ISSN 2181-9505
Doi Journal 10.26739/181-9505

Philosophy and Life

FALSAFA VA HAYOT • ФИЛОСОФИЯ И ЖИЗНЬ

2026 №3 (34)



ISSN 2181-9505
Doi Journal 10.26739/2181-9505

Mirzo Ulug'bek nomidagi O‘zbekiston Milliy Universiteti

O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Vazirlar Mahkamasi huzuridagi
Imom Buxoriy xalqaro ilmiy-tadqiqot markazi
O‘zbekiston falsafa jamiyati

Национальный университет Узбекистана имени Мирзо Улугбека

Международный научно-исследовательский центр Имам Бухари
при Кабинете Министров Республики Узбекистан
Философское общество Узбекистана

The National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek

Imam Bukhari International Research Center under the Cabinet of Ministers
of the Republic of Uzbekistan
Philosophical Society of Uzbekistan

FALSAFA VA HAYOT
XALQARO JURNAL

ФИЛОСОФИЯ И ЖИЗНЬ
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ ЖУРНАЛ

PHILOSOPHY AND LIFE
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

2026 №3 (34)

Jurnal bir yilda 4 marta nashr qilinadi.
Журнал выходит 4 раза в год.
The journal is published 4 times in a year.

Toshkent

“Falsafa va hayot” xalqaro jurnal, “Философия и жизнь” международный журнал, “Philosophy and Life” international journal

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UDK: 677.074(669.1) (091)
10.5281/zenodo.23658345

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HISTORICIZING ASO-OKE PRODUCTION IN ISEYIN TOWN, SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

Abstract. Aso-oke production constitutes an important component of the historical and cultural heritage of the Yoruba people and reflects the continuity of indigenous knowledge, craftsmanship, aesthetic values, and socio-economic practices in South-West Nigeria. In Iseyin, traditional hand-woven textile production developed long before the colonial period and became an important form of local craftsmanship, social identity, cultural expression, and intergenerational transmission of indigenous skills. However, the expansion of Western cultural influences during British colonial rule, together with subsequent socio-economic transformations, contributed to changes in traditional textile production and created significant challenges for the preservation, production, and use of aso-oke. In this regard, the present article analyses the historical development of aso-oke production in Iseyin, the processes of acquiring and processing raw materials, traditional weaving techniques and patterns of use, as well as the transformation of the indigenous textile industry under colonial and Western cultural influences, drawing on historical-narrative and interdisciplinary approaches and critically examined primary and secondary sources.

Keywords: Aso-oke, traditional textile, Iseyin, indigenous craftsmanship, Yoruba culture, textile production, cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION

The Yoruba people are renowned for the production of two types of traditional clothes, it is called traditional because it is a very long practicing tradition of cloth production of the Yoruba people ever before the coming of foreigners whether the Muslim merchants or the Christian missionaries. These two cloth production practice includes the hand-woven textiles called 'aso-ofi'/aso-oke, and pattern-dyed cloth called adire. The traditional textile art tradition which has been noted to still remain the most decorative artistic, and traditions weaving and dyeing with many indigenous plants as a vocation and art tradition especially cotton production and indigo dyeing is a specialized art which has become a legacy of the Yoruba people both men and women, and a hereditary craft passed from generation to generation. Though the Yoruba people including the people of Iseyin were traditional farmers, they were able to make use of their physical environment to acquire raw materials which became useful for other produce. This is most applicable to the people of Iseyin who part of their farming crop is the cotton planted from where they were able to sort for the materials used for weaving the aso-ofi. For the purpose of this study, the hand-woven textile of the Iseyin people will be the area of focus, this is due to the fact that the people of the location in perspective, Iseyin are basically involved in hand-woven textile production and not in tie and dye. The definition of the Yoruba 'aso-ofi' have been simply put by scholars to mean in the English Language, a hand-woven textile on both the horizontal and vertical loom [Aboshioke, 2025]. While the original makers of the hand-woven textiles (the Iseyin people of the Oyo town), named the woven textiles 'aso-ofi', this which means a cloth made in the wood, this wood here is the place most the weavers sits to do their weaving, that is why they often referred to it as the cloth made in the 'ofi.' (aso-ofi), also it should be noted that at first the 'ofi' is not made of wood but a kind of shed built with the use of clay where the olden days weavers sits in a molded seat (see Fig. 1); while those people from other places like Lagos named the cloth 'aso-oke,' this which was born out of the geographical location of Iseyin, as a result of the hill tops that surrounded the town. That is to say most of these Lagosians sees the cloth one imported into Lagos from those towns located on the hill top (aso lati ilu oke) [Rasaq, 2022, Personal communication].



