CLASSIFICATION AND DOCUMENTATION OF THE EICHER COLLECTION OF SELECTED NIGERIAN TEXTILE FABRICS

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study of handcrafted Nigerian textile fabrics is to document the artistic and technological skills of twentieth century Nigerian textile craftsmen. Twentieth century handcrafted Nigerian textile fabrics are aesthetic artifacts reflecting creativity, tradition, and an integration of the old and the new.

When viewed in their Nigerian cultural setting, these fabrics gain an expressive vitality, not otherwise obvious when viewed solely in terms of technological achievement. Riley expressed a similar view when he stated:

> Generic man is more than an anthropologist's toolmaking animal. He has used, and still does use textiles to emphasize his rank, his prowess in battle, his sexuality, his aggression, his tenderness. In a sense, he is shown to be a past master at deceit and magic. His fabrics glorify the body and home. He strives to impress on his fellow man his idealized version of reality . . . . It is the scrutiny and dissection of this ideal which illumines the content of a culture. What kind of economy could produce such complex weaves? What manner of religion would use these decorative forms? Why this color for men and the other color for women?[1]

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[1]Robert Riley, "The Myriad Worlds of Fabric," Craft Horizons, XXI (September-October, 1961), 8.

It is with a similar philosophy of textile artifacts that the writer has undertaken an investigation of handcrafted Nigerian textiles. This investigation was prompted by the availability of a personal collection of handcrafted Nigerian textile fabrics secured by Dr. Joanne Eicher while living in Enugu, Nigeria from 1963 to 1966. Contained in the Eicher Collection are fabrics from various locations throughout Nigeria. Some of these fabrics were purchased for personal use, some were obtained through the assistance of friends, and others were received as gifts.

The collection contains 128 fabrics which were in some way hand-processed in Nigeria. Some of the cloth has been hand-woven from cotton which was locally hand-cultivated, -ginned, -carded, -spun, as well as being hand-dyed in Nigeria. Other fabrics were commercially printed and imported prior to being dyed by the Nigerian craftsmen. Still others were hand-woven from imported yarns.

Fabrics in the Eicher Collection vary according to their intended end use. Some have been woven in the size of a finished wrapper, a stole, or a scarf for adult use. Finished woven fabrics in smaller dimensions have been intended for children's use. Other fabrics were purchased by the yard. Also included in the collection are remnants from fabrics which have been used for construction of personal clothing. There are seventy

fabrics from the Western Region, thirty-seven from the Eastern Region (known as Biafra), and twenty-one from the Northern Region. Descriptions of each fabric included in the collection can be found in the Fabric Inventory which follows a general discussion of the fabrics from each of the three regions reported in this study.

Nigeria is currently experiencing political, technological, and ideological change, factors which could make it very difficult to obtain duplicate samples of the fabrics in the Eicher Collection. Consequently this collection is historically valuable, as well as having sentimental and monetary value. For these reasons, it was deemed desirable that the Eicher Collection of selected Nigerian textiles be organized, classified, and documented before valuable information was forgotten or misplaced and the collection was more permanently stored. A classification system, which was prepared by the writer and members of her guidance committee, served as the basis for classifying each fabric in the collection. In brief, each fabric is classified according to the region of Nigeria in which it was handcrafted, the details which explain the fabric construction, the type of design process which was used, and the use for which the fabric was designed. The outline of the classification system follows.

Outline of the Classification System for the Eicher Collection of Selected Nigerian Textiles

I. Region
- A. Western
- B. Northern
- C. Eastern (Biafra)
- D. Midwestern

II. Fabric construction
- A. Fiber source
  1. Nigeria
  2. Imported
  3. Unknown
- B. Fiber type
  1. Cotton
  2. Rayon
  3. Silk
  4. Raffia
  5. Linen
  6. Wool
  7. Unknown
- C. Yarn construction
  1. Handspun
  2. Commercially spun
- D. Base fabric weave structure
  1. Plain
  2. Twill
  3. Other
- E. Base fabric manufacturing process
  1. Commercial
  2. Handwoven

III. Design process
- A. Structural
  1. Color variation
     a. Warp
     b. Weft
     c. Both
  2. Threading variation
  3. Treadling variation
  4. Finger manipulated warps
     a. Inlay
     b. Leno
     c. Spanish lace
     d. Brooks bouquet
     e. Loop technique
- B. Decorative
  1. Resist dyeing
     a. Tie dye

b. Batik
1. Wax
2. Cassava paste
2. Surface print
a. On plain background
b. On commercially printed cloth
3. Embroidery
a. Hand
b. Machine
4. Appliqué
a. With stitchery
b. Without stitchery
5. Drawn threads
a. Hemstitching

IV. Use
A. Adornment
1. Personal
a. Clothing
b. Accessory
2. Home
B. Occasion
1. Everyday
2. Special (dress-up)
3. Ritual
C. Sex
1. Male
2. Female
D. Age
1. Infant
2. Child
3. Adult

Classification and Documentation Procedure

A small identification tag was attached to each fabric, on which is indicated: The country in which the fabric was handcrafted, the region in which the fabric was handcrafted, the fabric dimensions, and the number which has been assigned to the fabric. For example, N - E - 1 would represent Nigeria - Eastern Region - Fabric number one from that region. The dimensions of the fabric are given on the reverse side of the tag.

The above information is documented on a five inch by eight inch file card. The numbers, and letters from the classification system outline which are appropriate to the fabric appear on the file card. In addition, a brief verbal description of the fabric and the fabric dimensions appear in the upper right corner of the file card, as the following example illustrates.

EXAMPLE OF CLASSIFICATION CARD

N - E - 1	III.	A.	62" x 80"
I. D., Akwete		1., c.	Background of black, yellow, red and white
II. A.		4., a.	warp stripes. Inlay weft design using
2.	IV.	A.	red and black yarns.
B.		1.	
1.		B.	
C.		1.	
2.		C.	
D.		2.	
1.		D.	
E.		3.	
2.			

A set of these classification cards is filed with the Eicher Collection, and a set is also filed with the Department of Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts, at Michigan State University, in East Lansing, Michigan.

In order to classify the Eicher Collection, available

literature concerning Nigerian textile crafts was reviewed. It was found that there is very little recorded data concerning textiles which are handcrafted or machine-made in Nigeria, or imported from other countries. That which exists is scattered throughout general accounts by ethnographers, economists, and journalists. More specific textile information and original data can be found in locally published Nigerian media, frequently inaccessible to an American student. The majority of the books dealing specifically with hand weaving, and printing of textile fabrics which were reviewed for this study did not include data on Subsaharan African textiles. Other texts included generalizations about West African textiles, while a few briefly mentioned the textile crafts of Nigeria. Current periodicals have included several articles with illustrations of African inspired textile designs, but their origin and means of fabrication remain obscure. The lack of comprehensive, detailed literature concerning the textile crafts of Nigeria further emphasizes the importance of this type of study. It is hoped that the synthesis of available literature, plus valuable information obtained through interviews with Joanne Eicher, and observations and comments reported by the writer and presented in this study, will be a contribution to the knowledge and appreciation of Nigerian textile crafts. Information which was essential to the classification of the Eicher Collection of Nigerian textiles was obtained

through interviews with Joanne Eicher throughout the duration of this study. Information which was obtained from these interviews is footnoted using the name, Eicher.

In order to obtain the desired perspective of the Nigerian textile crafts, a brief description of Nigeria follows.

In 1960, the Federation of Nigeria was granted independence from British colonial rule. At the time of independence, the Federation was comprised of the Northern, Western, and Eastern Regions, each region having a strong government. In addition, one federal government incorporated all three regions.[1] See map, page 9. Each of the original regions is the core area of one of the major tribal groups; the Hausa in the North, Yoruba in the West, and Ibo in the East, although no region is linguistically or culturally homogenous. In 1963, the Federal Government granted regional status to the Mid-West, which covers the eastern portion of the Western Region.

In 1966, two relatively severe revolutions were followed by military rule over the entire Federation. In May, 1967, the Ibos of the Eastern Region declared themselves the separate state of Biafra. As this study is being written, Nigeria continues to experience civil war.

Many of the tribal differences are related to

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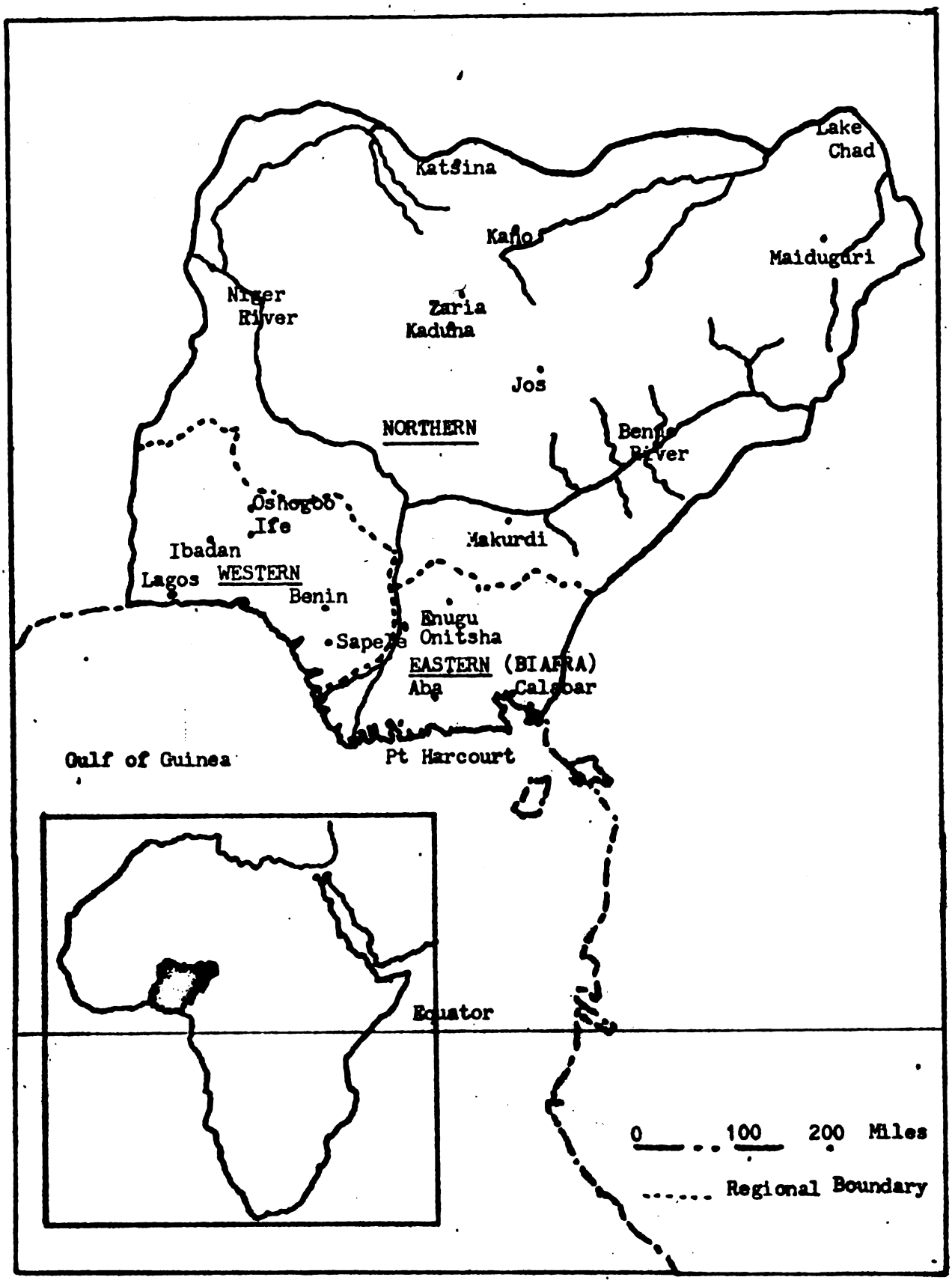
[1]Paul Fordham, The Geography of African Affairs (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1965), pp. 100-101.

PLATE I



MAP OF NIGERIA

divergent religious beliefs. The Hausa-Fulanis of the North are mainly Moslem, while other small tribes are pagan. The South, which encompasses the Western and Eastern Regions, is largely Christian and pagan with some Moslems in the Western Region.

The kinship structure of Nigerians has been described by Eicher as follows:

> . . . the family structure of Nigerians is, as for many other Africans, also related to religion. In the Moslem religion a man can have as many as four wives; many Moslem men are polygamous. Women are still treated in a typical or traditional Moslem way and do not appear much in public. Women are also not allowed to vote in the North as a result of the Moslem influence. In the South in a pagan family, polygamy also exists with no limit on the number of wives. Christian marriages are monogamous. However, in both the North and South, polygamy is not as wide-spread as people like to believe, because being polygamous usually means being wealthy. Since it is expensive to have more than one wife, even in a country where it is possible, ordinarily monogamy prevails.[1]

English is the official language of Nigeria. There are public and private elementary schools, some parochial and other secular. At the time of independence, there was one university in Nigeria, today there are five.[2]

According to Fordham, the wealth of Nigeria lies in agriculture, which occupies at least eighty per cent of the working population and supplies approximately sixty per cent of the national income.[3] Each area with

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[1] Joanne B. Eicher, "Clothing: A Cultural Habit." Speech given at Textiles and Clothing Forum, University of Wisconsin, June 20, 1967, to be published in the Proceedings of the Textiles and Clothing Forum, p. 8.

[2] Ibid., p. 9. [3] Fordham, op. cit., p. 110.

its distinctive natural environment is characterized by different export crops: cotton and groundnuts in the North, cocoa in the Yoruba areas of the West, and palm oil and palm kernels in the Ibo East.

Handcraft is one of Nigeria's legacies of a rich past and still prevails in many of the less urbanized areas today. The craft industries cover a variety of activities, including the hand-weaving, dyeing, and printing of textiles. Handcrafted textiles represent a relatively small proportion of textile fabrics which are available to Nigerian consumers. Many textiles are now locally produced by mechanical textile mills. Imported cloth is also available.

Many of the materials and processes used in the hand production of textile artifacts seem primitive when compared to modern mechanized methods but a knowledge of this primitive technology provides a medium for understanding and appreciating the people who produced them.

The Nigerian textile crafts are discussed according to the three major regions of Nigeria, the Western, Northern and Eastern Regions in respective chapters. The Mid-West Region has, unfortunately, been excluded because of the lack of available information concerning the textile crafts in that region as well as the lack of examples of fabrics in the Eicher Collection. Each chapter contains a summary of all of the fabrics in the Eicher Collection from that region in the form of a

fabric inventory, a synthesis of the literature which was reviewed for the region, information gained from personal interviews, as well as the writer's personal comments.

CHAPTER II

HANDCRAFTED TEXTILES OF THE WESTERN REGION

The Eicher Collection contains seventy handcrafted textiles from the Western Region of Nigeria. Forty of the fabrics are pairs of matched samples of Yoruba vegetable dye resist techniques. Twenty of these samples illustrate the preparation technique, or the fabric as it appears prior to being dyed. The other twenty samples illustrate the resulting dyed fabrics. Sixteen of the fabrics are tie and dye resist prints, and seventeen of the fabrics are starch resist prints. Four of the fabrics are hand woven baby ties, and nine fabrics are narrow hand woven bands. Three of the fabrics are sanyan, hand woven narrow bands, and one of the fabrics is raffia cloth.

Each fabric from the Western Region is briefly summarized in the form of a fabric inventory in Table 1. The code numbers identify the fabrics in the collection, and are referred to in the text where the fabric is discussed. The fabric inventory also serves as a cross reference with the file cards which accompany the Eicher Collection. The fabric inventory for the Western Region follows on Table 1.

TABLE 1.--FABRIC INVENTORY FOR WESTERN REGION

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size[a]	Intended Use of Fabric
	Tie and Dye Resist Print Paired Matched Samples[b]			
N - W - 1[c]	Shades of light & dark indigo blues form small circular patterns - clump preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	32" x 33"	Nigerian woman's everyday dress - Nigerian man's sleeping cloth. Non-Nigerian man's and woman's everyday clothing.
N - W - 2	Light red circular patterns of various diameters on dark red - clump preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 34"	"

[a]Size dimensions for all fabrics have been rounded to the nearest inch.

[b]The information given in this inventory for the pairs of matched samples pertains to the finished cloths. The samples which illustrate the preparation techniques are white cotton shirting which was imported. The dimensions of the fabrics in the preparation stage are similar to those of the finished fabric.

