

# ADIRE LAGOS

## A STELLAR STORY TELLING EXHIBITION OF ADIRE



14th - 17th JUN, | Ecobank Pan African Centre  
2024 | 4PM | 270B Ozumba Mbadiwe, Lagos

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## About the Exhibition

The Adire Oodua Textile Hub proudly presents: The Ecobank Stellar Storytelling Exhibition of Adire. This exhibition showcases the intricate works of Oshogbo Artisans, Students from Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife and other talented creators.

Set against the impressive backdrop of Ecobank Pan African Center, the exhibition features a stunning display of handmade Adire textiles including Adire Eleko, Adire Alabere, Adire Oniko and Adire Alabele transforming the front area of the center.

The exhibition delves into the origin of Adire in Ile-Ife, Oshogbo and Abeokuta, celebrating the rich Yoruba heritage woven into the cultural traditions of these three cities and highlighting the renaissance of this traditional textile.

Additionally, we honour three Yoruba icons — Prof. Wole Soyinka, Chief (Mrs) Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Their remarkable characters, attributes and creativity have been transformed into symbolic motifs, inspiring the designs of the fabrics on display.

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Adire Oodua Textile Training Hub, situated in Ile Ife, Osun State, is a vocational skill acquisition center established by His Imperial Majesty the Ooni of Ife and managed by Olori Adérónké. The Hub provides free training in adire making to women and youth, empowering them with valuable skills for financial sustainability.

As a resource center, the Hub teaches various techniques of adire making, offering complimentary training to help participants gain essential skills while pursuing their education. To date, we have directly and indirectly certified over 1,200 individuals, awarding startup grants to the most exceptional trainees.

For this exhibition, the Adire Hub collaborated with Obafemi Awolowo University and artisans from Oshogbo and Ile Ife to create narrative-rich fabrics. We utilized diverse adire-making methods to craft patterns that tell unique stories.

### Her Royal Majesty

**\*Olorì Adérónké Adémilúyì-Ogúnwúsi\***

**CEO Adire Oodua Textile Training Hub**

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## The History of Adire

Adire, a traditional Yoruba resist-dyed cloth, has deep roots in the cultural and historical tapestry of south-western Nigeria.

Adire is more than just a textile; it embodies cultural identity and artistic expression. The patterns and symbols used in Adire designs often convey messages, tell stories or represent proverbs, making each piece unique and meaningful. The dyeing process itself is a complex and skilled art involving various resist techniques such as tying, stitching and the use of starch paste to create intricate patterns.

Its origin and development are particularly linked to three major cities: Ife, Oshogbo, and Abeokuta. The link between Adire and the cities of Ife, Oshogbo and Abeokuta highlights the fabric's role in the broader cultural and historical context of the Yoruba people. Each city contributed uniquely to the evolution and propagation of Adire, ensuring its place as a cherished element of Nigerian cultural heritage.

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# ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

## Ile Ife

### The Spiritual Hub of Adire

The history of Adire is deeply intertwined with Ile Ife, the cradle of Yoruba civilization. According to Yoruba philosophy and traditional history, the first chapter of the Ifa Book of Wisdom Oral Literature attributes the origin of patterned dyeing to Orunmila, the Yoruba deity of wisdom and knowledge. It explains how Orunmila, inspired by Almighty God, created patterned dyed cloth using designs inspired by birds and dyes derived from indigo, palm oil and camwood, amongst other natural pigments. Traditional dyeing with plants, especially indigo has since become a lasting legacy among the Yoruba people.