Fig. 1 A picture of the modern day mobile ofi in Iseyin town, which can be moved about

What is referred to as aso-oke in this study is also known as aso-ofi, which means both names can be used interchangeably. The cloth is made principally by the Yoruba people of Oke Ogun area of the present Oyo State. It has been recorded that in the late 19th and 20th centuries, people from that area were referred to by Lagosians as mentioned earlier as 'ara oke.' This appellation connected to the clothe they make and transported to Lagos for commercial purpose i.e. aso awon ara oke (clothe of the people from the hinterland). While it is called aso ofi because of the process through which it is made particularly the equipment [Rasaq, 2022, Personal communication]. Aso-ofi is usually worn by Yoruba men and women throughout southwestern Nigeria which basically include contemporary Ekiti, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Lagos states. Yoruba stocks in parts of Kwara, Kogi and Edo States and other parts of Nigeria too wear this type of cloth. Common fashion styles often used aso-ofi for in Yorubaland was buba and iro (top and wrapper), gele (head gear), agbada (large gown) and buba and sokoto (top and trousers) [Agbadudu, 2006, p 97-113]. Aso-ofi is a major artifact among the Yorubas and it is a form of identity that links generations of the Yoruba race. Besides its cultural meaning and usage, aso-ofi provides employment for both men and women in Yoruba communities. This was confirmed in the words of an eye witness and experienced weaver in Iseyin that most of the youths of Iseyin after going out to study will return home to take up the job of weaving aso-ofi even before taking up other jobs. What this simply means is that they cannot be left idle and they try to make money from it for the time being. The vocational work of the aso-ofi has been said to cut across the age, gender and status of the people. In this sense, almost all communities in Iseyin town are into aso-ofi production and trading [Adeyeye, 2022, personal communication]. Although the origin of textiles production and usage in Nigeria, most especially among the Yoruba remain

unknown, there are evidences of Yoruba's long use of textile as attire been reflected in ancient sculptures, which has been dated back to the 10th and 12th century [Aboshioke, 2025, 285-286]. These sculptures have been noted to illustrate the use of apparatus such edge cloth, cap, waistband and others. There is also evidence that the materials used for the production of these local textiles are gotten locally that is the acquisition of the materials goes through a crude process, seeing the resemblance of modern times 'aso-ofi' (Yoruba hand-woven strip cloth) [Olutayo, 2009, p 62]. Though certain scholars have as well relate the weaving of textiles to have started in Yorubaland with the coming of the Muslim merchants and Islamic clerics, this assertion can be said to be true of places like Ilorin where in an interview with Mr Rasaq, a cloth weaver in Iseyin it was discovered that some people who came from places like Ilorin to learn Arabic in Iseyin, in the process of learning in addition they were made to learn how to weave cloth since it is a major work of these Iseyin Muslim clerics, and when they return to their place they become established in such vocation. It was as well confirmed that even before the coming of foreigners the practice of weaving have been in existence, it is the major occupation of old even before the present location of Oyo. So it could therefore be argued that the Yoruba production of textiles, aso-ofi in particular could have been developed by the Yoruba before contact [Rasaq, 2022, Personal communication]. Iseyin the study location is one of the notable towns in Oyo State, South West Nigeria. It is located in the Oke-Ogun local government of Oyo State, and centrally located and accessible through road networks from Ibadan, Oyo, Abeokuta and Ogbomoso. It has a total land mass of 1,419 km, and approximately 100km from the north of Ibadan. The local government is bounded in the north by Itesiwaju local government area, in the south by Ibarapa East local government, in the west by Kajola and in the east by Oyo West and Afijio local government. It currently has a total population of more than 302,000 persons. Iseyin is known to be a traditional centre for cotton production in addition to other profession such as cultivation of tobacco, teak, cotton, vegetable dyes, yam, corn, cassava, peanut which are exported and consumed locally [Adewole, 2022, p 52].