[c]As an example, this inventory would be read: N - W - 1; a (N)igerian textile from the (W)estern region, is identified as fabric number (1). The fiber content is cotton; the fabric was resist dyed in shades of light and dark indigo blues which form small circular patterns. The clump technique was used to prepare the cloth for dyeing. It was handcrafted in Abeokuta; it was thirty-two inches by thirty-three inches; and it would be used as a Nigerian woman's everyday dress, a Nigerian man's sleeping cloth; or for non-Nigerian men's and women's clothing.

TABLE 1.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - W - 3	Small circles form overall concertina pattern in indigo blues - clump preparation technique with seeds (cotton)	Abeokuta	32" x 33"	"
N - W - 4	Subtle overall stripes in indigo blues - rope preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	32" x 34"	"
N - W - 5	Light blue pattern formed with short lines on dark indigo - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	32" x 33"	
N - W - 6	Light & dark indigo blues in overall striped pattern - visible stitch marks - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	32" x 33"	"
N - W - 7	Light & dark indigo blues in overall striped pattern - visible stitch marks - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	32" x 33"	"

TABLE 1.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - W - 8	Light & dark indigo blues in overall striped pattern - visible stitch marks - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	32" x 34"	"
N - W - 9	Light & dark indigo blues in overall striped pattern - visible stitch marks - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 33"	"
N - W - 10	Light & dark indigo blues in overall striped pattern - visible stitch marks - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 33"	"
N - W - 11	Light & dark indigo blues in overall striped pattern - visible stitch marks - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 33"	"
N - W - 12	Light & dark indigo blues in overall striped pattern - visible stitch marks - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 34"	"

TABLE 1.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - W - 13	Light blue geometric patterns on dark indigo - visible stitch marks - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 34"	"
N - W - 14	Light red geometric patterns on dark red - visible stitch marks - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 34"	"
N - W - 15	Medium brown geometric patterns on darker brown - visible stitch marks - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 34"	"
N - W - 16	Light to dark indigo blues form irregular overall stripes - gathered stitches preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	30" x 31"	"
N - W - 17	Light & dark indigo blues form irregular overall stripes - gathered stitches preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 34"	"

TABLE 1.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - W - 18	Light & dark indigo blues form irregular overall stripes - gathered stitches preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 34"	"
N - W - 19	Light indigo blues form geometric designs on dark indigo - tritik (machine) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 33"	"
N - W - 20	Light blue (X) designs on dark indigo - visible stitch marks - tritik (machine) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 33"	"
	Tie and Dye Resist Prints			
N - W - 21	White circles on indigo form overall print - clump preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 56"	"
N - W - 22	Light blue overall patterns on dark indigo - combination of preparation techniques (cotton)	Abeokuta	19" x 15"	"

TABLE 1.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - W - 23	White to light blue overall patterns on dark indigo - combination of preparation techniques (cotton)	Abeokuta	63" x 65"	"
N - W - 24	White to light blue overall patterns on dark indigo - combination of preparation techniques (cotton)	Abeokuta	68" x 72"	"
N - W - 25	White to light blue overall patterns on dark indigo - combination of preparation techniques (cotton)	Abeokuta	67" x 73"	"
N - W - 26	Diagonal stripes in three shades of blue - folding preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	19" x 64"	"
N - W - 27	Narrow indigo stripes on medium blue background - folding preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	30" x 68"	"
N - W - 28	Overall indigo diagonal stripes - folding preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	64" x 66"	"

TABLE 1.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - W - 29	Indigo background with yellow - large & small circles over commercial print (cotton)	Abeokuta	65" x 70"	"
N - W - 30	White stripes on dark indigo - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	33" x 35"	"
N - W - 31	Light blue stripes on dark indigo - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	64" x 74"	"
N - W - 32	White to light blue elliptical designs on dark indigo - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	66" x 67"	"
N - W - 33	Light blue patterns on dark indigo - tritik (hand) preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	66" x 74"	"
N - W - 34	Subtle light blue, almost white, on bright blue background, splash-type patterns - dyefast folding preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	36" x 106"	Especially desired by non-Nigerian women for various styles of dresses

TABLE 1.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - W - 35	Light green on dark green background, splash-type patterns - dyefast folding preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	36" x 106"	"
N - W - 36	Yellow & white overall stripes - dyefast folding preparation technique (cotton)	Abeokuta	36" x 108"	"
	Starch Resist Prints			
N - W - 37	Yellow, black, red & blue geometric designs on commercial print (cotton)	Onitsha	5" x 24"	Women's wrappers
N - W - 38	Green, indigo blue & black designs on commercial print (cotton)	Onitsha	21" x 42"	"
N - W - 39	Black, red & indigo designs on commercial print (cotton)	Onitsha	10" x 64"	"
N - W - 40	Dark indigo houndstooth check pattern on light blue (cotton)	Onitsha	11" x 47"	"
N - W - 41a	Dark indigo circular patterns on light blue (cotton)	Onitsha	17" x 31"	"

TABLE 1.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - W - 41b	Dark indigo circular patterns on light blue (cotton)	Onitsha	14" x 31"	"
N - W - 42	Dark indigo circles on light blue (cotton)	Onitsha	9" x 34"	"
N - W - 43	White flower design on indigo (cotton)	Onitsha	33" x 60"	"
N - W - 44	Small white animals on indigo (cotton)	Onitsha	58" x 63"	"
N - W - 45	Dark indigo fish within a circle (cotton)	Onitsha	61" x 74"	"
N - W - 46	Light blue & purple elephants on indigo (cotton)	Onitsha	62" x 68"	"
N - W - 47	White birds on dark indigo (cotton)	Onitsha	64" x 70"	"
N - W - 48	Light blue geometric designs on dark indigo (cotton)	Onitsha	64" x 75"	"
N - W - 49a	Light blue flowers on indigo (cotton)	Onitsha	66" x 71"	"

TABLE 1.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - W - 49b	Light blue flowers on indigo (cotton)	Onitsha	32" x 70"	"
N - W - 50	White geometric designs on dark indigo (cotton)	Onitsha	68" x 70"	"
N - W - 51	Light blue geometric designs on dark indigo (cotton)	Onitsha	102" x 103"	"
	Woven Cloth			
N - W - 52	White, black & blue stripes (cotton and ramie)	Ibadan	11" x 62"	Baby tie
N - W - 53	Black & white clipped inlaid overshot designs (cotton)	Ibadan	13" x 62"	"
N - W - 54	White with two sets of three black stripes (cotton and ramie)	Ibadan	15" x 57"	"
N - W - 55	White looped yarns form overall textured surface (cotton)	Ibadan	15" x 71"	"
	Narrow Band Woven Cloth			
N - W - 56	Light brown, blue & black warp stripes - imitation Spanish lace (cotton)	Abeokuta	61" x 79"	Men's clothing, boys' coat, & cap

TABLE 1.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - W - 57	Gold, blue & black warp yarns with blue weft yarns (cotton)	Enugu (probably)	5" x 30"	Men's clothing
N - W - 58	Warp yarns of gold, maroon, black & white with light blue weft yarns (cotton)	Enugu (probably)	7" x 40"	"
N - W - 59	Brown, blue & black warp stripes with blue weft yarns (cotton)	Enugu (probably)	11" x 23"	Men's and women's clothing
N - W - 60	Brown & black warp yarns form stripes with brown weft yarns (cotton)	Enugu (probably)	53" x 70"	Men's clothing
N - W - 61	Three values of brown in warp, black repeat weft design - imitation Spanish lace designs (cotton)	Iseyin	5" x 83"	Men's and women's clothing
N - W - 62	Brown, black & light blue warp yarns with light blue weft yarns (cotton)	Iseyin	5" x 74"	"
N - W - 63	Maroon warp yarns; light blue & black weft yarns spaced to form subtle light blue stripes, Spanish lace designs (rayon & cotton)	Iseyin	5" x 86"	"

TABLE 1.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - W - 64	Maroon & green warp yarns; black & light blue weft yarns (rayon & cotton)	Iseyin	66" x 67"	"
N - W - 65a	Narrow bands of raw silk warp yarns & cotton weft yarns - Sanyan (raw silk & cotton)	Ijebu-Ode	29" x 91"	Men's and women's special clothing
N - W - 65b	"	Ijebu-Ode	42" x 73"	"
N - W - 65c	"	Ijebu-Ode	59" x 75"	"
N - W - 66	Magenta, green & navy stripes (raffia & cotton)	Ibadan	14" x 68"	Unknown

The Western Region of Nigeria is inhabited primarily by the Yoruba speaking people. In order to gain a proper perspective of the textile industry in this region, it will be instructive to provide a brief delineation of the Yoruba social organization. The smallest social unit in the Yoruba town is the immediate family, which occupies part of a house.[1] As the Yorubas are traditionally polygynous, the immediate family includes a man, his wife, or wives, and their children. Each adult member of the family group has a separate room in the same house, or in the same section of a house if it is shared with other families. An aggregate of houses forms what is known as a compound, and there are several compounds in a town.[2] The craft industries, which include hand-produced textiles, are often performed by family members who constitute the primary labor unit.

According to Ojo,[3] prior to the establishment of European contact, every Yoruba woman and her daughters ginned, carded, and spun. He describes a system whereby female members of the extended family periodically contributed a specified length of yarn to ensure a steady and adequate supply of thread for dyeing and weaving.

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[1]William R. Bascom, "The Sociological Role of the Yoruba Cult-Group," American Anthropologist, XLVI (January, 1944), 11-12.

[2]Ibid.

[3]G. J. Afolabi Ojo, Yoruba Culture (London: University of London Press, Ltd., 1966), p. 84.

The yarn was then given to each member in rotation at predetermined intervals.[1] This system, which grew beyond the confines of the extended family, involving acquaintances and age-groups, is still widely in use near the town of Oyo. In most areas throughout the Western Region, the preparation of yarn for dyeing and weaving has become more the province of industry and foreign firms than that of individual women and their daughters, and much of the cloth that is dyed in the Western Region is imported from England and Holland.

The Yoruba people are especially renowned for their pattern dyeing in indigo. According to Wenger and Beier, this technique, which is known to several West African tribes, has been elaborated to the greatest perfection by the Yoruba.[2] The following description of the indigo dyeing materials is based on the material presented by Ojo, unless otherwise documented.[3]

The indigo is obtained from the indigofera trees, whose leaves are subjected to certain regulated processes which separate the blue dye-stuff known as indigotin from the unrequired indigo-red known as indirubin. Three important species, indigofera arrecta, indigo suffricotosa and indigo tinctoria grow in the bush of northwestern

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[1] Ibid.

[2] S. Wenger and H. U. Beier, "Adire-Yoruba Pattern Dyeing," Nigeria Magazine, No. 53 (1957), 208.

[3] Ojo, op. cit., pp. 85-86.

Yorubaland, where Iseyin, Ipapo, Oke Iho, Ilaro, Otu, Okaka Ago-Are and Shaki are important centers. The indigo is also obtained from the woody climber which requires either sun-drying the leaves or pounding, fermenting and drying the fresh parts. The dried indigo obtained from either leaves or woody climber is then made into balls, varying from three to six inches in diameter. These indigo-balls will remain in good condition for many years if kept in a dry place.

In the early stages of the dyeing industry, indigo-making and dyeing were integrated. Later they became, except in a few cases, separate industries. Both dye-making and the dyeing processes are unusually long operations which are sometimes done professionally by women who are called alaros.[1] To prepare the dye, a special ash, which is obtained from burning green fire-resistant wood in a furnace, is arranged in a sieve in two or three layers of about six inches thick, and about a foot apart. Water is drained through the ashes, and is collected in a pot placed at the bottom of the filtering device. This product is the chemical which is applied to extract the dye from the indigo. The indigo and the ash-filtered water are mixed in varying proportions in the vat, according to the desired value of the hue. From time to time, the dye is stirred in the vat and after a few days, when the desired dye is formed, the vegetable sediments

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[1]Wenger and Beier, op. cit., p. 223.

are removed from the dye solution. Peelings of banana skins may be added to make the dye fast.

Wenger and Beier state that recently some women use soda instead of ashes to prepare the dye. The soda makes the dye adhere more quickly thus shortening the process, but it is not as colorfast and will wash out more quickly than the ash preparation.[2] Another deviation from the traditional process is the use of imported dyes. Eicher reports having observed the use of German indigo dye in the city of Abeokuta.[3]

The importance of dyeing in the ancient Yoruba area is illustrated by the fact that it was practiced everywhere, even in the smallest villages. Every family, more frequently the extended family rather than the immediate family, had a dyeing yard behind or close to the compound. Nevertheless, dyeing was more concentrated in some areas, partly because of the greater density of indigo, and partly because of the differential distribution of dyeing skill. Areas such as the following were found within the northern half of the Western Region, coincident with the indigofera centers: Oshogobo district, popularly referred to as the "home of dyeing"; southern Ilorin Province, including the northern border of Ondo Province, where nine out of every ten cloths worn, especially by the women, were dyed dark indigo; and Ogbomosho and Oyo districts.

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[1] Ibid. [2] Eicher.

The landscape of many Yoruba settlements was, even until the 1950's, decidedly affected by the dyeing industry. Until then, large areas of the backyards of house compounds were marked out as the open-air dyeing ground. They looked like factories. In Ikiti district, an average dyeing yard of a few years ago was as large as 500 square yards in area. It would contain different sized dyeing pots fixed into the ground, ash-water filtering constructions, and pegs of sticks, about five feet high, at fixed spaces apart, for stretching, drying, and spooling hanks of thread. If trees did not provide adequately the much-required shade, a shelter of palm leaves spread out flat on a simple framework of poles was sometimes erected.

Adire is the name given to the process of pattern dyeing cloth in indigo, which in Yoruba means to take, to tie, and dye.[1] Tie and dye or tie-dyeing is a resist process. It consists of knotting, binding, folding, or sewing certain parts of the cloth in such a way that when it is immersed in the dye solution, the dye cannot penetrate the prepared areas of the cloth.

The craft of resist dyeing has been practiced from very early times by people in many parts of the world. It is uncertain when and where it originated, or whether in the first place resist dyeing was discovered accidentally. The earliest records, from India and Japan, date

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[1]Wenger and Beier, op. cit., p. 213.

back to the sixth and seventh centuries A.D.[1] There are two major methods of adire dyeing which are practiced by the Yoruba people. The first is termed adire eleso, which includes variations of tying and/or sewing the cloth, and is characterized by the visible pattern on both sides of the cloth. The second method is termed adire eleko which entails applying starch to the fabric, which will resist the dye and later will be removed by washing.[2]

According to Maile, the Yoruba women produce the elaborate adire eleso by the clump, folding and tritik methods. Raffia and bast are the media used for sewing and binding. These methods are described as follows.[3]

Clump

The clump method derives its name from the little bunches or clumps that are formed by tying up the material. The cloth itself is bunched, or arranged in various ways, and bound; or small objects such as seeds, peas, beans, corn grains, pebbles, shells, corks, beads, buttons, cotton reels, or pieces of wood, are tied in the fabric.[4] Three examples of this technique are found in the Eicher Collection among the pairs of matched samples

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[1]Anne Maile, Tie and Dye (London: Mills and Boon, Ltd., 1965), p. 11.

[2]"Art on the Drying Field," Nigeria, XXX (1949), 325.

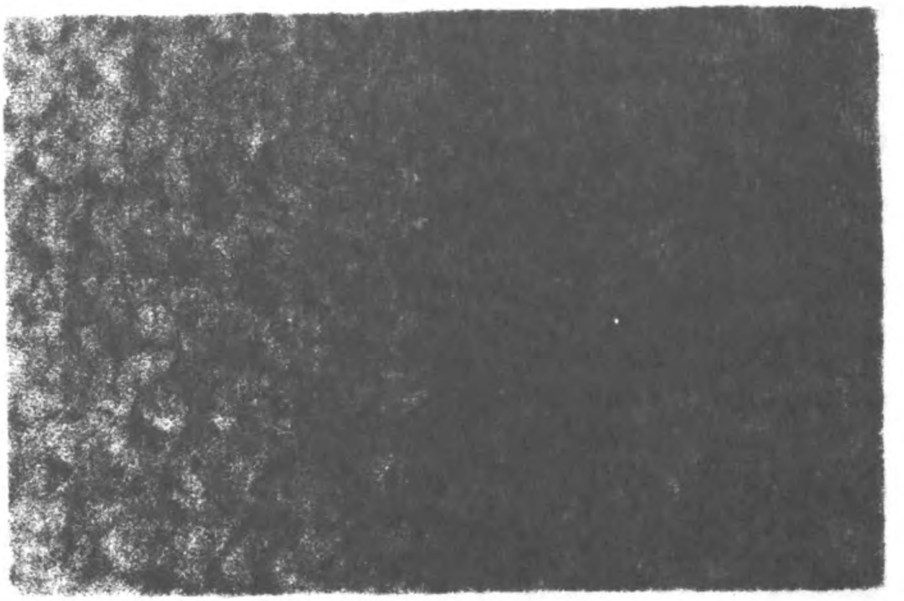
[3]Maile, op. cit., pp. 12, 65, 74. [4]Ibid., p.47.