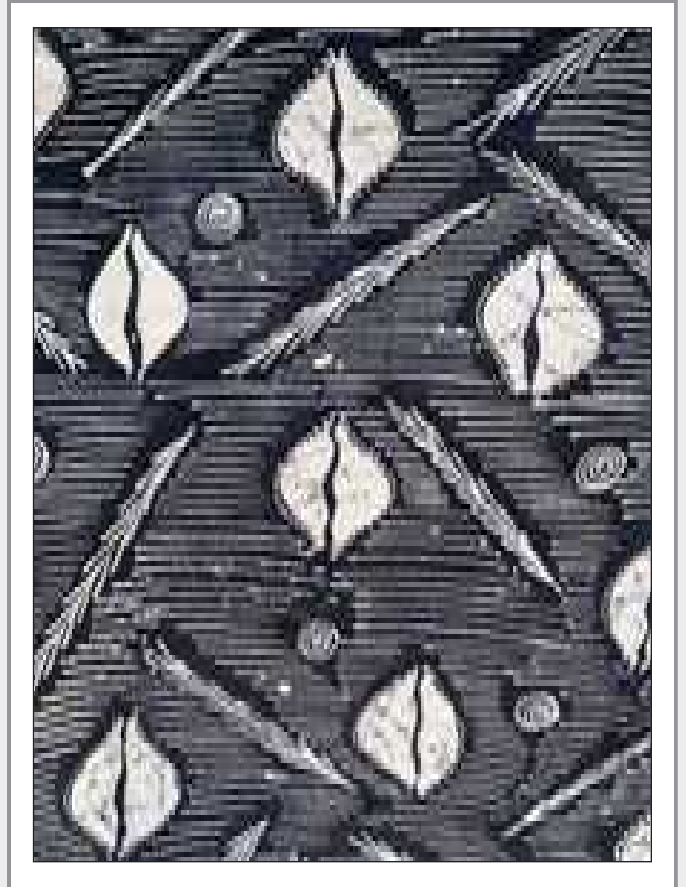
During ancient festivals in Ile Ife, prominent symbols of the celebrations were incorporated into Adire for participants to wear. For example, during the Aje Festival, also known as the Festival of Wealth Creation, the symbol of Aje is the cowrie shell (Owo Eyo). Motifs of cowrie shells were created on the fabric, symbolizing the power and dignity associated with the festival and all devotees would wear the Aje Adire.

The resist dyeing technique in Adire evolved from these early practices in Ile Ife, dating back beyond the 12th century and is a testament to the city's rich cultural heritage.



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# BATIK WAX RESIST PROCESS



## **Cowrie Shell**

The Cowrie Shell Motif also known as Owo Eyo, represents the symbol of wealth. These patterns were created using batik method

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## Oshogbo

### The Cultural and Artistic Hub of Adire

Oshogbo, another important center in the history of Adire is known for its strong cultural and artistic heritage, renowned for its indigo dye as celebrated in the praise poetry known as Oriki, which sings of its heritage.

Oshogbo is famed for its vibrant and artistic culture within the Yoruba region. The city's Artisans are noted for their creativity in Adire production using the fabric to communicate through both spoken and written words. The designs and motifs on the fabrics reflect meaningful aspects of daily life. Some notable designs include:

1. **Sumbebe** - Waist Beads
2. **Oya** - Hair Comb
3. **Orogbo** – Bitter-Cola
4. **Barbwire** – Women passing a message
5. **Ok** – Okay (as adopted from english language)
6. **Opon Ayo** – Communion
7. **Dingi** - Mirror
8. **Circle of life** – Journey of Life
9. **Erin-Elephant** – Power
10. **Ogede** – Fertility
11. **Agbo Ile** – Unity
12. **Cassava leaves** – From Cassava Plant
13. **Equn Eja** – Fish Bones
14. **Oya and Yeri Eti** – Comb and Earrings