This study therefore covers the background history of cloth (aso-oke) production, (which is of course an indigenous knowledge and technology of the Iseyin people) in Iseyin and what it is in recent times. This involves first, the acquisition, processing, weaving and usage of the indigenous textile in Iseyin town in the period preceding colonial rule by evaluating the entrenched traditional textile producers and industries in the area of study. It also shows how the traditional cloth was displaced by the western fashion which was introduced and publicised with the emergence of the British colonial rule in Nigeria, considering the challenges faced by the indigenous textile industry which must have affected the present production and usage of the Yoruba cloth, the changes which have taken place in the production process of textiles as well as the standing legacy of the aso-ofi in Yorubaland despite all odds.

The Iseyin Production of Hand-Woven Textiles in Historical Perspective

In the olden days, it was said that the production of the traditional cloth requires relatively more complex processes such as the preparation of yarn from cotton plant materials, the dyeing of the yarn into required colourful threads, the acquisition of highly-technical skills for cloths weaving and the fabrication of tools and equipment such as looms, motor, spreaders, rollers and peddlers used by the entrepreneurs to produce the cloth. This, therefore, implies that a lot of entrepreneurial spirit, skills and culture are needed to carry out the activities involved in the weaving process [Adeyeye, 2022, personal communication]. The production of the aso-ofi at this point in time goes through a very rigorous process, in an interview with Alhaji Muraina Alarape (Aare Egbe alaso/president of cloth weavers in Iseyin) he confirmed that the cloth production started from the iseyin community, and that all the materials that are been used for cloth production are gotten from their farm [Alarape, 2023, personal communication]. The production of the hand woven textile in Iseyin have been said to have taken place one step after the other. Though some scholars have discussed the process of production, what most of their work entail is the general view of the processes involved in different parts of Yorubaland, therefore the study will specifically focus on the production process of hand-woven textile in Iseyin which is the area of study. To simply put, the Iseyin cloth production can be classified into the pre-weaving process and the weaving process. In this case the aso-ofi is the name given to the end result of thread weaving and the extracted thread from cotton are the ones dyed and which significantly represent the names given to each of the aso-ofi produced. This was the case in the pre-colonial Iseyin weaving industry, now with the coming of foreigners especially the British colonialists, the process of cloth production have been limited and much more easy.

The process of the production of aso-ofi by the Iseyin people basically include the following; planting and harvesting of cotton seed, separation of the seed from the cotton, extraction of the thread from the cotton wool, stretching of the thread, dyeing of the thread and finally weaving. To start with, the production of cloth in Iseyin involves planting of cotton which is done mainly by the men, at this point in time the men are the ones who cultivate the land, plant the cotton seeds and weed. That is to say that the men go through all the processes of the preparation of farmland as well as planting. Land preparation for farming has not changed in Yorubaland. Weed clearing, which must precede cultivation, is carried out with cutlasses, knives, and axes. “Slash and burn” techniques were practiced in most remote areas, not only to clear the vegetation but also to replenish the soil with ashes [Alarape, 2023, personal communication]. This simply means that cultivation is usually carried out using simple implements like hoes, knives, axes, and cutlasses. Specific tasks were assigned by gender and age group. Men dominated the cultivation of farmlands, while women performed the roles of harvesting, transporting, and processing agricultural products.When the time comes for harvesting, it was recorded that the men then takes their family along to the farm, the women, children alongside the men in different households are the

ones that first harvest the proceeds together. After harvesting, the women then takes over the job by going through the process of removal of the seed from the cotton, this then makes the extraction process easy and possible, the process which is called in Yoruba language 'gbigbon owu'. In iseyin town the women were also the ones responsible for the extraction of thread from the cotton this process of extraction is called 'riran owu' with the use of a moulded machine made of clay and the 'oparun' tree. To remove the seeds, ginning usually involves placing cotton balls on a block of wood and rolling an iron rod over them. The pressure exerted on the moving cylindrical object pushes the seeds out of the cotton fibres. After the seeds are removed, the fibres must be aligned and this process is called ginning. The ginning process which was confirmed to be done indigenously through a bow type device called Okure. The device is used to fluff the cotton and straighten the fibres. This process produces the fluffy product which is ready to be spun into thread. Between five and six of the thread are said to be extracted at a stretch, and folded into 60 roll [Alarape, 2023, personal communication].