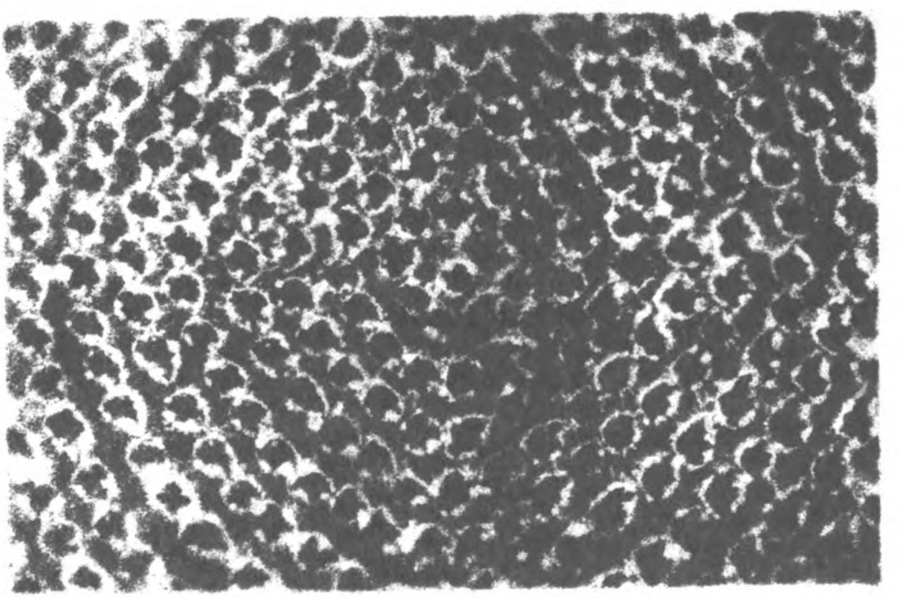
of resist dyeing obtained in Abeokuta. (N - W - 1 and N - W - 2). One of the samples contains small seeds, tied securely with raffia thread (N - W - 3). Plate II, on page 33, illustrates the fabric as it appears before it is dyed. Also illustrated on page 33 is the fabric as it appears after it has been dyed and the stitching and seeds have been removed.

Folding

Four main categories are included in the classification of the folding technique: (1) simple stripes, (2) an individual or edge stripe, (3) folded squares, and (4) rope tying. Each of these techniques produces striking patterns and effects, which differ from one another, but the one most commonly used by the Yorubas is the rope tying technique. Narrow strips of cloth are used so that the dye can penetrate into the closely packed folds. When these cloths are folded and bound, they resemble ropes. Where the cloth is fine, a wider piece can be treated successfully by this method. The pattern produced is one of stripes or bands of visual texture. A variation of this method is the production of diagonal stripes, by pleating the cloth diagonally instead of following the warp or the weft. There are many more variations of the folding techniques, and the interested reader is referred to the text by Maile. In an unpublished manuscript, Barbour describes a cloth

PLATE II





which is folded from corner to corner like a concertina and bound very tightly at various points along the cloth. When the cloth is bound two or three times in broad strips, a pattern in the shape of a diamond in alternating broad bands of blue and white is produced. Barbour described this style as the cloth of the year, 1964.[1] One example of the rope technique is found among the pairs of matched samples in the Eicher Collection (N - W - 4). Among the other fabrics obtained in Abeokuta, are examples of the simple and diagonal stripes described by Maile.

Tritik

The sewing or tritik method has been used in most of the countries where tie and dye is practiced. In Nigeria, the traditional sewing fiber most often used for this technique is raffia, the width of which is determined by the envisaged pattern. The success of the sewing method is dependent on the ability to draw up the material into gathers so closely on the sewing thread that the dye cannot penetrate into the folds. It is essential, therefore, to have very strong thread that does not break half-way through the operation, and that will remain taut while supporting the weight of the closely gathered cloth during the process of dyeing.

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[1] Jane Barbour, "Adire Cloth" (unpublished manuscript, Ibadan University, n.d.).

Fifteen examples of raffia-stitched designs are found in the Eicher Collection (N - W - 5 through N - W - 15, and N - W-30 through N - W - 33). The overcast stitch was used most frequently.

Commenting on the tritik dyeing process of the Yoruba, Murray states: "The latest development is the work of youths who rapidly make dull and mechanical designs by sewing the cloth on a machine."[1] The machine tritik process to which Murray refers would be much less time consuming than hand tritik. However, it might be disputed that the design quality of the mechanical product is aesthetically inferior to the handcrafted product. Cordwell's comments concerning contemporary African art are appropriate to the Yoruba machine tritik designs:

> In all areas of Africa south of the Sahara, Africans have extended their very real aesthetic appreciation of form, color, and design by the employment of new media or of earlier media in new ways. Though the form is sometimes distasteful to those committed to the older forms of African art as the primary expression of African aesthetic drives, these newer productions have undoubted values in their own right.[2]

Use of the sewing machine to prepare cloth for indigo resist dyeing illustrates the employment of new media in a traditional Yoruba art form. There are two examples of machine tritik in the collection (N - W - 19 and

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[1]K. C. Murray, "Arts and Crafts of Nigeria: Their Past and Future," Africa, XIV (October, 1943), 158.

[2]William R. Bascom and Melville J. Herskovits (eds.), Continuity and Change in African Cultures (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 45.

N - W - 20). See Plate III, page 37. When white cloth is resist dyed with indigo using the adire eleso technique, the designs which result are subtle values of blue, progressing from light blue to dark indigo blue.

Adire eleko is the second method of indigo printing practiced by the Yoruba women. The use of the adire eleko technique began about 1910.[1] The starch used for painting these patterns is made from either cassava or corn meal flour, and can be obtained on the market under the name of lafun. The lafun must be boiled together with blue and white alum to make a thick pudding. If no alum were added, the starch would dissolve in the indigo vat before the cloth is dyed blue. The boiled starch is called eko and will usually be wrapped in etemfe leaves. In this way it will keep fresh for two weeks, providing the leaves are occasionally renewed.[2]

According to Wenger and Beier, there are two methods of applying the starch.[3] The first method is the use of a stencil. Stencils are cut by the men from zinc or lead sheets which are used to pack match boxes imported into the country. When a stencil is used, the starch can be applied with a thick brush, thereby hastening the process. Sometimes the patterns which are meant to replicate writing result in a picture-type design because the men who cut the stencils are often illiterate.

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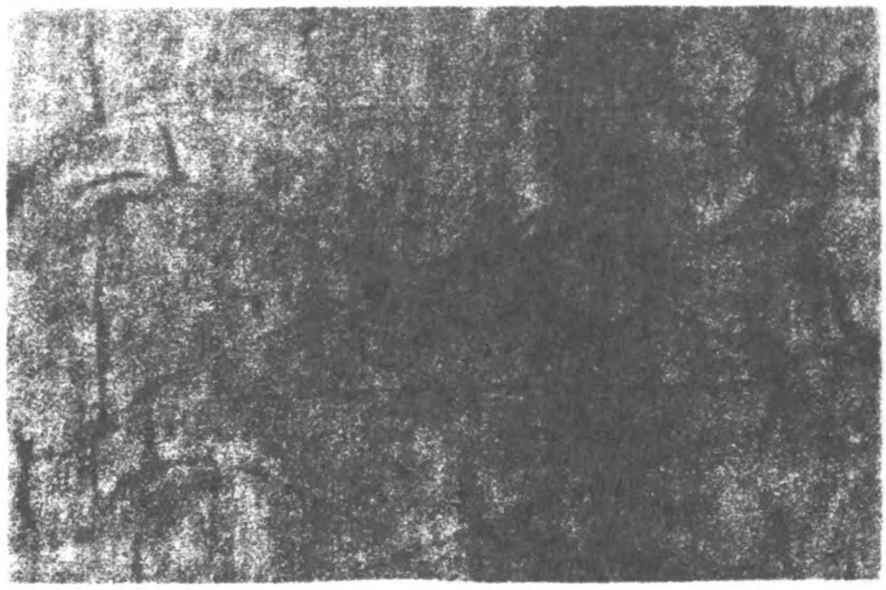
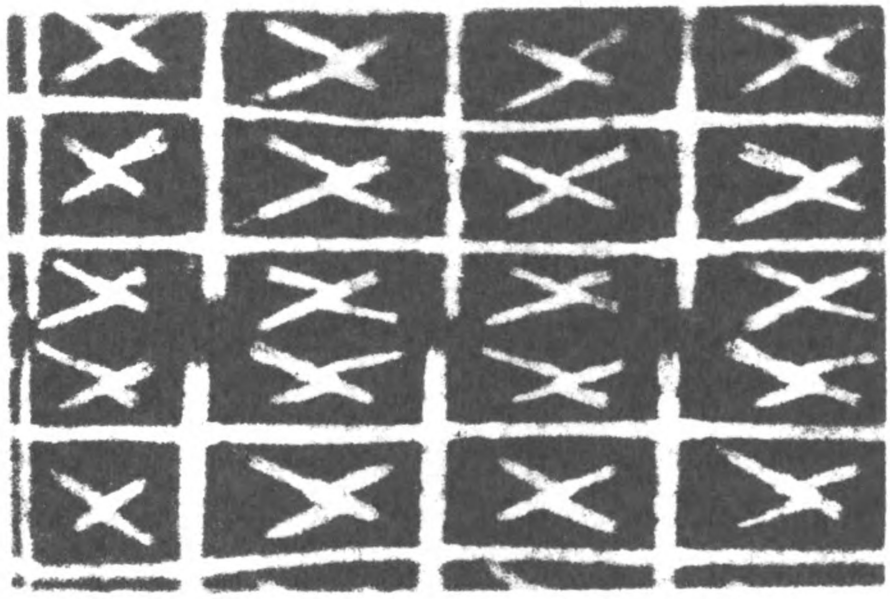
[1] Wenger and Beier, op. cit., p. 213.

[2] Ibid., p. 214. [3] Ibid.



[illegible] MACHINE BATIK PREPARA[illegible]



[illegible] RESIST DYED FABRIC [illegible]
[illegible] MACHINE BATIK TECH[illegible]

Consequently the writing is just another type of decoration to them.

The second method of applying starch is painting it on by hand, a much more laborious process. The result, however, can be more representative of the craftsman's creativeness. In this process, either a feather or the rib of a palm leaf may be used to apply the starch. There are often set patterns which the commercial craftsman repeats. A woman often employs a number of children who help her draw the designs. These children are trained in this way in order to become aladire, or skilled dyers of indigo patterns. Each adire eleko design and finished cloth has a special name. The names and meanings of these designs are not available at this time to classify accurately the fifteen adire eleko samples in the Eicher Collection. Most of the adire eleko designs are geometric. A few of the designs are stylized animal figures.

According to Wenger and Beier, a recent fashion in adire eleko consists in taking an European cotton cloth which is printed with red or yellow designs on white, and covering the whole cloth with an even zigzag pattern in starch and dyeing it in indigo. In this way, the whole tone of the cloth becomes subdued enough to suit the taste of Yoruba women, and the rather monotonous European designs are broken up into intriguing patches of red and yellow that shimmer through the dark tone of the indigo dye.[1] Three examples of this technique are found in the

[1] Ibid., p. 223.

collection (N - W - 37; N - W - 38; N - W - 39). A similar example appears to have been a commercially printed fabric which was tied and dyed in indigo (N - W - 29).

According to Wenger and Beier, thousands of Yoruba women are still engaged in the making of adire cloth and thousands of women are still wearing it. Ojo states that people in the cities of Oshogbo and Abeokuta still specialize in the making of adire cloth, the latter city is the location where the matched samples in this collection were secured. Imported cotton has largely replaced adire for men's gowns, but the Yoruba women who have a dislike of loud colors still cling to it.

Originally, adire was made with locally woven cloth, but now imported cloth is used exclusively. The women buy white shirting cloth in pieces of ten yards and this is cut into four pieces which are dyed and then sewn together to make two women's wrappers.[2]

The collection of indigo leaves and the actual dyeing process are the labor of Yoruba women while the Yoruba man cuts the stencils for the adire eleko and occasionally performs some of the stitching for the tritik process.

The Yoruba women have long been renowned for their astuteness as market women, and at periodic market intervals they offer a variety of goods for sale, including

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[1] Ibid., p. 223. [2] Ibid., p. 212.

their adire cloth. According to Barbour, the two main markets for adire cloth are located in Abeokuta and at Oje, a district of Ibadan. The cloths are marketed in Abeokuta every four days, and in Oje, every sixteen days. Barbour also states that fashion is an important determinant of the adire patterns which are available at any one time.[1] Some of these patterns continue from year to year, while others disappear rapidly. A more recent development is the dyeing of cloth in adire patterns, with colors other than indigo. The Eicher Collection contains three such examples, one is medium brown (N - W - 15), and the other two are light red (N - W - 2 and N - W - 14), and appear to have been produced from vegetable dyes because the colors are less intense than the colors obtained from imported dyes. Three other fabrics, similarly patterned, have been made with colorfast dyes in bright hues of blue, green and yellow (N - W - 34 through N - W - 36).

Adire cloths are used by the Yoruba for both personal and domestic adornment. Women use them for head-ties, wrappers and baby clothes. They may also be used by men as sleeping cloths.[2] As interior decoration, they may be used as cushion covers and window curtains.[3] Adire cloth has recently been used by non-

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[1]Barbour, op. cit., p. 4.

[2]Wenger and Beier, op. cit., p. 212.

[3]"Art on the Drying Field," op. cit., p. 327.

Nigerian men and women for sport shirts and dresses. The colorfast adire cloths are especially desired by non-Nigerian women for various styles of dresses.[1]

Weaving as well as pattern dyeing is a craft which was widely practiced by the Yorubas. According to Ojo,[2] weaving as a domestic industry flourished throughout the West in the past when a great number of women wove, as well as assisted on the farms. Weaving became localized in areas where cotton grew best, and where alternative occupations were rare. It became a specialized industry, especially when men and women could be absent from the farm for long periods during the year due to the shorter growing season. The main weaving centers were: Akoko, Owo, Ekiti, Ondo, Oshogbo, Ibadan, Iseyin, Oyo, and Ilorin. Vertical weaving is more important than the horizontal weaving in Owo, whereas horizontal weaving preponderates in the other areas. Most of the hand-woven samples from the Western Region in the Eicher Collection are from Iseyin and Ibadan. A few were purchased in the Enugu market, and resemble those from Ibadan and Iseyin in fiber content, color combinations and weaving techniques.

Cotton is grown and spun in Nigeria, but much imported yarn is used, especially for the warps.[3] The

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[1]Eicher. [2]Ojo, op. cit., p. 87.

[3]Murray, op. cit.

imported yarn provides extra strength which is needed for the warp yarns. Today, fewer women gin, card, and spin cotton, and these are usually the illiterates.[1] Boyer[2] and Worsley[3] describe the process which is used by the Yoruba women who prepare cotton.

De-seeding is accomplished by rolling the cotton away from the body, between an iron rod and a block of wood, and as pressure is applied, the seeds are extracted. After the cotton is fluffed with a bow, it is ready for spinning. In her right hand, the spinner holds a six-inch wooden spindle, weighted by a clay whorl. This is twirled on a calabash, or piece of cloth. When sufficient yardage has been obtained, the yarn is wound into skeins, either around the legs of the worker or over pegs set in opposite ends of a bamboo pole. A finished skein is secured with a small portion of thread, twisted into shape, and is then ready to be transferred to spools if natural color is used, or to be taken to women dyers.[4] If the yarn is dyed, the process used is similar to that described above for the indigo pattern dyeing of cloth. Boyer lists dark blue as the favorite color of the Yoruba,

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[1] Ojo, op. cit., p. 90.

[2] Ruth Boyer, "Narrow Band Weaving Among the Yoruba of Nigeria," Craft Horizons, XXIV (November-December, 1964), 52.

[3] Marie Worsley, "Nigerian Weavers," Handweaver and Craftsman, XII (Spring, 1961), 45.

