drumming is most often about entertainment while in Africa, drums hold a deeper, symbolic, and historical significance. They herald political and social events, attending ceremonies of birth, death, and marriage. Drums are also used to raise alarm or a call to arms thus stirring up emotions for battle and war. They spark courtships, they herald home- coming and going and they accompany religious rites and rituals as well as calling up ancestral spirits (Bronwen, 2010). According to Amegago (2014), African drumming stating that drums are used in summoning members of communities to gather for events and played during fundraisings by individuals, groups, and organizations. It was further explained that traditional drums can also inspire passion, excitement and even cause trances, a momentary loss of consciousness to either the drummer or the listener. It also symbolizes and protects royalty and is often housed in sacred dwellings serving as a means of communication and entertainment to essential characteristics of community life.

This paper was motivated through the observations of the various traditional symbols and designs found on the Sato drum of Badagry Lagos State. The use of Sato traditional symbols as motifs in textiles will go a long way in saving the history behind those symbols for the upcoming generations. The desire to adapt the Sato drum symbols as design for fabric and apparel design can be explained in number of related ways which include an interest to explore motifs and symbols

found on the Sato drum, and as an adaptation of the cultural identity and practice of the people of Badagry. Hence, this study seeks to explore Sato traditional symbols as textile prints for contemporary fashion through apparel design which will help to sustain the traditional symbols. The researcher intends to incorporate the Sato symbols as motif designs that can be used for fashionable apparels.

## **Literatures Review**

### **Textile Printing**

Textile printing is one branch of textile wet processing technology. It is a process of transferring design to fabric by applying pigment on the surface of textile materials to form patterns. Printing is carried out after the pre-treatment of fabric or after dyeing of the fabric. Kasikovic, Vladic, and Novakovic, (2016) described printing as a localized process of applying colourant to a the selected arears of a substrate. Miles (2003) also defined textile printing as a process of bringing together a design idea, one or more colorants, and a textile substrate (mostly fabric), using a technique for applying the colorants with some precision. In printing, colors are applied only to specific areas, thus introducing various colors, patterns, and designs to the textile fabrics (Kasikovic et al., 2016). However, printing can be considered as a specialized dyeing technique where the concentration of dye is higher, and the dye medium is thick and viscous to limit dye migration on fabric, permitting formation of a design or pattern (Needles, 1986). In textiles, different techniques and various pigments are used in creating patterns on textile materials. In properly printed textile fabrics, colors are bonded with the fiber, so as to resist washing and friction. It is important to note that in printing, pigments only remain on the surface of a fabric while dyes penetrate the fabric yarns and become affixed with the fibres.

## **Screen printing**

Screen printing is a simple direct printing process that developed from the principle of stenciling whereby a pattern results on the textile substrate from passing pigment through open areas in a paper or metal sheet while non- printing areas are covered by stencil. This process also involves forcing the printing paste with a squeegee through the openings in a fine or open screen mesh while blocked areas prevent the paste from passing through the screen to the fabric, thereby creating the desired pattern. One colour is printed at a time, so several screens can be used to produce a multi-coloured image or design. Each colour to be used in a multi- coloured design requires a separate screen. The screen for each colour should have the correct registration of pattern to avoid smearing previously printed areas. Traditionally, screen printing is also known as silkscreen printing because silk was used in the process, and it is also known as flat screen printing. Currently, synthetic threads are commonly used in the screen-printing process. The most popular mesh in general use is made of polyester. There are special-use mesh materials of nylon and stainless steel available to the screen-printer. There are also different types of mesh size which will determine the outcome and look of the finished design on the material. Screen printing is believed to be one of the oldest forms of fabric decoration. According to Sheng and Angela, (1999), screen printing was largely introduced to Western Europe from Asia sometimes in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century but didn't gain large acceptance or use in Europe until silk mesh became more available for trade from the East thus a profitable outlet for the medium discovered.