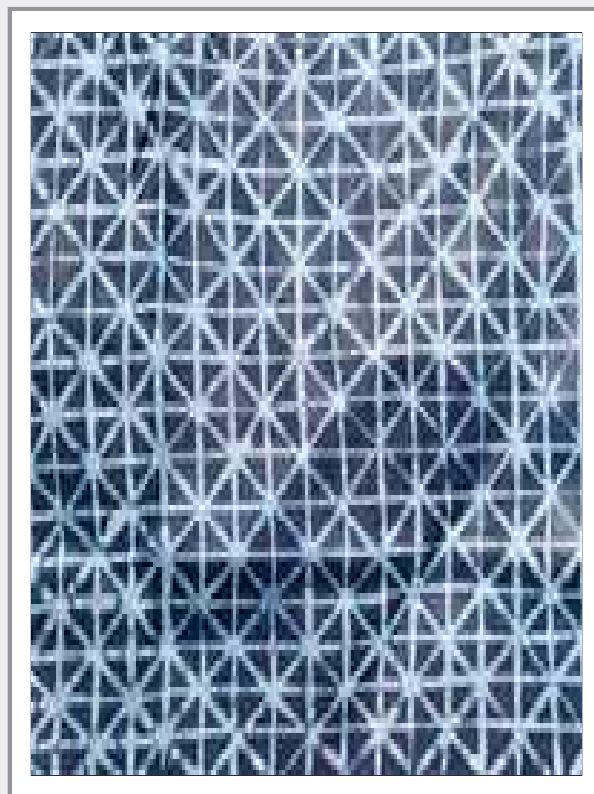


# ELEKO CASSAVA RESIST PROCESS



**Eleko Cassava Resist**

Ore Merin design  
(4 Jolly Friends)



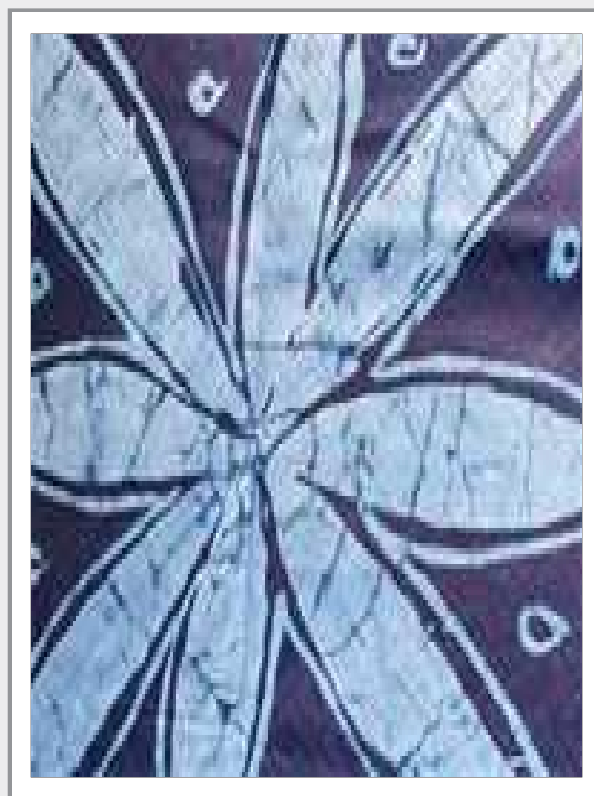
**Eleko Cassava Resist**

Barbwire design



**Eleko Cassava Resist Technique**

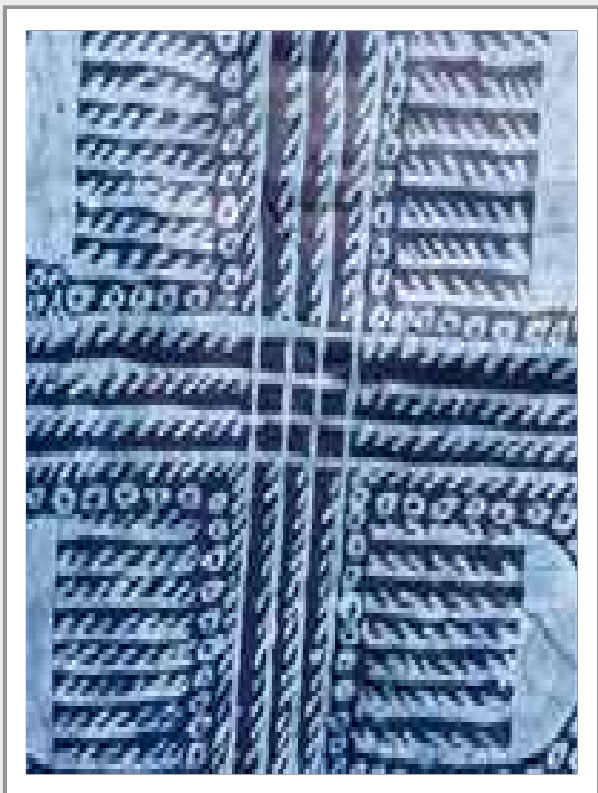
Circle of life design



**Eleko Cassava Resist**

Flower design  
(Beauty)