[4] Eve deNegri, "Nigerian Textile Industry Before Independence," Nigeria Magazine, No. 89 (June, 1966), 98.

followed by a rich tan.[1] Red, yellow, greens, and magenta are less frequent choices because the materials for making them are often difficult to obtain. Pre-dyed skeins of European origin are available in a wide range of colors, and many of these are popular when not too expensive. Sometimes, the weft color which is used differs from the hue of the warp. Boyer lists as prevalent color combinations, red or green with indigos, or beige with light blue. The colors of the fabrics in the Eicher Collection reinforce this opinion.

Prior to warping the loom, all threads must be wound onto spools. This is the task of young male weaving apprentices. The first step is to spread the skein around the four pegs of a simple revolving reel. One peg is located at each end of the two crossbars. The worker inserts a long plug inside the spool to be used. Then holding the plug in his right hand so as to twirl the spool, he disentangles the threads on the reel with his left hand and the thread is transferred from reel to spool.

The warping process follows the preparation of the yarns. The threads are lain out along the ground according to a predetermined arrangement by the master weaver. The apprentice places the spool of thread on a peg extending from a stick. At the lower end of the stick is an eyelet through which the thread passes. Therefore,

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[1]Boyer, op. cit., p. 52.

when the stick is held by its upper end, the eyelet is pointed down and the thread is fed out close to the ground. A common variant is a warping stick with multiple pegs, each carrying its own spool. The forward movement of the apprentice releases a trail of threads in parallel rows. Warps may vary from twenty yards to hundreds of yards in length.

The male weaver uses a horizontal narrow band treadle loom, which Hambly describes as having a West African distribution from Gambia to Lake Chad.[1] Instead of using a rectangular wooden framework[2] to support the reed and two harnesses,[3] the Yoruba weavers take advantage of their shelter. They employ the rafters as suspension points for the necessary cords. Each of the two foot treadles is equipped with a loop which fits around the weaver's big toe. The weaving is done in a long, low, open-fronted shed, in front of which stretch the warps and the finished fabric. A shed may contain as few as two or three, or as many as thirty-five looms (Plate IV, page 45).

The textiles produced on this narrow loom are usually four inches wide, are plain weave, and are warp faced so that the various colors included in the warp

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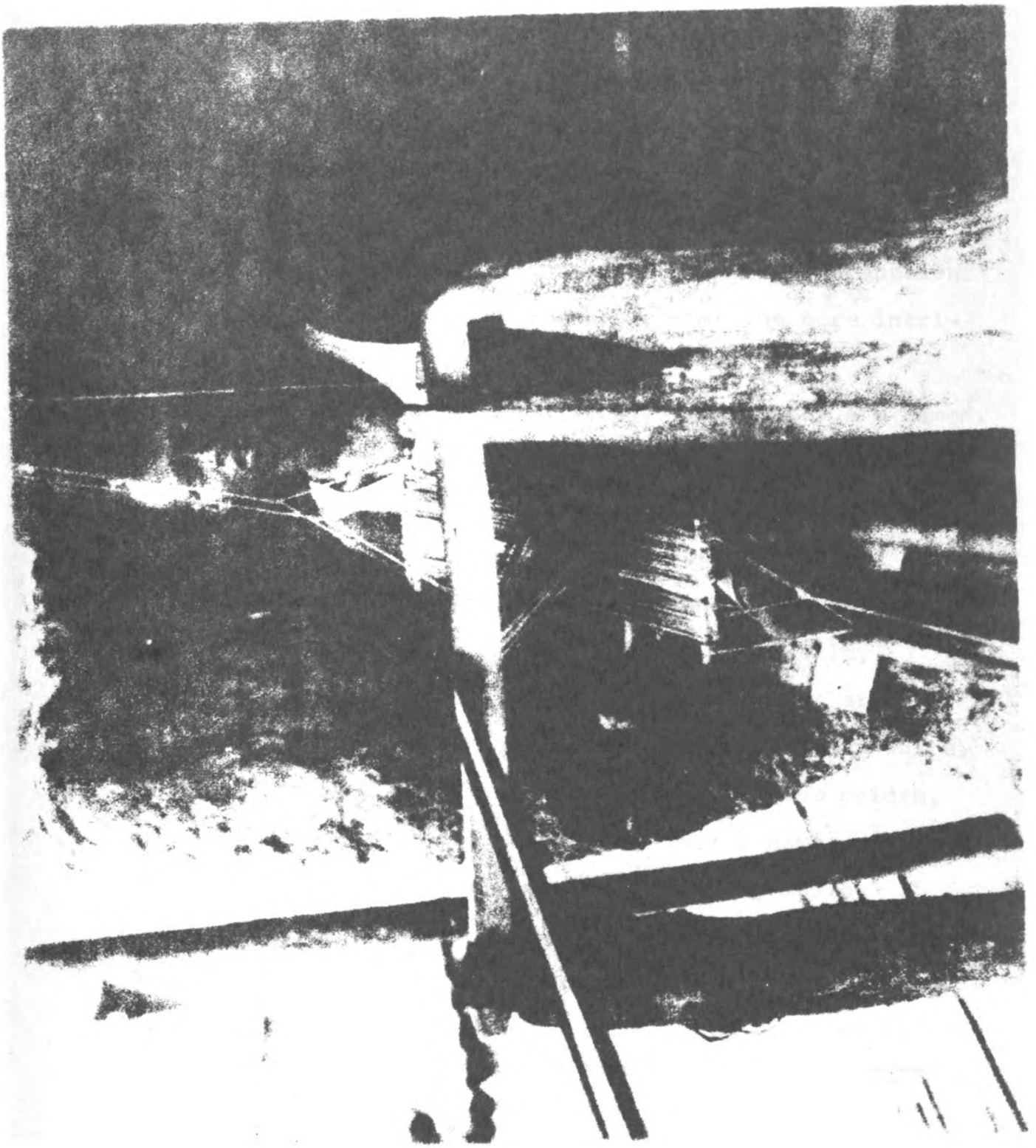
[1]Wilfrid D. Hambly, Culture Areas of Nigeria. Field Museum of Natural History. Publication 346. Anthropological Series, XXI, No. 3 (Chicago, 1935), 413.

[2]Ling Roth, Studies in Primitive Looms (Halifax: Scott Bros., Ltd., 1950), p. 57.

[3]C. B. Dodwell, "The Town of Weavers," Nigeria, No. 46 (1955), 122.



emerge as lengthwise stripes. According to Boyer,[1] the design within the narrow band may be symmetrical, asymmetrical, or a series of repeats. Asymmetrical patterns are slightly more prevalent than the others. Occasionally the Yoruba make monochromatic bands without patterning, but neither these nor the weft striped patterns are highly esteemed. However, those which combine both warp and weft stripings to form plaids or checks are popular. The number of colors used in a particular band has no apparent bearing on price, but many Yorubas prefer the more intricate designs.

Except for unpatterned strips, most bands are named. First, the weaver names his pattern, then if it is chosen to represent a certain organization, it may be given another name, and the terminology may be complicated even further by the seller who may give it another name. The names given by weavers tend to describe the quality, color, or general pattern of the band. Examples are plain cloth with one stripe, or something which has white. Examples of other names are cricket legs, albino maiden, or yam porridge which has red. Some of the names do not seem to have a logical connection with the textile.

In an article on the weaving performed in Iseyin, Dodwell describes the narrow woven bands from that town. Unless otherwise documented, information pertaining to

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[1]Boyer, op. cit., p. 52.

Iseyin weaving is taken from this article.[1] The three main qualities of Iseyin cloth are: (1) a smooth-textured cloth woven entirely of imported yarn, (2) a slightly heavier and rougher textured cloth of mixtures of imported and local yarn, and (3) a heavy-weight, closely-woven cloth entirely of local yarn. The Iseyin cloth in the Eicher Collection is smooth-textured and woven entirely of imported cotton yarn. There are examples of narrow bands with weft and warp stripes as well as combinations of both. Some of the more decorative fabrics have an inlaid design of lustrous rayon (N - W - 63 and N - W - 64), and one has been structurally decorated by using the Spanish lace technique (N - W - 63). (Plate V, page 48.) Upon close examination of some of the narrow bands it was discovered that the weft and warp yarns had been separated by an object which was forced through the fabric in order to simulate the Spanish lace technique (N - W - 56 and N - W - 61). The fabrics in which this technique was observed were less elaborate in color and lacked the inlaid design (Plate VI, page 48).

Dodwell further comments that the demand for various designs differs from area to area. At the time his article was written, the local Iseyin demand was for the traditional patterns in the combinations of darker blues. In Ibadan and Lagos, on the other hand, where the influence of settlers from the Northern and Eastern Regions

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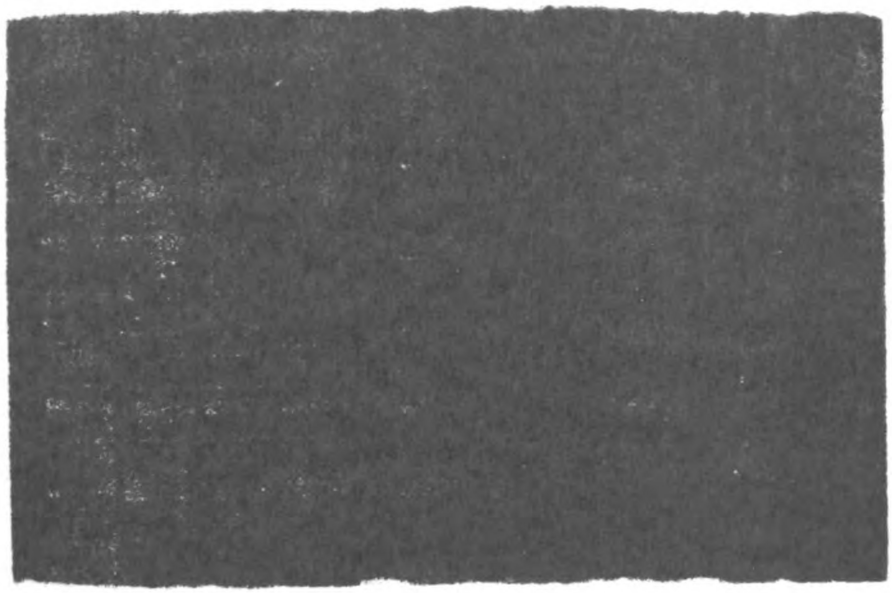
[1] Dodwell, op. cit., pp. 118-143.



exists, there was a preference for the lighter colors and combinations of fawn, red and yellow.

Iseyin cloth is valued for its stiffness, its absorbant properties, and the protection it gives from the sun. Throughout the Western Region it has a reputation for excellence and its use denotes the prosperity of the wearer.

The output of an individual weaver depends on his degree of skill, dexterity and industry, as well as on the type of yarn he is using. Although imported yarn is much finer than the local yarn, it allows a faster rhythm of work and less time is lost through yarn breakages. A weaver's average daily production ranges from five-sixths of a square yard for heavy-weight cloth of local yarn, to over one square yard for imported plus local mixtures, and up to two square yards a day for cloth woven entirely in imported yarn.

The accumulation of stocks of cloth is very restricted. This is attributed to the limitations of available capital and to the astute appreciation of the factors which may cause price fluctuations.

The Nigerian markets for Iseyin cloth are the towns of Iseyin, Ibadan and Lagos. The Iseyin market serves the immediate vicinity and occasional traders who come from as far away as Onitsha, but is not, however, ordinarily visited by cloth traders from other areas. These areas are served by the Iseyin cloth traders who

travel to the Ibadan and Lagos markets.

The marketing structure is highly organized. The individual, independent weavers may dispose of their cloth in three ways: (1) by sale to a particular customer who has ordered it from him, (2) by sale to some cloth trader with whom the weaver is accustomed to deal, or (3) by sale to any purchaser in the early evening market in Iseyin. Few weavers rely exclusively on any one of these channels. The main marketing channel is the Iseyin cloth trader. Those weavers with a small trading capital confine their activities to the Iseyin market, but those with more capital form two trading groups, one group traveling to sell in the Ibadan market, the other in Lagos. A new group member will be introduced to reliable middlemen traders in the distant market, he will have the support of his comrades in any dispute that may arise there, and he will be introduced to reliable yarn dealers.

Consumers may purchase Iseyin cloth in the form of the long narrow bands or as wide cloth comprised of several bands sewn together. Iseyin cloth is used in wrappers and head-ties for women, and caps, robes, and trousers for men. The cloth is considered to be a semi-luxurious product, it is more expensive than the imported cottons, and it competes with the more costly imported printed cottons, artificial silks, velveteens, and brocades.

In addition to the textile crafts of resist dye

printing and weaving with cotton and rayon, Nigerians also produce fabrics from indigenous silk. According to an article written by Ene, silk is grown in all three regions of Nigeria and is described as follows.[1] The silk is made from protective nests spun by anaphe caterpillars. The silks they produce are known as anaphe and are distinct from the bombyx and tussah silk of China and Japan, and the eri silk of India. The silk of the individual anaphe cocoons is pale in color and is not as strong as the casing silk.

The silken nests are collected from the wild, and the food plants of the caterpillars are not cultivated in any way. The collection depends entirely on chance. If a farmer or hunter happens to see a nest while walking through the bush or clearing farmlands, he will take it to the nearest market and sell it. The silks of the anaphe moths which occur in Eastern and Mid-Western Nigeria are not used for the production of cloth, but the caterpillars may be eaten.

After the nests have been collected, they are treated with a special mixture of wood ash to remove the gum which binds the silken threads together. The ash and the nests are seived free from debris, are mixed with water to form a paste, and are moulded into lumps. These are first dried in the sun and then baked in a hot oven,

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[1] J. Chunwike Ene, "Indigenous Silk-weaving in Nigeria," Nigeria Magazine, No. 81 (June, 1964), 127-36.

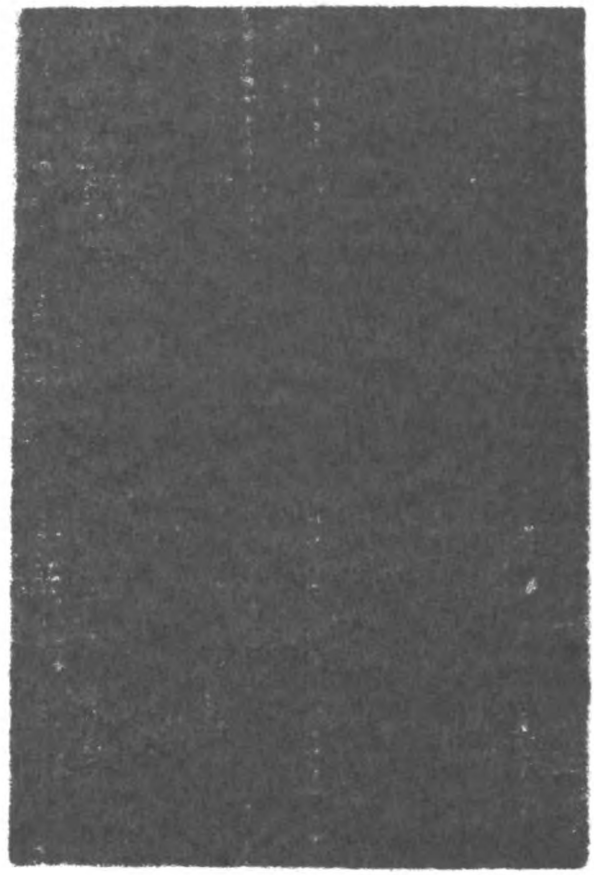
after which they are spun into a coarse thread.

The cloth woven from the coarse thread is known as sanyan. Traditionally, sanyan is woven as a narrow band four to six inches wide, and fifty to sixty yards long. It is then cut into three or six-yard lengths and sewn together side by side. This material is not usually bleached or dyed, and is brown or greyish brown color. If not specially ordered, the weft yarns are made of cotton threads.

The major weaving centers for sanyan weaving are Iseyin and Ondo. Burning tests have indicated that the average sanyan in the Ondo market contains a higher proportion of cotton fibers and is consequently paler in color than the Iseyin sanyan.