Onoja (2014) also described screen printing as an art form which involves the creation of images by forcing ink using a squeegee (a flat rubber tool) through a fabric or silk screen onto the surface to be printed. Stencil attached to the screen prevent ink from passing through where no image is desired. Screen printing is both an artistic technique and a production printing method.

## **Sato Drum**

The Sato drum is generally believed to ward off evil, wherever they are beaten within the community. For instance, when prayers are offered to a deity in the community, the drums are beaten for entertainment, during cultural and traditional festivals and to announce the ascent of the new moon. So besides adding glamour to events it also does some spiritual cleansing in the community. The Sato helps to maintain peace and tranquility among the people, Sato drums does not only represent a religious symbol but also political authority. Hence, it commands both social and political influence on the people. It has since become a symbol of expressing the peoples' feelings and eternal cultural truths. Also, prayer requests are made to sato for material blessing, protection, good yield, request are also made by pregnant women for easy birth and barrenness prayer for children seeking women.

According to Akin (2018), from his interview with the drummer troupe leader "Houngbe", he explained that the Sato drums which are molded in twin form are treated as sacred by the people of Badagry and its environs and the reasons are not far-fetched. He also described the Sato drums as a royal musical instrument, adding that one of the uniqueness of the drums to the people of Badagry is the twin forms of the drums which depict humanity. Houngbe further explained that apart from the usefulness of the drum as a peace and cleansing instrument, the reptiles inscribed on the drums depict the conquering prowess of such drums.





*PLATE 1: THE SATO DRUMMERS TROUPES*

*SOURCE: BY EIEKE BOLAJI, (2017)*

### **Methodology**

The study adopted qualitative research method using practice-led research technique in the textile studio. Four (4) different digital designs were created using CorelDraw graphic suite. CorelDraw is a vector application with a user-friendly interface and automatic colour separation feature. The designs printed have at least four (4) separated colors. The following materials were used for this research white cotton fabric, wooden mesh, printing chemicals, printing inks of primary colors, dyes, and dyeing agents. The screen-printing process was done painstakingly to ensure accurate colour registration for all the designs.



## **Discussion**

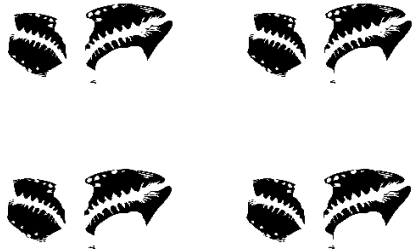
Screen printing in textiles involves the application of colors on a fabric by impressing colors through the open parts of an exposed mesh using a squeegee. The following materials were used for the simulation process.

1. Wooden frame
2. Silk Screen
3. Photo stencil Emulsion
4. Sensitizer
5. Squeegee
6. Printing inks
7. Dye pigment and dyeing agents

## **Design Creation**

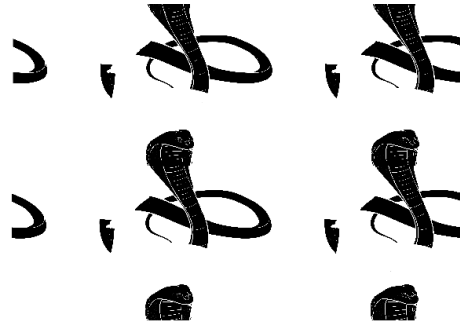
The designs used for this research work were made using CorelDraw software, CorelDraw was used because it is user friendly, and it also has a special feature that makes colour separation easy. The tools used for creating the designs are; shape tool, bezier tools, pick tool, basic shape tool, outline tool, and the colour palettes.