After all the thread have been extracted from the cotton, it is said that the women will prepare pots of dye and pour the extracted thread into the dye to bring out different specific colours in which the produce out of each of these threads are named after the colour of the dye. After ginning the process of spinning takes pace, spinning is mostly done traditionally, manually and very cumbersome. The spinner pulls and twists enough fibres to secure it to a spindle. Though it was gathered that spinning can take two major forms, but in this case the spindle is weighted by a clay whorl. The spinner sets the spindle in motion, draws fibres into a thread and winds them on the spindle. This instrument is called akowu. The extracted threads are then dyed into different colours, in which these dyes colour are responsible for the naming of any of the aso-ofi produced at this point in time, for instance the magenta colour dye used was what gave birth to the name alaari, and for sanyan is the champagne colour dye and the sample used are said to never go old in years [Atanda, 2015, p 114-115].

The desired colour of the thread is obtained with particular leaves and plants depending on the colour. In the case of blue colour, dyeing starts with the collection of eluu leaves (Indigofera) which produces indigo blue. The leaves are fermented and dried in balls. The indigo cakes are then placed in a perforated pot (elekiti) which contains ash (as source of soluble alkaline). Water is poured into the top filter through the perforated holes into the bottom pots to obtain dye (omi aro). Preparation of dye in other colours however demands more specialized skills, for instance the red dyes was discovered to be gotten from leaves of guinea corn (ewe oka baba), back and roots of African rosewood (aga tree), black from physic nut tree (opo owon) beige from bark of mango tree (epo igi mongoro) and so on [Atanda, 2015, p 114-115].



Fig. 2 The locally and manually extracted and dyed thread gotten by the Iseyin people

All these processes are discovered through direct interview to be done traditionally by the Iseyin people, it was a hand craft which was passed down through the family lineage, and so almost all families in Iseyin are involved in the production of the aso-ofi even to the youngest of the household. In their work, "Aso-Oke Production and Use among the Yoruba of South Western Nigeria", (2009), Makinde et al mentioned the two types of loom for the production of their traditional hand-woven textiles 'aso-oke'. First, the upright single heddle loom, also known as the broad loom (made for the wrap around used by women) which is a fixed vertical frame upon which the warp is held under tension used to weave cloth of a predetermined length with about 30 to 90 cm width to allow two or three pieces stitched together to make a wraparound "iro" for women. The fabric produce on this loom is termed to be referred to as the common Kijipa. Second, is the double heddle loom (sown into the agbada used by men) which is an horizontal loom with the unwoven warp yarns stretched out several yards in front of the weaver with a heavy shed to maintain tension. The loom produce strips of woven fabrics which is about 14-15cm wide; the fabrics are cut and edge stitched together to make larger piece of cloth which could be used for clothing or coverings. The men's horizontal loom compared to the women vertical loom are said to use more accessories and provides opportunity for the use of a variety of warp threads which often determines the types of design found on the aso-ofi [Makinde, 2009, p 58-59]. Though they mentioned types of production of the aso-oke is the record of what was gotten from ogbomoso, it is as well discovered that the production of these textiles spread from Iseyin to these areas. Also in Iseyin the pattern of weaving is quite different as they only specify on weaving plain and carpet pattern rather than basket and port-hole (jawu) pattern which is common in other places like Ilorin, it is important to as well know that all other patterns are done by the Iseyin people but they are not specialized in those more [Ikimot, 2026, Personal communication]. In general the warp is the predominant feature, the pattern of

stripes is determined by laying the threads out, and using a roller to create alternate stripes. The warp threads are then bundled and threaded through suspended heddles (Omu) which are also attached to pedals which the weaver can manipulate with their feet, leaving their hands free to manipulate the weft. Heddles operate as a pair forming the shed and counter shed. The weft is passed through the opening and closing heddles to form the cloth [Olutayo, 2011, p 10-11].