Nigerian silk which has been degummed by the process described above, tends to lose the luster that is regarded as one of the prime qualities of silks. The yarn is hand spun by women from the tangled silk mass and never reeled as single denier filaments. It is therefore rather lumpy, and yields a coarse cloth invariably mistaken for cotton. The Eicher Collection contains three widths of sanyan which were purchased in Ijebu-Ode (N - W - 65a, b, c). When the weft yarns were inspected under a microscope, the fiber content was identified as cotton. Each width contains several narrow woven strips which have been sewn together (Plate VII, page 53). These three widths of fabric constitute the basis of a

PLATE VII



SAIPAN

traditional Yoruba woman's costume; wrapper, stole, and head-tie, with which a contrasting blouse would be worn.[1] Sanyan is worn by both men and women for special occasions and as wedding garments by the bride and the groom as well as the wedding guests.[2]

The Eicher Collection contains four fabrics purchased in Ibadan, for which no descriptive literature was found. These fabrics average fourteen inches by sixty-six inches and when used, they are tied around the waist of an adult as a support for carrying a baby on the mother's back. These fabrics are called baby ties.[3] Two of the baby ties are a plain warp-faced weave (N - W - 52 and N - W - 54). The fiber used for the weft yarns is cotton and the warp yarns are ramie fiber.[4] The third baby tie is cotton fiber woven in a plain ground weave, on which groups of cotton yarns have been inlaid in the warp direction, and clipped to form a bow-tie design (N - W - 53). The other baby tie is cotton with a plain ground weave on which weft yarns have been looped to form an overall textured surface (N - W - 55). All of the baby ties are hand woven and have fringe on each end.

Another fabric which was purchased in Ibadan was not described in the literature. It is similar to the above baby ties in size and weft yarn fiber content;

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[1]Eicher. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid.

[4]Fiber content identified by inspection under microscope.

however, the warp yarns are raffia. The use for which this fabric was intended is not known (N - W - 66).

Although the literature did not describe the baby ties, photographs of Yoruba women supporting a baby on their back are indeed symbolic of a pattern of life. Each family member who is capable, pursues some type of task which is not always in the home. In order to continue her work, the Yoruba woman ties the baby on her back.

The narrow bands, which are woven by Yoruba men on horizontal narrow looms, are illustrative of another aspect of the Nigerian culture. Technologically, the narrow looms are inefficient. If the looms were wider, an increased quantity of cloth could be produced in the same amount of time. However, a technological change such as this would eliminate the attractive texture which is produced by sewing together the narrow bands of cloth.

Technological change is also evident in the craft of resist dyeing as visualized by the use of imported dyes to produce the traditional indigo blues, and the use of sewing machine tritik resist preparations. Tradition also prevails in the face of technological change as exemplified by the continued Yoruba preference for subtle indigo blues which are obtained by dyeing commercially printed cloth.

In the opinion of many non-Nigerians, the indigo adire cloths, varying in values from the lightest blue to almost black, are keenly expressive textile artifacts,

and are valued for the Nigerian craftsman's accomplished execution of color and design.

CHAPTER III

HANDCRAFTED TEXTILES OF THE NORTHERN REGION

The Eicher Collection contains twenty-one handcrafted fabrics from the Northern Region of Nigeria. One of the fabrics is composed of narrow woven bands and is believed to have been handwoven in Ilorin. Three fabrics are wide, handwoven cloth from Bida. One fabric is a cotton blanket comprised of six handwoven strips of cloth. One of the fabrics is a Hausa embroidered bedsheet. Six of the fabrics were handwoven in Okene. One fabric was woven on a foot-powered loom in Kano. Five of the fabrics were handwoven in Lokoja. Two were handwoven in Yola, and a large blue rayon blanket was woven in Maiduguri.

Each of the fabrics from the Northern Region is briefly summarized in the form of a fabric inventory which follows in Table 2.

The majority of available literature describing the textile craft industries of the Northern Region pertains to the city of Bida, which is inhabited by the Nupe speaking people, a group which is in numerical minority to the more populous Hausa and Fulani tribes.[1] Therefore, the following account can not be viewed as representative

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[1]Fordham, op. cit., p. 100.

TABLE 2.--FABRIC INVENTORY FOR NORTHERN REGION[a]

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size[c]	Intended Use of Fabric
N - N - 1[b]	Narrow bands, plain weave in medium blue with black warp and weft stripes (cotton)	Ilorin (probably) (purchased in Enugu market)	55" x 84"	Men's African evening dress, cap and cloak for a young boy, and ceremonial dress for chiefs in Ghana
N - N - 2	Black, blue, green warp stripes on red plain weave (cotton)	Bida	21" x 66"	Woman's wrapper
N - N - 3	Rayon inlay designs on cotton blue plain weave	Bida	25" x 68"	"
N - N - 4	Rayon inlay designs on cotton white plain weave	Bida	26" x 75"	"

[a]This fabric inventory is a summary of all the handcrafted textiles from the Northern Region of Nigeria which are included in the Eicher Collection. The code numbers identify the fabrics in the collection, and are referred to in the text where the fabric is discussed.

[b]As an example, this inventory would be read: N - N - 1; a (N)igerian textile from the (N)orthern Region, is identified as fabric number (1). The fiber content is cotton; the fabric consists of narrow bands sewn together. Each narrow band is a plain weave in medium blue with black warp and weft stripes. It was probably handcrafted in Ilorin and purchased at the Enugu market; it is fifty-five inches by eighty-four inches; and it would be used as men's African evening dress, a cap and cloak for a young boy, and as ceremonial dress by chiefs in Ghana.

[c]Size dimensions have been rounded to the nearest inch.

TABLE 2.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - N - 5	White blanket of six stripes (10" wide) with float designs (cotton)	Unknown	58" x 86"	Blanket
N - N - 6	White imported cotton in plain weave with rayon embrodered animal figures	Kano	35" x 69"	Hausa bridal bed sheet
N - N - 7a	Rayon inlay designs on cotton plain weave	Okene	22" x 89"	Special woman's evening dress
N - N - 7b	"	Okene	23" x 89"	"
N - N - 7c	"	Okene	26" x 89"	"
N - N - 8a	Black cotton plain weave with rayon inlay designs of red, yellow, and white	Okene (purchased in Enugu)	24" x 70"	"
N - N - 8b	"	Okene	24" x 70"	"
N - N - 9	Yellow inlay on green plain weave (rayon)	Okene	5" x 50"	Scarf
N - N - 10	Green and black uncut overshot design on blue plain weave (cotton)	Kano	17" x 88"	Unknown

TABLE 2.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - N - 11a	Black and white check plain weave (cotton)	Lokoja	19" x 81"	Woman's wrapper
N - N - 11b	"	Lokoja	19" x 81"	"
N - N - 11c	"	Lokoja	20" x 81"	"
N - N - 12a	Black and white block plaid with red and yellow warp stripes (cotton)	Lokoja	18" x 81"	"
N - N - 12b	"	Lokoja	18" x 71"	"
N - N - 13a	Inlay designs of white, red, green, gold, and blue on black plain weave (cotton)	Yola (purchased in Lagos)	23" x 71"	Unknown (possibly a woman's wrapper)
N - N - 13b	"	Yola	23" x 71"	"
N - N - 14	Blue bed cover with red, yellow, green, black float designs (rayon)	Maiduguri	33" x 95"	Bed cover

of the entire Northern Region of Nigeria; however, many of the aspects may be typical.

In an account of Bida written by Nadel, craft industries are described on the basis of individual and guild-organized crafts.[1] The individual crafts include glass-bead making, brass casting, tailoring, embroidery, indigo dyeing, straw-hat making, mat making, and basket-work. The craft of weaving is listed among the guild-organized. The guild is a co-operative group in which the membership is largely hereditary within families, outsiders being admitted only through a formal adoption into the craft profession after a period of apprentice-ship. In weaving for example, the work organization consists of a section of the family group working together under a senior relative who acts as the leader, directs group co-operation, supplies the means of production, and distributes the proceeds from the group work. He also pays taxes for his co-workers and provides them with food, clothing, and bride price. At the death of this man, the man who is next in seniority takes his place. Young men are not interminably bound to this co-operative group, however to establish themselves elsewhere would be very expensive. Young boys are taught the weaving craft by assisting with auxiliary work such as spooling the cotton thread, or preparing the yarns for warping, and in general, obserbing the weaving process.

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[1] S. F. Nadel, A Black Byzantium (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 257-58.

Describing the male weavers in Bida, Vernon-Jackson states that there are three distinct groups, two Nupe and one Nupe in appearance but Yoruba in descent. All three groups belong to one craft guild, whose headship passes in no established order from one group to another upon agreement among the councils of elders of the guild and, like all guild headships, is held for life.[1] This opinion agrees with the presentation by Nadel on the position that there are three distinct groups of weavers, however, it is in disagreement on the basis that Nadel contends that each group of weavers has its own guild head.[2] This discrepancy may exist because in 1946, when Nadel's work was published, there was a greater number of weavers whose guilds were more elaborately organized than in 1960 when Vernon-Jackson's work was published.

The following description of the Bida weaving process is based on Nadel's account unless otherwise documented.[3] The loom is of the narrow upright kind, worked with treadles, and is common all over Northern Nigeria. These looms produce narrow strips of cloth five inches wide and thirty feet long.[4] The looms are placed in an open-faced shed, similar in structure to the weaving sheds described in the Western Region, six to

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[1]Hugh Vernon-Jackson, "Craft Work in Bida," Africa, XXX (January, 1960), 54.

[2]Nadel, op. cit., p. 282. [3]Ibid., pp. 279-82.

[4]deNegri, op. cit., 89; and Vernon-Jackson, op. cit., 54.

seven sheds are situated in the inner courtyard of the compound. The weavers purchase a large proportion of their tools from other craftsmen, such as the shuttle and the wooden posts on which the loom rests, the iron rods used as treadles, and the iron take-up bar upon which the finished strips of cloth are wound. Only the weaver's reed is produced by the weavers.

The individual weaver is free to plan his work independently, and to select from a number of different methods. The long narrow strips of cloth, woven on the Nupe looms to a standard length of about thirty feet, are produced in five days. One man may produce from three to four lengths every month. The cloth is then cut into five strips and sewn together, edge to edge, to form the complete ede cloth. This cloth is worn by women around the waist or as kerchiefs over the head.

The Nupe weavers work every day except Friday, but much time is involved in marketing the cloth. A weaver can entrust his goods to one of the brokers who has a shop on the Bida night market. The broker often takes considerable time selling the cloth, and sometimes does not sell it at all. Many younger men prefer to sell their own cloth in village markets where there is less competition in both Nigerian-made and European goods. Instead of cutting and sewing together the cloth in the form of an ede, the weaver can also sell the full-length cloth to the cap makers, or as another alternative, he can make

it into caps himself. Cap making is more profitable because hats are in great demand; however, cap making is regarded as a slightly degrading occupation.

In the villages cheaper qualities of cloth, mostly native-dyed, are produced. Even when the village weavers produce the same kind of cloth as the Bida craftsmen, they sell it more cheaply, being content with a smaller profit. The work and materials of the village weavers are known to be inferior to that of the Bida craftsmen because they use a cruder indigenous dye instead of European dyes, gin their own cotton and work with the resulting inferior cotton thread which breaks frequently during the weaving. They take ten days for the weaving of a piece of cloth which the Bida craftsmen finish in five. Because they limit themselves to cheaper and cruder materials and cater exclusively to the less wealthy customers, they can withstand the competition of European cloth better than the Bida weavers who have specialized in more ambitious and expensive work.

The Eicher Collection does not contain samples of Bida narrow woven fabric of either quality. The only narrow fabric from the Northern Region represented in the collection is believed to be from Ilorin. Ilorin is on the border between Northern and Western Nigeria and the weaving done there illustrates a meeting of the two cultures. For example, the men do narrow weaving on a horizontal loom, which is technically more advanced than

the wide vertical loom because it contains a mechanically operated heddle. This mechanism, while enabling a much greater weaving speed, is still inefficient because the woven cloth is only four to six inches wide and consequently must be sewn together to make widths suitable for use as garments.

Clarke states that most of the Ilorin cloths are designed with stripe arrangements in blues, browns, and white.[1] The Ilorin cloth in the Eicher Collection is comprised of narrow bands which are medium blue with black warp stripes (N - N - 1). Uses for the Ilorin cloth, which is comprised of narrow woven bands, suggested by Clarke are: men's African evening dress which is a full length garment draped over one shoulder; cap and cloak for a young boy; ceremonial dress for Gold Goast (Ghana) chiefs; and as bedspreads and curtains by Europeans.[2]

Wide cloth is woven in Ilorin by women on primitive vertical looms. It is a slow process which produces cloth about eighteen inches wide and six or seven feet long.[3] This type of weaving is similar to that described for the Yoruba and has been practiced for over a thousand years. There are no examples of wide cloth from Ilorin in the collection.

According to Vernon-Jackson, considerably more weaving in Bida is done by women than by men, but there

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[1] J. D. Clarke, "Ilorin Weaving," Nigeria, XIV (1938), 121.

[2] Ibid., 123-24. [3] Ibid., 121.

is no organization or craft guild of women weavers.[1] Nadel has classified women's weaving as an individual craft, and from his treatment of the subject, there is reason to believe that he might have concluded the women's weaving to be less important and less prevalent than that of the men. The following discussion from Nadel's work provides the basis for the above assumption.[2] Women's weaving is done on the upright broad loom, twenty-one inches wide, which, although produced today by the Bida carpenters, appears to have had its origin in the southern Yoruba country. This technique of weaving is said to be comparatively new, and not traditionally Nupe. It may have been introduced to the Nupe from the Yoruba in the times of the Yoruba wars, through the medium of Yoruba wives and slaves of the Nupe nobility. Women's weaving is restricted to the upper classes of Nupe society and only wives and daughters of the nobility or the intelligentsia possess a loom and practice the craft. This suggests an explanation for the limitation of this craft to a specific social stratum. Only women who have servants to help with housework and to run errands for them can find the leisure for this long and delicate work. The restriction of this woman's craft to one social stratum is made possible through the existence of a unilateral class endogamy on the part of the women who

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[1] Vernon-Jackson, op. cit., 54.

[2] Nadel, op. cit., p. 297.

rarely marry beneath their class.

The review of literature produced no detailed description of the Bida cloth woven by the women, other than the size, which deNegri classifies as wide,[1] which the writer assumes to be approximately twenty inches, based on the twenty-one-inch loom described by Nadel. Two of the three examples of wide cloth from Bida in the Eicher Collection are twenty-five inches (N - N - 3), and twenty-six inches wide (N - N - 4), indicating the use of a wider loom than described above. These fabrics have a plain ground weave, with inlaid geometric designs of rayon and cotton yarns. The ground weave is more accurately classified as a basket weave variation of a plain weave because two warp yarns pass alternatively over and under three weft yarns. The inlaid designs are visible only on the right size of the fabric because they are inlaid on a single shed. Neither the inlaid rayon yarns nor the inlaid cotton yarns were plied prior to being inlaid. Plate VIII on page 68 provides an enlarged view of Bida cloth. Plate IX on page 69 illustrates a portion of the same Bida cloth. The other Bida cloth is less wide, without inlaid designs, and could have been woven on the twenty-one inch loom (N - N - 2). The Bida cloth in the Eicher Collection would be used as one of three units sewn together side by side to form a woman's wrapper.[2]

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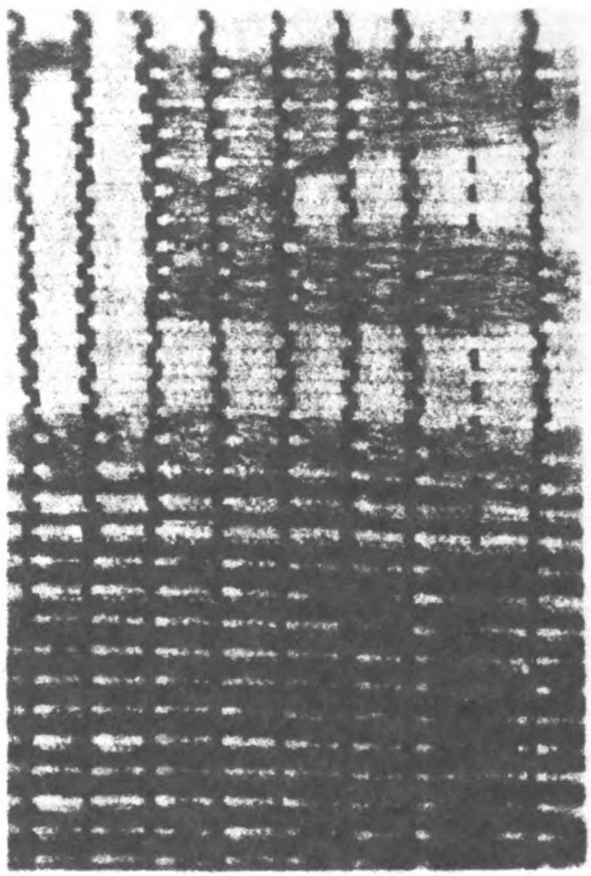
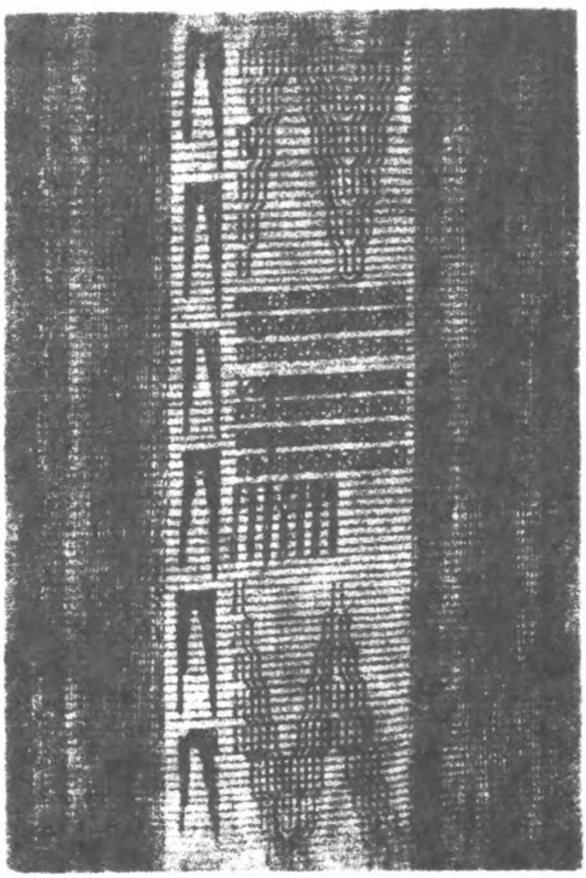
[1] deNegri, op. cit., 89. [2] Eicher.