**Design 1**



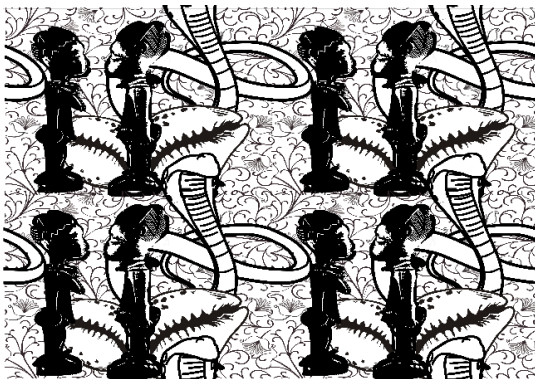
**PLATE 2:** FIRST SEPARATION COLOUR (FIRST DESIGN)

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



**PLATE 3:** SECOND SEPARATION COLOUR (FIRST DESIGN)

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



**PLATE 4:** THIRD SEPARATION COLOUR (FIRST DESIGN)

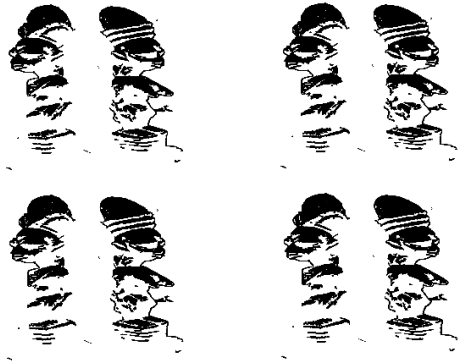
*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



**PLATE 5:** FULL DESIGN IN COLOUR (FIRST DESIGN)

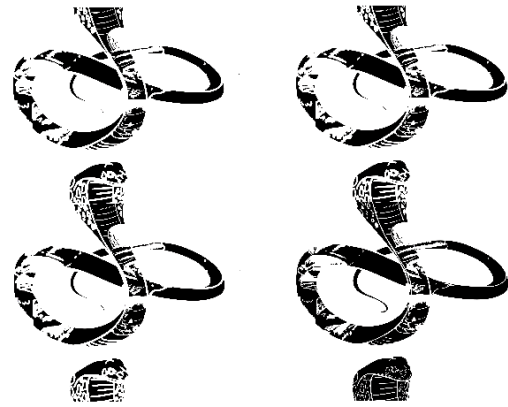
*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*

**Design 2**



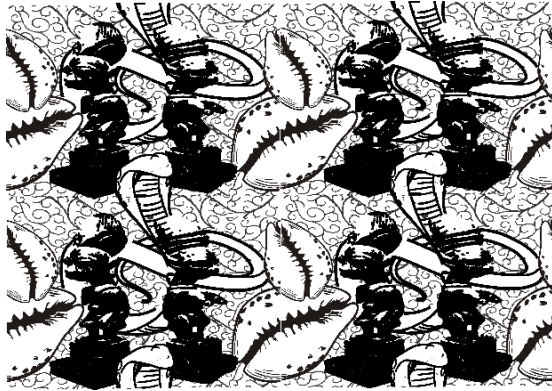
**PLATE 6: FIRST SEPARATION COLOUR  
(SECOND DESIGN)**

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



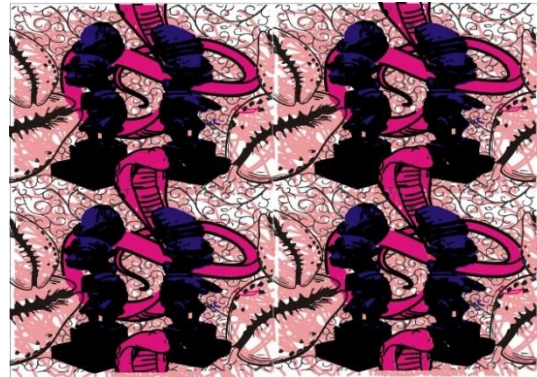
**PLATE 7: SECOND SEPARATION COLOUR  
(SECOND DESIGN)**