Fig. 3 Finished product of the woven aso-ofi in Iseyin

Traditional Usage of Aso-Ofi in Yorubaland

In the Yoruba historical settings, the aso-ofi was always reserved for special occasion and used to attend different ceremonies, sometimes the Yoruba people used the aso-ofi as a uniform clothing (aso-ebi) by a group of people for an event and therefore was seen as a means of expression of communal, loyalty, solidarity and love. In other cases it was mainly used by women as girdle (oja) to hold their babies, shawl, wrapper, head tie, and blouse, the Yoruba men also cloth themselves in aso-oke for work and other social ceremonies [Idowu, 2025, p 26-28]. In the history of the Old Oyo empire, Iseyin was part of the area under the Old Oyo empire, and part of the tribute which the Alaafin often collect from Iseyin was their hand woven cloth which was said to be rated high in terms of tribute paid to the Alaafin [Oladejo, 2026, Personal communication]. The importance of the aso-ofi in traditional Iseyin land was visible in the presentation of aso-ofi as gift and receiving it as gift, an example was the case of the defeated Alaafin who was said to have gotten to Iseyin while trying to secure a location for the present day Oyo after the Dahomey war, when he got to Iseyin he was said to meet the people weaving clothes, he was said to have stayed for about two to three years before he continued in his journey, when he was leaving the people of Iseyin were said to as part gifted him the aso-ofi cloth to take along in his journey, this cloth at this point in time was regarded as a special and ceremonial cloth which cannot be given out anyhow except to a special and highly honoured person [Rasaq, 2022, Personal communication]. Also is the case of a Christian missionary who received the gift

of aso-oke from Aalafin Abiodun of the Old Oyo Empire in 1920 [Oladejo, 2026, Personal communication].

Apart from giving out aso-ofi as gift to a special guest, in the traditional Yoruba wedding ceremony, part of the material of marital rite (idana) is the bride receiving the gift of aso-ofi from the groom's family and in other cases from the mother of the bride, in time past they used to believe that if the aso-ofi is not in the brides package then the bride's package isn't complete and so might not be acceptable in some cases. The aso-ofi in the Yoruba dress also serves some traditional religious purposes whereby aso-ofi was prescribed to be presented to witches to appeal to them. Aso-ofi was also used for religious festive purposes; the hand-woven cloth traditionally is used mostly in festival like the Egungun festival in which the costume is made from the aso-ofi with no compliment, also is its usage in the Oro festival., a vivid example of Oyo and Iseyin township, also the Ogboni society among the Ijebu people of Yorubaland imported the aso-ofi from Iseyin to be used as what they use to call itagbe, an insignia of the ogboni society and lastly it is used to cover some religious objects like ere-ibeji, osanyin, edan and used as shrine decoration. Also religiously in some other cases, the aso-oke was used as a protective measure whereby part of the materials used for a protective armband/waistband (ifunpa/ounde) was the aso-ofi, and used to prevent the cycle of death and rebirth in abiku [Rasaq, 2022, Personal communication].

Most importantly the kijipa has been found to be mostly used as the ritual clothes; these cloths may be used in worship, to perform rites, sacrifices or as an object of prayer. Sometimes medicine men or heads of cults, pray on the cloth or add other substances, and subsequently give the cloth to their patients or followers for protection against evil spirits. Women who are having problems with child conception may be given specially woven cloth to wear on their bellies after prayers or incantations have been said over them. Some of these cloths are also woven for the use of masquerades with the belief that once they wear the cloth, the ancestral spirits will possess them. Egungun and Gelede, two very important masquerades in Yoruba land, are examples of masquerades that use traditional cloth woven by women for covering (See below) [Rea, 2013].



Fig. 4 An Egungun costume made of purely colourful aso-oke

The aso-ofi which was also worn as cloth was used by Yoruba women as girdle (oja) to strap babies), this girdle was said to be made of the sanyan aso-ofi, and the ipele was also sown out of the aso-ofi to be used as a covering cloth because of its thickness. The buba (blouse), (wrapper) iro, head-tie (gele) and shawl iborun which is usually hung on the shoulder of the user were commonly worn by the Iseyin and generally the Yoruba women, that was the only style the aso-ofi was sown in to during the pre-colonial Iseyin town. In this case, a single panel of cloth may be used as oja, (a piece of cloth used by Yoruba mothers to strap their babies to their back), gele (head ties) iborun (a type of shawl) osuka (cloth rolled into a bun and placed on the head for loads to be set on) and towels. So basically women's use of traditional hand woven textiles have can be classified into the basic clothes which are worn for everyday use, and they are also referred to as aso iwole/iyile (casual cloth). They can be made with traditional hand spun thread or with industrial threads to produce lighter cloth that can be used as cover cloths, casual wrappers to be worn to markets, baby ties, work and play clothes among others. Clothes under this category are known as kijipa or ikale, oja, ologba meta and ala which are sown into buba (blouse) and iro (wrapper) [Asakitipi, 2007, p 103]. (see Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 The basic women cloth