PLATE VIII



ENLARGED VIEW OF CLOTH WOVEN [illegible]

PLATE IX



DISTANT VIEW OF A PORTION OF CLOTH
WOVEN IN BIDA

Concerning the weaving in other parts of the Northern Region, Gervis comments on having seen in a small village, men stretching out a warp of coarse cotton spun in with goat hair, and another man working a hand made loom on which he was weaving strips of cloth about nine inches wide. When finished, these strips would be sewn together with five or six others to make a blanket.[1] One fabric in the Eicher Collection which was purchased in the Northern Region resembles this description. It is structurally decorated with blue and gold float yarns which form one stripe on each strip of fabric (N - N - 5). Eicher reports that this fabric would be used as a blanket or a bed covering.[2] Gervis also comments on the textile industries in Ilorin Province where considerable weaving is done from cotton which is grown and dyed locally. He continues to explain that spinning is undertaken by the village women and the weaving is done by men and boys who sit on benches before their horizontal looms set under trees or thatched roofs. Women also weave using the upright loom indoors.

According to Ene, silk of the type described in the Western Region is also found in the Northern Region.[3] The degumming agent is a special wood ash which is boiled in water with the nests of the caterpillars. Nests are then stirred thoroughly and allowed to stand for an hour,

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[1]Pearce Gervis, Of Emirs and Pagans (London: Cox and Wyman, Ltd., 1963), p. 91.

[2]Eicher. [3]Ene, op. cit., p. 132.

after which they are washed, dried, and teased open by hand into single silk threads. The Hausas use this silk for embroidering elegant robes.[1] Examples of Hausa silk embroidery are not found in the Eicher Collection.

The craft of embroidery, according to Beier, is a highly developed traditional art among the Hausa people.[2] He contends that traditional embroidery is performed by men and is usually applied to men's dresses, the designs being abstract and severe. The embroidering done by women is of very recent origin and would not have been observed a few years ago in the Kano market. Today however, there is an increasing turnover among embroiderers, and new patterns are constantly being created. Beier states that these designs are embroidered on long strips of white imported cloth, with brightly colored silks, but he does not indicate whether or not the silks to which he refers are of Nigerian origin. In contrast to traditional designs, the new ones are abstract geometric figures. Usually the same design is repeated four times in a row. Often the colors are mixed and sometimes two designs alternate. The most common design subjects are animals. Less frequently there are designs of decorative mosques and there are some which represent human figures.

The stylistic differences between these two types

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ulli Beier, "Nigerian Folk Art," Nigeria Magazine, No. 75 (December, 1962), 28.

of embroidering are very noticeable. Folk art, according to Beier, is less skillful, and the more relaxed designs are applied in brighter colors. These embroideries are used for table cloths, or bedspreads or simply used to decorate the walls.

The Eicher Collection contains a bridal bedhseet which was embroidered by the Hausa people (N - N - 6). The design of animal figures was embroidered in hues of blue, orange and yellow on a white cotton plain woven fabric. The embroidering yarns are rayon. It is not known whether the embroiderer was a man or a woman.

Nadel classifies Bida embroidering as an individual craft for which there is no guild organization.[1] He comments that embroidery is, however, a more delicate work, requiring more taste and skill, than other individual crafts such as tailoring and mat weaving, and has become the pastime of many members of the intelligentsia. Nadel further contends that most important chief's dress is of the more expensive kind, such as embroidered trousers, or possibly an embroidered Bida robe.[2] Embroidered Bida gowns are famous throughout Nigeria, and are completed in fifteen to twenty days.[3]

Weaving with grass is another craft which is characteristic of the Northern Region, and according to Ahmed, mats constitute the greatest proportion of the grass-woven

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[1] Nadel, op. cit., p. 286.

[2] Ibid., p. 61. [3] Ibid.

products which he describes.[1] Mats serve as seats, beds, carpets, and ceiling boards. They are used for screening off areas, for fencing in compounds, and are woven into boxes, raincoats, hats and many othr items. Several kinds of palm leaves and grasses are used in the production of these products. The method of coloring grass woven products is the same throughout the Northern Region. Red, yellow, and black locally obtained dyes are used. Red is obtained by boiling the sheaths of a kind of guinea-corn stalk. Yellow is made from roots called rawaya plus black from guinea-corn stalks. There are no examples of this type of weaving in the Eicher Collection, but they are mentioned in this study because they provide an example of the products used by the people of Northern Nigeria which would be substituted by cloth fabrics and other more durable materials in the Western world.

Indigo dyeing is another craft practiced in the Northern Region although it is much less prevalent than in the West. According to Nadel, indigo is gained from both the indigo grass and the indigo tree which either grow wild in the bush that surrounds most Nupe villages, or are cultivated in the areas which have been cleared.[2] The following discussion of the indigo crafts is based on Nadel's description.[3] The source and the cultivation of

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[1] S. Gimba Ahmed, "Grass Weaving," Nigeria Magazine, No. 74 (September, 1962), 11-14.

[2] Nadel, op. cit., p. 235. [3] Ibid., pp. 235-95.

the indigo plant determines if it will be used by men or women dyers. The indigo plants and trees which have been grown and cultivated in the cleared areas provide the dye which will be used by the Nupe men dyers. The cultivated indigo grass or leaves are cut, and left to dry from two to three months. The indigo dye is obtained by placing the dried indigo grass or leaves in a mortar, pounding the leaves to a powder substance, adding water to the indigo powder and allowing it to ferment. Ashes are then mixed with the fermented dye solution. The resulting combination of dye and ashes is dried and may be shaped into balls. The Nupe men dyers produce the indigo dye by filtering water through a sieve, which contains the dried indigo, into the deep clay cemented dye pits (Plate X, page 75). The Nupe and Hausa dye making processes are the same. Similarly, both Nupe and Hausa men do more dyeing than Nupe and Hausa women.

The uncultivated indigo, which grows wild in the bush, is gathered and made into dye only by the Nupe women. The method of preparing the indigo dye used by the women is the same as that used by the men dyers. However, the dyeing receptacles used by the women are large earthen pots situated above the ground. Nadel attributes this type of dyeing to the Yoruba-Konu,[1] who introduced weaving and indigo dyeing in Yoruba fashion.

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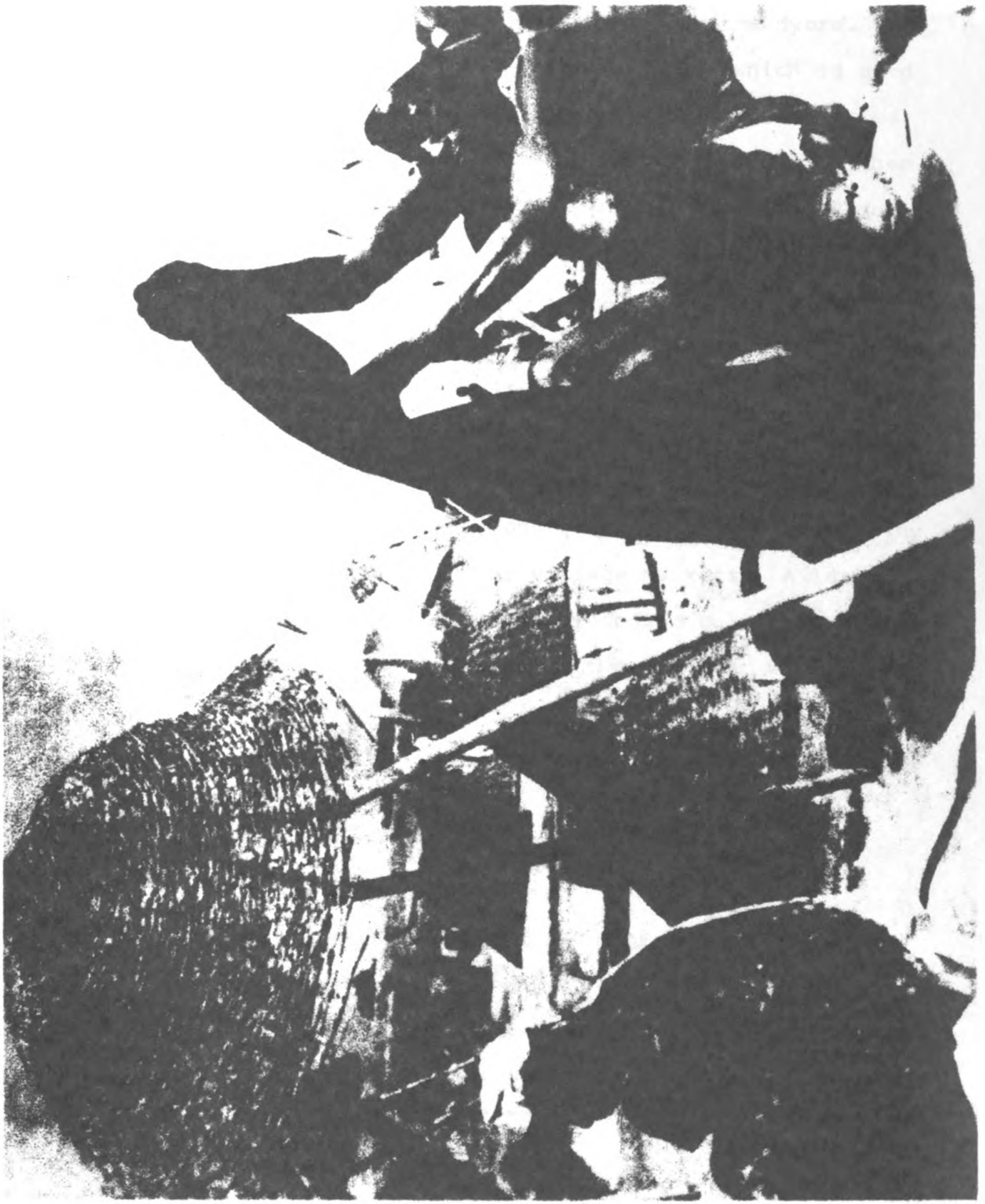
[1]Nadel, op. cit., 20, 188. Konu in this sense refers to the descendants of prisoners of war, now barely distinguishable from the original Nupes.

PLATE X



KANO INDIGO DYE PITS USED ONLY BY MEN

He further contends that indigo dyeing by women is practiced only in the few Konu groups in Nupe country where the men are the weavers and the women are the dyers. These women dye not only the cotton thread which is used later by the men in weaving, but they also dye any kind of readymade cloth, old and new, that is brought to them by outside customers. Dyeing is usually done individually, and each woman has her own dyeing pot and makes her own dye. After the cloth is dyed, it is spread on the felled trunk of a tree and beaten with wooden clubs, then rubbed with round stones to make it shine.[1]

In Nadel's opinion, the market for indigo in Nupe country is very limited. The small quantities manufactured by the wives of the Konu weavers are either used by the wives or are sold in the village markets. A larger output of indigo dye, produced by indigo cultivators, is distributed through middlemen to the Yorubas, who provide the most favorable market. In the city of Bida, modern products have almost completely replaced the native technique of dyeing.

The Eicher Collection contains no indigo dyed cloth from the Northern Region.

There are three fabrics from Okene in the Eicher Collection. The only literature found concerning the textile crafts produced in that city was an advertisement from the University of Lagos Library:

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[1]Vernon-Jackson, op. cit., p. 55.

> DISPLAY OF OKENE WEAVING . . . The woven samples of cloth, here displayed, represent the labours of present day folk who live in Okene, Kabba Province, who are following an Igvira tradition established over two centuries ago. The original Igvira weaving was with locally grown cotton and spinning machines.
>
> Silks, now characteristic of Okene cloth, were introduced by Yesufu Otohu in 1948. Since his innovation, silks are now very popular as weaving material.[1]

Two of the Okene cloths in the Eicher Collection are a plain weave cotton, with inlaid designs formed by groups of rayon and cotton yarns (N - N - 7a, b, c and N - N - 8a, b). The inlay technique used to produce the Okene cloths is the same as that described above for the Bida cloth. Eicher reports that these cloths are sewn together to form women's wrappers. These wrappers are currently used by Nigerian women for special occasions, especially in Lagos.[2]

The third cloth from Okene is 100 per cent rayon, a double woven background, with an inlaid design forming checks on both sides of the fabric (N - N - 9). The fabric is five inches wide, suggesting that it would be used as a scarf.[3] (Plate XI, page 78)

Kano is reputedly a weaving center in Northern Nigeria; however, lack of available literature prevents discussion of the textile crafts in that city. Hambly merely mentions the presence of the narrow band treadle

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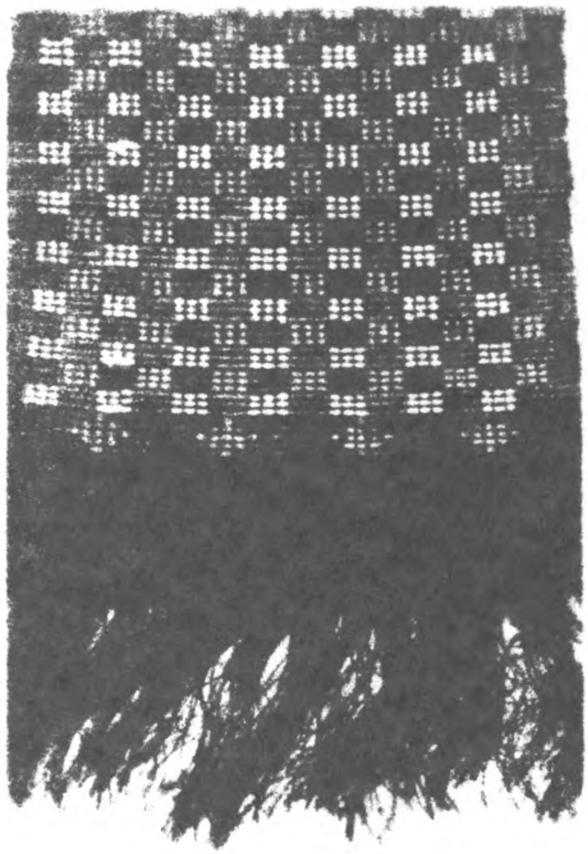
[1]Advertisement from University of Lagos Library (n.d.). Silk Okene cloth is not represented in the Eicher Collection.

[2]Eicher. [3]Ibid.

PLATE XI



[illegible] WOVEN IN OKE[illegible]

loom.[1] Eicher reports having attended a modern weaving center in Kano, and one cloth in the collection was purchased from a handcraft center in that city.[2] This fabric is sixteen and one-half inches wide, of plain weave, and decorated with one-half inch designs of uncut inlaid overshot (N - N - 10). The use for which this fabric was intended is not known.