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



**PLATE 8:** THIRD SEPARATION COLOUR  
(SECOND DESIGN)

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



**PLATE 9:** FULL DESIGN IN COLOUR  
(SECOND DESIGN)

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*

### **Final design**



**PLATE 10: FIRST SEPARATION COLOUR  
(THIRD DESIGN)**

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



**PLATE 11: SECOND SEPARATION  
COLOUR (THIRD DESIGN)**

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



**PLATE 12: THIRD SEPARATION COLOUR  
(THIRD DESIGN)**

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*

**PLATE 13: TWO SEPARATED COLORS  
(THIRD DESIGN)**

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



**PLATE 14: FULL DESIGN IN COLOUR (THIRD DESIGN)**

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*

The practical exploration is essentially started with pencils, and then colour sketches, dyeing of the fabric background, exposing of design on screen (mesh), printing of design on fabrics, sewing of embellished fabrics into different apparel designs, exhibition of newly embellished fabrics.

Below are some simple explanations of the methods of the practical exploration of the study;

## **STUDIO PRACTICE**

### **Stage 1**

Production of swatches of design: Sample of fabric outlook was done on paper manually which serve as guideline for the researcher when carrying out printing on fabric.





**PLATE 15:** CREATION OF DESIGN ON PAPER

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*

Pre-dyeing Process: marbling technique of dyeing will be use for the background of the fabric.

The marbling effect is achieved through intense rippling of fabric surface when wet, then the dye pigment is been floated on the fabric surface.

## **Stage 2**



**PLATE 16:** MARBLING OF FABRIC FOR DYEING

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



### Stage 3

Coating of screen (mesh): this required quantity or adequate ratio of photo emulsion to sensitizer which was mixed, and applied on the stretched screen (mesh). It is then dried up with the use of hand dryer. This was carried out in the studio dark room.



**PLATE 17: COATING OF MESH**

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*

### Stage 4

Exposure of design on screen: after the screen has been coated, exposure was done by putting artwork positive on screen and placed under the sunlight to expose the design onto the screen.



**PLATE 18: BURNING OF MESH USING SUNLIGHT**

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*

### **Stage 5**

Washing out of design on screen: The art work block the light from hardening the emulsion, which allows the design to be easily washed out thus creating the stencil.



### **Stage 6**

Printing process design: After exposing and rinsing out the exposure, the researcher dry up the screen thoroughly (ideally harden the screen, by exposing it to sun) before printing. Before inking the mesh, the researcher makes use of a blocking tape to cover up areas of the screen not covered by the emulsion.



**PLATE 21: PRINTING ON FABRIC (2)**  
*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



**PLATE 20: PRINTING NO FABRIC (1)**  
*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*

## Stage 7

Finishing process: in this stage, the fabric will be sewn into different apparel designs.



**PLATE 22: CUTTING AND SEWING OF FABRICS**

*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*

(2023)

## Apparel designs



**PLATE 23:** FIRST APPAREL DESIGN  
*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



**PLATE 24:** SECOND APPAREL DESIGN  
DESIGN  
*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*





**PLATE 25: THIRD APPAREL DESIGN**  
*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*



**PLATE 26: FORTH APPAREL DESIGN**  
*SOURCE: BY AUTHOR (2023)*

## **Conclusion**

The result of the study reaffirms some of the findings in earlier research that is associated with adaptation of traditional symbols. Findings in this study indicate the need to improve in inculcating more of our traditional symbols and designs on textile fabrics. This is to help increase the awareness of these traditional symbols and also serves as a means of saving them from total extinction.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the discussions and findings on the adaptation of Sato drum traditional symbols as motifs for fabric embellishments, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is the need for preservation of our traditional designs for the benefits of the younger generation to understand and appreciate their culture. Therefore, it is recommended that more studies should be made on other Nigerian cultures and traditions because by conserving it will encourage people to learn and appreciate it the more.
2. Government should look into good maintenance of our ancient buildings and monuments, by making our cultural sites attractive for tourist visit.
3. Agencies should work hand in hand with institutions on the preservation of art works and designs in museums and Galleries for the people to view and appreciate.
4. Students of textile design specialization should always consider the use of their traditional symbols for fabric designing which will serve as a means of cultural originality.

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