# ELEKO CASSAVA RESIST PROCESS



**Eleko Cassava Resist**

Sumbebe  
(Waist Beads)



**Eleko Cassava Resist Technique**

Egungun Eja  
(Fish Bones)



**Eleko Cassava Resist**

Cassava Leaves  
(Abundance)



**Eleko Cassava Resist Design**

Opa Aro  
(Cassava Paste Resist Technique)

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## Abeokuta

### The Economic and Entrepreneurial Hub of Adire

Abeokuta's pivotal role in the history of Adire has ensured its continued evolution and sustainability through innovation and modern techniques. Artisans from Abeokuta introduced various innovative techniques to traditional resist dyeing processes including tie and dye Adire Oniko, stitch resist Adire Alabere and wax resist Adire Alabela. These techniques gave rise to numerous designs such as;

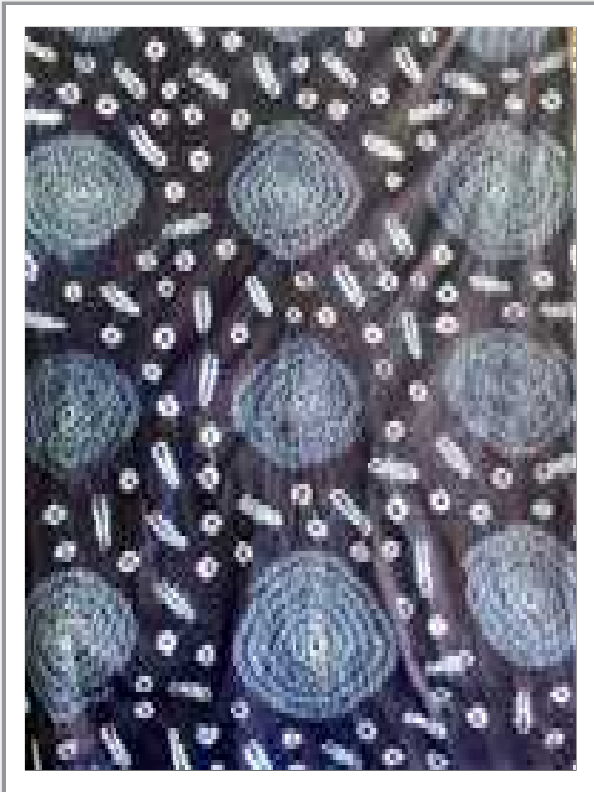
1. **Ade Ori Okun**
2. **Akete Kabo**
3. **Oni Blade**
4. **Oni Gbale**

Abeokuta's enduring involvement in Adire production has sustained this art form for decades, establishing the city as a major center for Adire creation. The city's strategic location and the entrepreneurial spirit of the Egba women were crucial in the commercialization of Adire. These women played a key role in organizing production, developing new techniques and establishing markets for Adire both locally and internationally. Consequently, Abeokuta has become the commercial hub of Adire production in Nigeria.