Two examples of cloth from Lokoja are included in the Eicher Collection, and the descriptive literature concerning the cloth produced in Lokoja was stated by deNegri: "Among the Igbirra of Lokoja, women make finely textured cloth into which they incorporate many silk threads and beautiful patterns."[3] The two fabrics in the collection are both of cotton fiber content, one is a check (N - N - 11a, b, c) and the other is a plaid (N - N - 12a, b). Both are of a plain weave, and approximately nineteen inches wide, indicating the use of a broad loom. It is believed that these fabrics would be used as part of a woman's wrapper.[4]

Two cloths in the collection were handwoven in Yola and purchased in Lagos. The Yola cloth is similar in appearance and structure to the wide Bida cloth. The cotton ground fabric is a basket weave variation of the plain weave, with cotton yarns inlaid on a single shed (N - N - 13a, b). The Yola cloths are also believed to

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[1]Hambly, op. cit., p. 412. [2]Eicher.

[3]deNegri, op. cit., p. 89. [4]Eicher.

be part of a woman's wrapper.[1]

The Eicher Collection contains a bed cover purchased in Maiduguri. The fabric is a plain woven background, with bright blue, yellow, and red weft float yarns which produce geometrical designs (N - N - 14). The length of the float yarns indicates the use of an eight-harness loom. The appearance and the hand of this fabric misled many observers to believe that the fiber content of this bed cover was wool or an acrylic fiber. However, when the fibers were examined under a microscope, it was determined that the fibers were definitely not wool, but possibly rayon or nylon. Burning tests indicated that the fibers were rayon.

The rayon blanket, woven in Northern Nigeria, is illustrative of an economic aspect of the Nigerian culture. Rayon yarns, not produced in Nigeria, are a product of Nigeria's import market.

Imported rayon yarns are also employed by men and women in the craft of embroidering. Formerly, Moslem women did very little embroidering and that which was done was not sold. Within the past few years, however, an increased amount of embroidering is done by women, and some of their products are sold at the market.

Like embroidering, the craft of weaving was not performed traditionally by Moslem women. Today Moslem women weave, but they are usually members of the upper

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[1] Ibid.

caste, and perform their weaving in their homes. Unlike the Yoruba women in the West, the Northern Nigerian women do not market their own cloth or other handcrafted products. This could be an influence of the Islam faith. Moslem women occupy a status inferior to Moslem men and do not appear often in public.

Cultural diffusion among the regions of Nigeria has undoubtedly encouraged the Northern women to engage in the textile handcrafts. For example, the broad looms, and the indigo dyeing techniques used in the North are adaptations from the Yoruba in the West. Also, the inlaid designs woven in the Bida, Okene, and Yola cloths are accomplished by a technique similar to that used by the Akwete weavers in the Eastern Region.

Although women's weaving is of recent occurrence in Northern Nigeria, the wide cloths in the Eicher Collection, woven by women in the Northern Region, represent skillful execution of both color and design.

CHAPTER IV

HANDCRAFTED TEXTILES OF THE EASTERN REGION (BIAFRA)

The Eicher Collection contains thirty-seven handcrafted fabrics from the Eastern Region of Nigeria. Twenty-three of the fabrics were handwoven in Akwete using an inlay technique. A pair of fabrics which were called Akwete cloths were purchased at the Enugu market. Another fabric, purchased at the Enugu market, was handwoven in Edam Ani. Four of the fabrics were handwoven in Edam Ani using handspun and locally dyed yarns. Two of the fabrics are from Udi, one was handwoven from handspun yarns and resist dyed in indigo, the other fabric was handwoven from imported yarns. One of the fabrics, handwoven from ramie and cotton yarns, was purchased at the Enugu market. One fabric was finished in Aba and one fabric was handcrafted in Buguma.

Each fabric from the Eastern Region is summarized in the form of a fabric inventory which follows on Table 3.

The Ibo and Ibibio are the principal tribes of people inhabiting the Eastern Region. Their social organization is similar to that described for the previous two regions, however they lack the traditional political and

TABLE 3.--FABRIC INVENTORY FOR EASTERN REGION (BIAFRA)[a]

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size[b]	Intended Use of Fabric
	Inlay on Plain Weave			
N - E - 1[c]	Background of black, yellow, red and white warp stripe - red & black inlay designs - traditional pattern & traditional colors (cotton)	Akwete	32" x 62"	Woman's wrapper
N - E - 2	Purple & orange double woven overall checks with inlaid designs of grape on orange - green & white rayon stripes near fringe on each end (cotton & rayon)	Akwete	40" x 68"	"

[a]This fabric inventory is a summary of all the handcrafted textiles from the Eastern Region of Nigeria which are included in the Eicher Collection. The code numbers identify the fabrics in the collection, and are referred to in the text where the fabric is discussed.

[b]Size dimensions have been rounded to the nearest inch.

[c]As an example, this inventory would be read: N - E - 1; a (N)igerian textile fabric from the (E)astern Region, is identified as fabric number (1). The fiber content is cotton; the background consists of black, yellow, red and white stripes with red and black inlaid designs. The pattern and colors are traditional. It was handcrafted in Akwete; it is thirty-two inches by sixty-two inches; and it would be used as a woman's wrapper.

TABLE 3.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - E - 3	Black weft stripe on red border - black and red weft stripes. Spanish lace designs on red border - traditional pattern & traditional colors (cotton)	Akwete	41" x 64"	Woman's wrapper
N - E - 4	Black background with traditional pattern in traditional colors of green, white, red and yellow (cotton)	Akwete	42" x 71"	"
N - E - 5	Red background with traditional pattern of double bird inlaid in traditional colors of yellow, blue, white & green (cotton)	Akwete	47" x 82"	"
N - E - 6	Yellow, black & white background with traditional colors of brown & red inlaid traditional tortoise & saw designs (cotton)	Akwete	21" x 63"	"
N - E - 7	Double woven checked design of black & white - inlaid red & black large tortoise designs (cotton)	Akwete	24" x 26"	"

TABLE 3.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - E - 8a	Black background with traditional inlaid pattern of saw & tortoise in traditional colors of green, white, red, gold, yellow & pink (rayon & cotton)	Akwete	45" x 67"	Nigerian woman's special wrapper
N - E - 8b	"	Akwete	46" x 63"	"
N - E - 9a	Green, white, black, yellow & blue warp stripes. Inlaid weft designs of yellow & black. Green & black twining on lower edge in weft direction (rayon & cotton)	Called Akwete by giver from Enugu market	44" x 67"	Nigerian woman's wrapper. Non-Nigerian woman's dress
N - E - 9b	"	"	44" x 67"	"
N - E - 10	Black background with ¼ inch spaced gold yarns. Gold inlaid designs (rayon & cotton)	Akwete	42" x 66"	Nigerian woman's special wrapper. Non-Nigerian woman's special dress
N - E - 11a	Black background with black inlaid designs - traditional patterns of tortoise & others in European colors (rayon & cotton)	Akwete	42" x 68"	"
N - E - 11b	"	"	45" x 71"	"

TABLE 3.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - E - 12	White background with ¼ inch spaced blue warp yarns - traditional pattern of draught, saw & tortoise inlaid in gray (rayon & cotton)	Akwete	42" x 70"	"
N - E - 13	Black & white weft yarns form salt & pepper effect with yellow weft yarns. Black inlaid designs of traditional pattern in European color combinations (rayon & cotton)	Akwete	48" x 68"	"
N - E - 14	Red background with yellow warp & weft yarns forming double woven checks. Inlaid diamond shaped designs (rayon & cotton)	Akwete	15" x 15"	"
N - E - 15	White on white traditional pattern of draught & arrows in European color - high fashion in 1965 (rayon & cotton)	Akwete	14" x 29"	"

TABLE 3.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - E - 16a	Black background, gold inlaid traditional pattern of tortoise & diamonds in European colors (rayon & cotton)	Akwete	39" x 71"	"
N - E - 16b	"	"	42" x 46"	"
N - E - 17	White background with ¼ inch special black warp yarns. Tourquoise inlaid traditional tortoise design (rayon & cotton)	Akwete	22" x 52"	Nigerian & non-Nigerian woman's special stole
N - E - 18	Red background. Inlaid pattern of white, green, yellow, lavender & blue designs (cotton)	Akwete	42" x 47"	Stole or baby tie
N - E - 19a	Yellow weft yarns - warp stripes of white, red & black	Akwete	42" x 65"	"
N - E - 19b	"	"	42" x 64"	"
N - E - 20	Woven by 8-year old girl in Akwete as a gift for Carolyn Eicher. European colors of olive green with ¼ inch spaced gold warp	Akwete	17" x 45"	Young Nigerian girl's special dress

TABLE 3.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
	yarns - traditional pattern of tortoise & saw inlaid on orange & white			
N - E - 21	Black, white, yellow, maroon & red striped background. Inlaid bow-tie designs (cotton)	Edam Ani	27" x 51"	Woman's wrapper
N - E - 22	Maroon background with two red/yellow warp stripes. White & yellow/red weft stripes - white inlaid stripes (cotton)	Bought in Enugu market	18" x 67"	"
	Handspun - Handwoven - Handdyed Cloth			
N - E - 23	Dark indigo & white warp stripes with occasional narrow brown warp stripes (cotton)	Edam Ani	23" x 45"	Nigeria man's under-garment
N - E - 24	Indigo, brown & white warp stripes (cotton)	Edam Ani	23" x 47"	"
N - E - 25	Indigo & white warp stripes (cotton)	Edam Ani	25" x 47"	"

TABLE 3.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
N - E - 26	Light to dark indigo warp stripes (cotton)	Edam Ani	22" x 56"	Nigeria man's undergarment
N - E - 27	Dark indigo background with evenly spaced darker indigo stripes. Light blue elliptical designs produced by tie dying (cotton)	Probably Udi from Enugu market	17" x 70"	Unknown
	Handspun - Handwoven Cloth			
N - E - 28	Natural color - three 11-inch wide stripes loosely sewn together (cotton)	Probably Edam Ani purchased in the Enugu market	40" x 140"	Probably Nigerian men's ritual clothing
	Handwoven Cloth			
N - E - 29	Blue, black & tan weft stripes with lavender weft yarns (ramie & cotton)	Origin unknown purchased in Enugu market	11" x 60"	Probably baby tie
N - E - 30	Tan & red ¼ inch weft stripes (cotton)	Probably Udi	23" x 76"	Unknown

TABLE 3.--Continued

Fabric Code Number	Fabric Description	Fabric Origin	Fabric Size	Intended Use of Fabric
	Imported Cloth Locally Finished			
N - E - 31	Dark brown cloth which appears to have served as surface cover on which fabrics were either dyed or pounded or both (cotton)	Aba purchased in Calabar market	48" x 128"	Unknown
	Handpicked Warps & Wefts from Commercial Woven Print			
N - E - 32	Commercial print of white checks on medium blue background. Portions of the warp & weft yarns have been hand picked out to produce another design (cotton)	Buguma	33" x 72"	Probably woman's clothing

military organization characteristic of the North and the West.[1] This factor may account for the lack of organization found among the craftsmen in the textile industries which prevailed in the Western and Northern Regions.

Very little literature was found concerning the textiles in this region. One reason for this may be because the people of the Eastern Region live in a forest environment,[2] where wood-carving has been more typical of their labors, and consequently a more attractive topic for authors writing about the Ibo and Ibibio crafts.

One exception to this has been the weaving performed in the small town of Akwete, for which three references were found. The majority of information for the following description of Akwete weaving is based on the article written by Ukeje unless otherwise documented.[3]

Ukeje contends that the location of Akwete has been responsible for the irregularity of demand for Akwete woven cloths. When Opobo was a major slave and palm oil trading port, the location of Akwete, enroute from the hinterland to Opobo, enabled facile trade with the populations of the former Calabar and Owerri Provinces; consequently, weaving was a flourishing industry. The women wove and the men marketed their products,

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[1]Fordham, op. cit., 105. [2]Ibid., 110.

[3]L. O. Ukeje, "Weaving in Akwete," Nigeria Magazine, No. 74 (September, 1963), 33-41.

sometimes traveling long distances. Today, Akwete is not located on one of the major transport routes, and due to the decline in trade, many of the men have sought jobs elsewhere. Many of the women have necessarily had to spend more time in subsistence agricultural pursuits and less time weaving, which, according to Ukeje, has declined to hobby status. Eicher reports that during the years from 1963 to 1966, Akwete cloth was very popular for use as women's wrappers and was observed in many areas throughout Nigeria.[1] The widespread popularity of Akwete cloth, which Eicher reports, would indicate that Akwete cloth is now being produced to fill demands of an expanding market, rather than as a hobby.

Sisal hemp, raffia, and cotton are the most common fibers used for weaving. Hemp is used for weaving ropes, hats, coarse cloth used in masquerading and a type of headgear worn by warriors. Raffia is woven into an uncommon type of cloth used for certain religious occasions and by mourning women. Of the three, today cotton is the most frequently used fiber.

Formerly all the cotton used in Akwete weaving was produced by the women who grew it among their other crops. The yarns were dyed black, indigo, violet, yellow, and a dull red using vegetable dyes. Today, however, imported dyed yarn is used except when special orders are placed by clients who prefer the traditional colors which are

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[1]Eicher.

not always available in the imported yarns. The vegetable dyes produce less intense hues than the imported dyes.

People of Akwete weave on a vertical cotton loom which is described as follows by Roth: (Plate XII, page 94)

> The West Coast modification [loom used in Akwete] consists of a square frame made up of an upper and lower piece of palm leaf mid-rib or stem into which are fixed two uprights; occasionally, instead of the ends of the uprights passing through holes in the upper and lower ribs, they are merely lashed on to the latter. The lower rib forms the breast beam, which is sometimes furnished with a supplementary rod; the upper rib itself occasionally forms the warp beam, but usually another rib suspended below it does this. As the palm leaf mid-rib employed does not possess much rigidity, the two beams sag towards each other when the warp is beamed. On the West Coast the warp is continuous . . . . The weaving proceeds from below upwards. Generally the heddle consists of two very thin pieces of cane with spiral leashes intertwined.[1]

Roth also describes some details of the Akwete weaving process:

> Coloured geometrical weft pattern weaving on these looms has reached a high pitch of excellence, all things considered; blue, yellow, red, and white yarn being used over a blue warp and weft with generally a few inches of coloured warp at both selvedges. The pattern is woven on top of the plain web as the latter proceeds, and is woven right across the web or in part only as required; if in part only the ends of the weft hang down . . . until further required. For this type of pattern weaving the worker is guided by the special way in which the warp is laid out. Every third, fourth, sixth or twelfth warp, as the case may be, is made to pass over the pattern rod . . . and in order to ascertain at which warp the pattern weft is to be inserted or withdrawn the weaver must apparently

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[1]Roth, op. cit., pp. 48-50.

PLATE XII

[illegible] CLOTH BEING WOVEN ON AKWETE LOOM

> run his finger from that warp on the pattern rod down to the web, and where that warp passes into the web he will insert or withdraw this spool as the case may be.[1]

Ukeje discusses some of the designs which frequently appear on Akwete cloth. Among the designs listed as having special significance is the ebe, or cross, which was formerly produced on fabric used only on religious occasions or fabric used by the people in times of stress, and by warriors in the battlefield. Recently this design has been used less discriminately and can be found on cloth used for purposes other than those noted above. The tortoise, which according to Ukeje is symbolic of royalty, is another design found on many Akwete cloths. Formerly it was woven into cloth for use by people of noble birth and it was a crime for a commoner to adorn himself with this design. In a brief description of a photograph of Akwete cloth, it was stated that the tortoise is also the hero of mahy Ibo fables. Other motifs frequently used were listed in this article: the maltese cross, the chess board, the sleeping mat, fruit of the oil-bean tree, eating utensils and animals.[2]

The Eicher Collection contains twenty-five Akwete cloths woven by a process similar to that described by Roth (N - E - 1 through N - E - 20). Examination of the Akwete fabrics in the collection has provided a basis

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[1] Ibid., p. 54.