For the Yoruba men, the aso-ofi in the ancient times was worn as work dress on their farms, and sow it into full agbada for ceremonial occasion, agbada siki, sokoto kembe mostly used by the chiefs, abeti-aja for fila and they also use it for social, religious and traditional ceremonies. They wear a complete dress consisting of sokoto (trousers), buba (top), agbada (large embroidered flowing gown) and abeti aja fila (cap) [Negri, 1962, p 4]. (see Fig. 6).

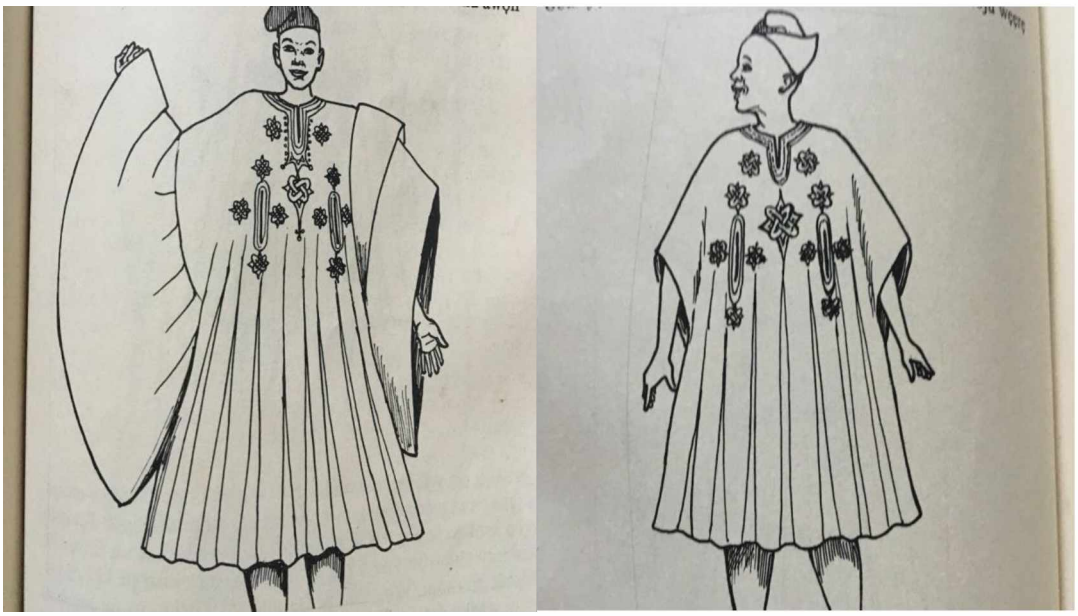

Fig. 6 Example of sown style of aso-ofi with embroidery for men (dandogo and gbariye) and cap (abeti aja)

Also is the ceremonial cloth of traditional design which falls under sanyan, etu, and alaari (these are cloth used for specific ceremonial occasions such as marriage, chieftaincy etc (see Fig. 7); these are cloth forms, which reflect social status because only the leaders and the rich can afford to wear them. Such cloth can be used for important ceremonies such as chieftaincy, initiation ceremonies, weddings, and funerals of important individuals within the society. These cloth forms reflect leadership, prestigious, and religious or cultural status [Rasaq, 2022, Personal communication]. In Iseyin where men's weaving is very prominent, the cloth produced, namely aso-ofi, was often used as symbols of political and social prestige. In these areas, a small percentage of the women (when compared to their male counterpart) also weave and though some of the cloth so produced are used to mark important events in the life of the women (including marriages, birth of babies and other social functions), most of their woven cloths serve domestic purposes in the form of blankets, towels, and work clothes [Asakitipi, 2007, p 103].