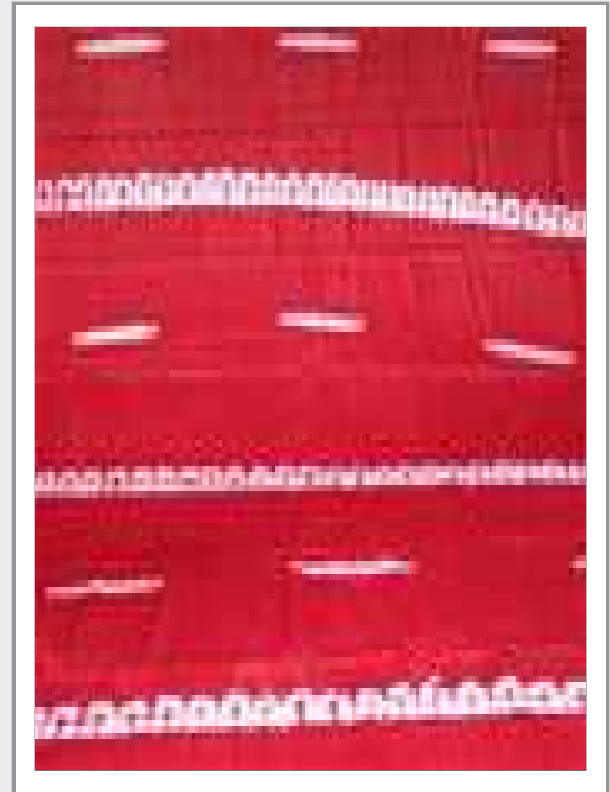


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# ALABERE STITCH RESIST PROCESS



**Akete Kabo Design**



**Oni Blade Design**



**Ade Ori Okin Design**



**Onigbale Design**

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# STORYTELLING NARRATIVE OF ICONS

## **Late Olufunmilayo Ransom-Kuti: The Lioness of Lisabi**

Olufunmilayo Ransom-Kuti, often heralded as the "Lioness of Lisabi," represents the spirit of resistance and empowerment. Born in 1900, she was a trailblazer for women's rights in Nigeria, leading the charge against colonial taxation policies and advocating for social justice. On the Adire, she is symbolized by a lioness, a nod to her fierce and unyielding nature.

Her life was a constant battle for equality. She founded the Abeokuta Women's Union in the 1940s, rallying thousands of women to protest against unfair taxes. Her efforts were instrumental in the eventual abdication of the Alake of Egbaland, a feat that underscores her influence and determination. Ransom-Kuti's legacy on the Adire is a reminder of the power of collective action and the importance of standing firm in the face of oppression.

## **Late Obafemi Awolowo: The Sage of Ikenne**

Obafemi Awolowo, revered as the "Sage of Ikenne," is depicted on the Adire as an owl, a symbol of wisdom and foresight. Born in 1909, Awolowo's contributions to Nigeria's development are immense, particularly in the areas of education and governance. His vision and policies laid the foundation for the modern Nigerian state.

As the Premier of the Western Region, Awolowo implemented free primary education and free health care policies that were revolutionary at the time and significantly improved the quality of life for many Nigerians. His economic strategies and infrastructural developments propelled the region into a period of prosperity and progress. On the Adire, his icon serves as a beacon of knowledge and visionary leadership; a testament to his enduring impact on Nigerian society.

## **Prof. Wole Soyinka: The Bard of Yoruba Land**

Wole Soyinka, Nigeria's first Nobel Laureate in Literature is depicted on the Adire as a pen and a torch, representing his mastery of the written word and his role in illuminating social issues. Born in 1934, Soyinka's works are a profound exploration of culture, politics, and identity, making him a global literary icon.

Soyinka's plays, poetry and essays often challenge societal norms and critique political oppression. His activism during Nigeria's tumultuous political history, including his imprisonment during the Nigerian civil war, underscores his commitment to justice and human rights. The icon of Soyinka on the Adire not only celebrates his literary genius but also his courage to speak truth to power.