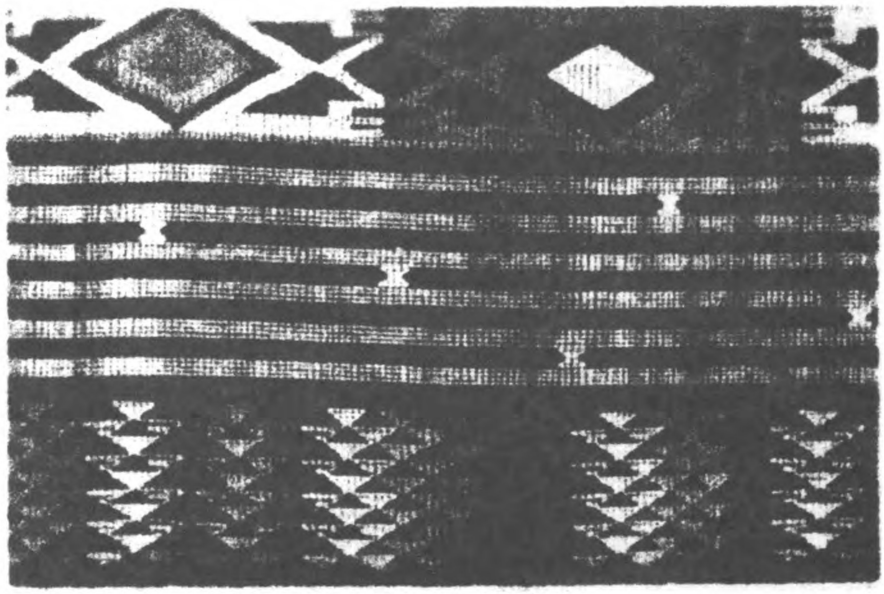
[2] "Eastern Nigeria," periodical published by Eastern Nigerian Ministry of Information, Enugu, Nigeria (1960).

for the following description. The base fabric construction is woven in a plain weave from commercially spun cotton yarns. In the base fabric, the yarns which form one warp and one weft unit are not twisted, therefore, the base fabric is more accurately classified as a basket weave variation of the plain weave. Each warp unit usually consists of three yarns, and each weft unit contains from five to eight yarns. The structural designs are produced by finger manipulated warps using the inlay technique described above. The materials frequently used to produce the geometrical inlaid designs are lustrous rayon filaments which have been losely plied to produce a two ply yarn with very low twist. Because these rayon yarns have such a low twist, and also because dull cotton weft yarn passes over them on only one shed in the inlay process, the resulting rayon geometric designs are very lustrous.

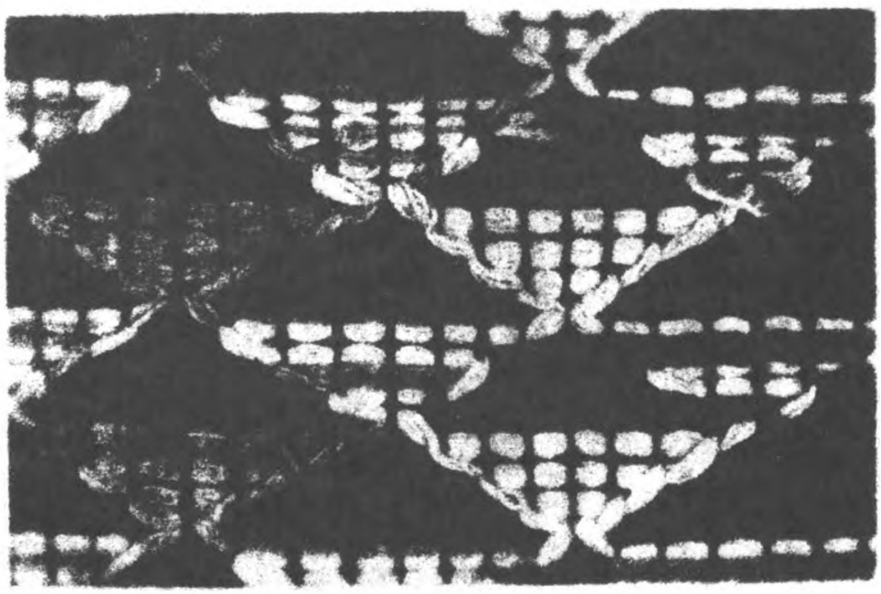
Often the designs inlaid with rayon yarns are combined in the same fabric with designs inlaid with cotton yarns. When cotton yarns are used for the inlay process, several parallel yarns are used as one unit. They are not plied like the rayon yarns (Plate XIII, page 97).

The designs on the Akwete cloth in the Eicher Collection are visible only on the right side of the fabric because they are produced by laying in the motif thread on a single shed. Therefore, the designs have one thread

PLATE XIII



DIP AND VIEW OF A PORTION OF AKWETE CLOTH



ENLARGED VIEW OF ABOVE AKWETE CLOTH

over them and three threads under them, making them invisible on the wrong side of the material. The designs on two Akwete fabrics in the collection appear on both sides of the material (N - E - 2 and N - E - 7). These designs are produced by laying in the motif thread with an equal number of warp yarns over and under the motif threads.

The ends of the Akwete cloths are not square, a factor noted by Hollos: "One problem which has never been satisfactorily solved is the problem of weaving square ends, an extremely difficult objective to attain."[1] The Akwete fabrics in the collection are three to four inches wider on one end than they are on the other end and in the middle. Although Hollos classified this distortion as a problem, it does not detract from the beauty of the Akwete cloth. If the cloth continues to be used for wrappers, the distorted end can easily be concealed in the portion which is rolled. It would be more noticeable in those cloths used as stoles, or as wall hangings. However, even in this case, the distortion is not unattractive because it shows that the Akwete cloth was handcrafted.

The traditional Akwete cloth colors, blue, yellow, red and white, listed by Roth, are still woven in various combinations for the Nigerian consumer. Akwete cloths

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[1]Dennis Hollos, "The Heritage of Akwete," The Sea (June, 1964), 4.

woven for expatriates[1] exhibit a wider range of colors, and the finished cloth is usually of only two hues. Three Akwete cloths in the collection are monochromatic; black on black (N - E - 11a, b), and white on white (N - E - 15).

A pair of matching fabrics in the collection was received as a gift and called Akwete cloth by the giver (N - E - 9a, b). The weave in these cloths is very regular. The ground weave is plain, however, it is not warp faced. The rayon yarns used for the inlaid designs are plied more tightly than the rayon yarns which were used in the Akwete cloths described above. It is not certain if these fabrics were handwoven, however, the traditional Akwete weaving techniques discussed above were not used to weave the two fabrics which were called Akwete cloths.

According to Hollos, the crafts of dyeing and spinning are not practiced in Akwete.[2]

Concerning the other areas of the Eastern Region, Murray states that the craft of tie and resist dyeing is unknown to the Ibibio people and among the Ibo, it is practiced only in the North-East.[3] The Eicher Collection

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[1]Eicher. The term expatriate is used by Nigerians to classify any person who is not a native Nigerian.

[2]Hollos, op. cit., 5.

[3]K. C. Murray, "Tiv Pattern Dyeing," Nigeria, No. 30 (1949), 41.

contains four fabrics which were purchased in Edam Ani. The yarns of these fabrics have been locally dyed in indigo, or brown (N - E - 23 through N - E - 26). (Plate XIV, page 101). These fabrics have been handwoven from handspun yarns.

A fabric in the collection which was purchased at the Enugu market and believed to have been handcrafted in Udi, has been resist dyed in indigo (N - E - 27). It is handwoven in a plain weave, with elliptical designs which were produced by a combination of the folding and stitching resist dye techniques. These fabrics from Edam Ani, and from Udi, are used for men's undergarments.[1] Another handwoven fabric believed to have been handcrafted in Edam Ani, is light tan, handwoven from handspun yarns, and is believed to be used for men's ritual clothing (N - E -28).

A fabric with one quarter inch weft stripes of tan and red is believed to have been handwoven in Udi (N - E - 30). The use for which this fabric was intended is not known.

Another fabric which was purchased at the Enugu market is eighteen inches wide by sixty-seven inches long. The fabric is handwoven from imported yarn. Yarns of maroon, red and yellow form the plain ground weave. White cotton yarns are inlaid on a single shed to form small geometrical designs on the right side of the cloth.

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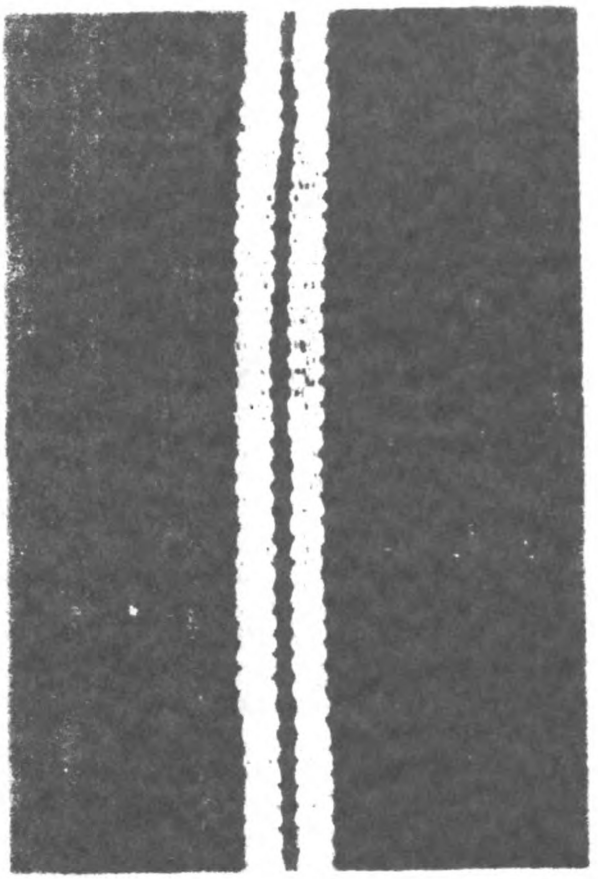
[1] Eicher.



The technique used to produce the inlaid designs on this cloth is similar to the inlay technique used in weaving Akwete cloths (N - E - 22). This fabric would probably be used as part of a woman's wrapper.

A narrow fabric, eleven inches by sixty-three inches was also purchased at the Enugu market. A plain weave is formed by lavender, ramie weft yarns and blue, black and light brown cotton warp yarns (N - E - 29). The narrow width of the cloth suggests that it would be used as a baby tie.

Descriptive literature was not found for a dark brown fabric which was finished in Aba, and sold at the Calabar market (N - E - 31). The cotton cloth was commerically woven and has been dyed dark brown on one side. The cloth has a shiny finish but does not have a glazed finish. The shiny finish may be the result of a beetling process, whereby the fabric is pounded to produce a shine and a more compact weave. Because the dye penetration is not even, the cloth is darker in the center, and because the cloth is more shiny in the center, it is suggested that this fabric may have been used to cover a surface on which other fabrics were beetled.

A unique and interesting fabric from Buguma, located in the Rivers area provides an example of skillful textile craftsmanship. The original fabric was a plain weave imported cotton, commercially woven in England with a pattern of white checks formed by warp and weft stripes

on a blue background. The Buguma women have removed portions of the stripes by hand-picking out small amounts of warp and weft yarns, producing another design on this fabric[1] (N - E - 32).

The time, dexterity, and precision involved in producing the designs on the Buguma cloth are not unique to the craftsmen in Buguma. These same skills and abilities are also vividly expressed in the beautiful Akwete cloths. The Akwete craftsman possesses considerable artistic skill in order to design the Akwete cloth motifs, to select and to coordinate the colors she will use. The accomplished Akwete weaver must also possess the ability to interpret and to implement a design ordered by a customer. These skills are evident in the Eicher Collection Akwete cloths which display beautiful design attributes. For example, harmony in the Akwete designs is achieved in many ways: by repeating motifs within the cloth, by repetition and progression of the size of the motifs, by variation of color values and intensities, and by integrating two or more colors of yarns in one portion of the design inlaid in one shed. The tortoise, formerly symbolic of royalty, is an Akwete design which incorporates the past with the present and perhaps is also symbolic of increased personal freedom in that the right to wear the tortoise design is no longer limited to individuals of royal birth.

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[1] Ibid.

The monochromatic Akwete cloths and those woven in two hues are also symbolic. They represent the Nigerian craftsman's flexibility and perception of market potentials. This flexibility has altered only one aspect of design - color. The motif lines and shapes, as well as the Akwete weaving techniques remain traditional.

If the traditional woman's wrapper is replaced by another style of dress, the demand for Akwete cloth may decline. Hopefully, however, the appreciation for the skillful art of Akwete weaving will not cease.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From this investigation and classification of selected handcrafted Nigerian textile fabrics, it is apparent that the Nigerian textile craft industries are both traditional and dynamic. Tradition or stability is visualized by the Yoruba continued preference for subtle colors, especially indigo blues. The village weavers in the North reflect tradition by their use of locally processed cotton yarns and indigenous vegetable dyes. Akwete weavers also perpetuate tradition by the use of their inlay weaving technique.

Change is evident in the same aspects of the textile handcrafts. The Yoruba may actuate their preference for subtle blues by using imported commercial indigo dyes. The Northern village weavers, employing indigenous media, may compete with the city weavers who employ imported yarns and dyes. The Akwete weavers execute European color choices in the traditional inlaid designs.

Traditional and dynamic aspects of the Nigerian textile handcrafts are not easily or even beneficially dichotomized. The art of textile design is a part of the Nigerian culture, an expression of human values, aspirations,

and creativity. As Riley implied,[1] an examination of a culture's textile fabrics can provide considerable knowledge of the people of that culture.

This study has illuminated many aspects of Nigerian culture. In the first place, concerning the Nigerian technology, it is seen that four types of technology are operating at the same time: (1) primitive weaving is done by women on broad vertical looms, (2) men use a less primitive narrow horizontal loom into which is incorporated a mechanically-operated heddle which makes a much greater weaving speed possible,[2] (3) foot powered hand looms are used, and (4) fully mechanized looms are operated in the textile mills.[3]

Secondly, aspects of the Nigerian economy have become evident from this investigation: (1) the existence of a money exchange system, of which fibers and fabrics are a part; textiles are imported and exported from outside the African continent as well as among African countries, (2) labor is collectivized to some extent as exemplified by the yarn rotation system in the extended family, and (3) middlemen exist to market the yarns and fabrics at distant markets.

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[1]Riley, op. cit.

[2]Clarke, op. cit.

[3]R. A. Akinola, "Factors Affecting the Location of a Textile Industry--Example of Ikeja Textile Mill," The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies, VII (November, 1965), 247.

Thirdly, aspects of the Nigerian division of labor are exemplified: (1) in most areas, men weave on narrow horizontal looms, while women weave on the wide vertical looms, (2) women cultivate, card, and spin cotton in most areas, (3) in some areas both sexes embroider but the type of items which they embroider are exclusive to the sexes, and (4) dyeing is done primarily by men in some areas, while in others, it is the domain of women.

Finally, the basic social unit of Nigeria has been viewed in a stage of transition. Some extended families still perform the entire processes of cloth fabrication, however examples of this situation are becoming less prevalent as the traditional family unit of labor gives way to the demands of specialization which frequently require individual family members to seek employment away from the extended family.

There are numerous aspects of the Nigerian culture which are currently experiencing both stability and change, and this investigation of the textile crafts in that country has provided only a glimpse of these phenomena.

While surveying literature and conducting interviews for this study, several suggestions for further research have emerged:

1) investigation of the kinds of fibers, yarns, fabrics and dyes used in the production of handcrafted textiles and the sources of their origins would document more accurately the

history of Nigerian textile crafts.

2) determination of the spinning, weaving and dyeing techniques used by craftsmen in specific areas and analysis of the diffusion of these techniques from one area to another.

3) survey of the number of craftsmen who spin, weave, and dye to assess the economic importance of the textile craft industries.

4) investigation of the number of men, women, and families who have abandoned or entered the textile crafts and an analysis of the reasons for these occurrences to more accurately reveal the changes that are developing in this industry.

5) analysis of the symbolic representation of textile design motifs to better understand the social implications represented by these designs.

6) more comprehensive investigation of the ultimate uses of handcrafted textiles in order to assess the fabric in terms of functional or aesthetic qualities, or both, in the opinion of Nigerians. A longitudinal study of this topic would be particularly interesting in terms of stability and change.

7) determination of the durability of handcrafted textiles by means of standard textile laboratory tests to reveal the strength, abrasion

resistance, colorfastness to light, laundering, and crocking, and also wrinkle resistance.

In addition to the above suggested topics, Nigerian handcrafted textiles could be investigated in relation to specific aspects of the culture. For example, textile crafts could be examined in relationship to political change as it may influence the status of the craftsman, his family, or their textile products.

Finally, it is suggested that the Nigerian textile import market be investigated to determine the quantities and types of textile goods imported and the sources of importation. The results of a study such as this would be especially enlightening because the future of the Nigerian textile craftsmen, as well as the future of the five mechanized Nigerian textile mills, depend on their ability to compete with imported textile products.

Knowledge gained from the foregoing suggested research topics would provide needed additional information for filling the presently inadequate knowledge and appreciation of Nigerian textiles. The Nigerian textile craftsmen produce intricate, distinctive and beautiful artifacts. It is the opinion of the writer that they deserve recognition equal to that accorded textiles from other parts of the world.

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