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# ICONS



Chief Obafemi Awolowo



Chief (Mrs) Funmilayo Ransom Kutu



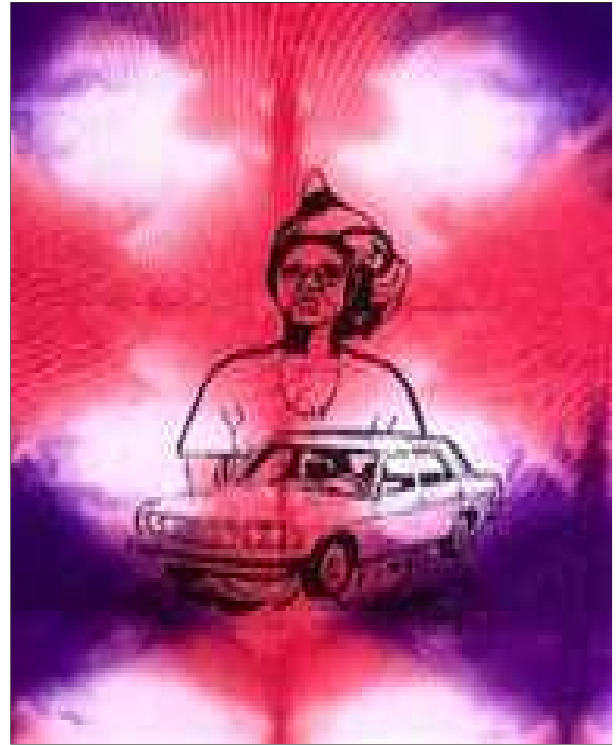
Prof Wole Soyinka



# MOTIFS



Chief Obafemi Awolowo's stylised image symbolising his multifaceted personality and role in the Egbe Omo Oduduwa.



The image of an old Mercedes Benz was incorporated to highlight Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's distinction as the first woman in Abeokuta and Nigeria to drive a car.



Prof. Wale Soyinka, born in Abeokuta, Nigeria, attended Government College Ibadan, University College Ibadan, and the University of Leeds in England.



Chief Obafemi Awolowo held the title of Odole Oodua of Ile-Ife. His iconic cap and glasses, combined with the Ori Olokun image, are used to depict him as a chief in Ile-Ife.

# MOTIFS



Chief Obafemi Awolowo's cap and glasses on books represent the free universal education he provided for children.



Prof. W le Soyinka is a Nigerian playwright, novelist, poet, and essayist in English, all reflected in the motif.



As a visionary leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo established the first African television station in Ibadan. His iconic cap and glasses, alongside a local TV motif, summarise his legendary status.



Chief Obafemi Awolowo's cap and glasses with a stethoscope represent his provision of free healthcare for children in the western region.

# MOTIFS



Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's educational, social, and political activism, including her fight for gender equality and campaign for Nigerian women's rights, is depicted in the motif.



Prof. Wole Soyinka and Fela Kuti are cousins, both descendants of Josiah Ransome Kuti, Fela Kuti's paternal grandfather and Prof. Soyinka's maternal great-grandfather.



The hand holding the microphone symbolises Chief Obafemi Awolowo as an astute journalist, orator, visionary, and great politician.



Prof. Wole Soyinka's accomplishments as a playwright, novelist, poet, and essayist in English are highlighted in the motif.

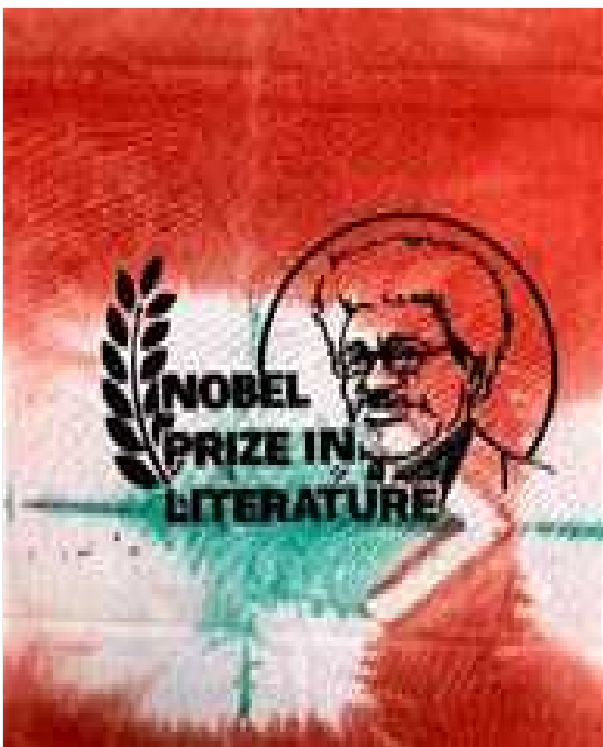
# MOTIFS



Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was instrumental in negotiating Nigeria's independence with British authorities and is the mother of renowned Afro-beat musician Fela Anikulapo Kuti.



Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, a pioneering female activist in Nigeria, is depicted as a leading advocate for women's rights.



Prof. Wole Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his "wide cultural perspective and poetic overtones fashioning the drama of existence," the first sub-Saharan African to receive this honour.



Chief Obafemi Awolowo's leadership during the first republic party (UPGA) in the western region is depicted with his cap and glasses alongside the UPN logo.

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# MOTIFS



Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's multifaceted personality is captured in a motif reflecting her establishment of the Abeokuta Ladies Club (ALC).



Referred to as "The Lioness of Lisabi" for her numerous activities, Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti is depicted with a lioness motif, symbolising her societal roles.



Born in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was the first female student at Abeokuta Grammar School and worked as a teacher.

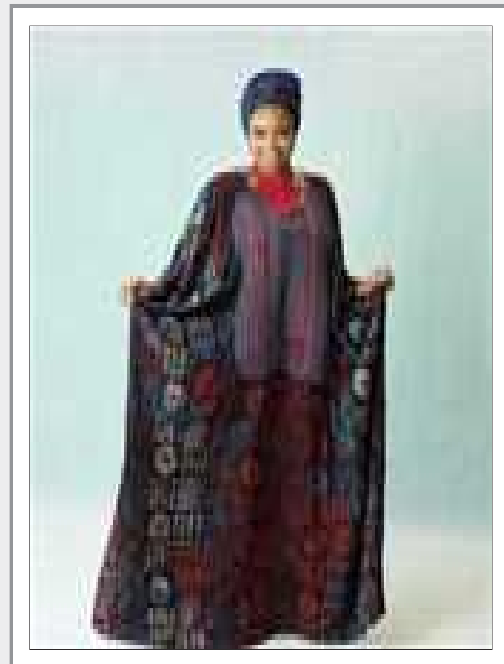
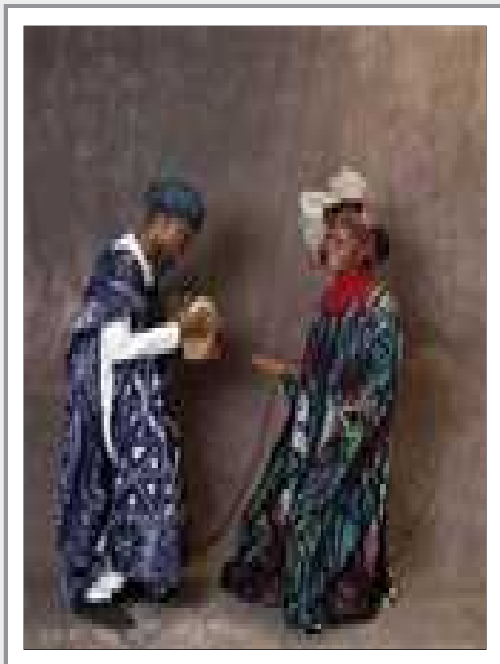
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## The Legacy of Adire

The legacy of Adire has profoundly influenced its present and will undoubtedly shape its future.

Adire serves as a medium of cultural expression and storytelling for the Yoruba people. The patterns and motifs used in Adire often carry symbolic meanings acting as visual narratives that convey messages resonating with Yoruba cultural identity and history. Recently, Adire has seen a resurgence in popularity and demand, driven by a new generation of fashion designers and consumers who are increasingly interested in cultural heritage and sustainable fashion. Modern designers are reinterpreting traditional patterns and techniques, integrating them into contemporary fashion to appeal to a broader audience. This revival is supported by efforts to document and preserve traditional methods, as well as initiatives to train new generations of Artisans. The global fashion industry's increasing appreciation for unique, handcrafted textiles has also contributed to the renewed interest in Adire.

In conclusion, the history of Adire is deeply intertwined with the cultural and artistic traditions of Ife, Oshogbo and Abeokuta. Each city continues to make significant contributions to the propagation of this unique and intricate textile art, ensuring its place as a vibrant and enduring symbol of Yoruba cultural heritage worn proudly by the people of Nigeria and across the world.



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