Fig. 7 A full sown gown (agbada) with embroidery for men and women ceremonial outfit made of aso-ofi

As regard the aso-ofi clothing style, it was discovered that there used to be limited styles which the aso-ofi are sown into, particularly the women who had just the popular buba and iro and even in this case the women that wear such often portray the riches and wealth of their husband, while in the case of the men the styles are more than that of the women but also limited. The reason for the limitation is said to be because of the cost of the aso-ofi, which was as a result of the difficulty that entails its production. Finally the aso-ofi was also used as aso-ebi (commemorative cloth) among the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria most especially during burial ceremony in the case of an old person. Aso-ebi connotes the wearing of a chosen or commissioned cloth as a uniform dress to commemorate or celebrate an event or occasion [Akinwumi, 1990]. In all the aso-ofi used to be an attire which cannot be worn anyhow or made into anything, and in most cases it is used to identify classes amidst the yoruba people, mostly between the alaari and the sanyan which portrays the riches or royalty of the wearer, so the aso-ofi often portrays wealth and riches amongst the Iseyin people [Alarape, 2023, personal communication].

Colonialism and the Aso-Ofi Production and Usage in Iseyin

The British policy in Nigeria from 1886 has been said to be designed to knock down the home industries in other to guarantee continuing importation of British made goods to her colonies which Sir Lord Lugard implemented. With Lugard's policy of indirect rule (the use of traditional rulers and chiefs as middle men to help implementing British government policies in Yorubaland) which was predominant in Yorubaland, the colonialist was able to gain direct access to the land, human and farm produce of the Yoruba people. During the colonial period, cotton was widely cultivated as an export commodity. New varieties of cotton introduced during this time may have been responsible for its large- scale

production relative to the pre-colonial period. Cotton cultivation was promoted in the British regions of Yorubaland by the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA), founded in 1902 [Asakitipi, 2007, p 101, 104-105]. As a result the policy of commercial farming formed one of the basis for the colonial economy, and by this the colonialism were able to acquire the farm produce of the colonies in which the cotton farming in Iseyin was greatly affected. With the British introduction of the commercial farming, the need therefore arises among the weavers to extract more thread in large quantities in order to meet the foreign market demand, so the thread became scarce. The cotton produce were then exported in large quantity to serve the European market and this limiting the production of the aso-ofi in Iseyin and generally in Yorubaland. There was also the huge imposition of tax on the cotton planters and textile weavers, which made these farmers and weavers to work harder and earn little as profit because most of the profits have gone into the taxes paid to the colonialist through the middle-men. This therefore led to the inflated prices in the aso-ofi products at this point in time. There was also the report of a riot which took place in Iseyin at this point in time, which was done by the Iseyin women and was said to have happened in Ode-Oba. This was a fight against the British representatives (the middle-men) on the huge levy of taxes which was placed on the cotton producers and cloth weavers in Iseyin. As a result of these colonial policies on the Yoruba handcrafted textiles with smuggling activities along Nigeria coastal towns and land boarders became a major obstacle to the growth of the indigenous textile industries [Ikimot, 2026, personal communication]. In essence, the British colonialists attacked the local industries through legislations banning the production of certain goods by the local craftsmen. Other crafts were systematically taxed to raise their general cost of production, making them uncompetitive against foreign goods. The merchants trading in the local crafts products were subjected to various taxes which forced them to abandon dealing in locally manufactured goods. Through advances of cash and credit goods (imports) the local merchants' class was incorporated into the imperialist trading network. Some of the artisans abandoned that work and took agriculture, wage labour or trade [Makinde, 2009, p 58-59]. It is also noted that these cotton produce exported to serve the European market also often come back to Yorubaland in form of finished goods basically as dress material or sown clothes to be sold to the people, thereby setting the foundation for the evacuation of the traditional clothes and particularly the aso-ofi, in addition to the 'colonial environment' not being 'conducive' for the production of the hand-woven textile in Yorubaland at this point in time. On a final note, the implication of these colonial influences discouraged the production of the aso-ofi as well as the usage of the cloth. The cotton materials produced were no longer meant to serve the local hand-woven textile industry but rather to serve the European industry to produce the western clothes and in cases where the cottons were not exported they were meant to produce the mission church and schools clothes in addition to serving the European owned textile industries within Yorubaland and Nigeria in general.

Western Influence on Production of Aso-Ofi

After colonialism, much more developments have been discovered to have taken place in the production of aso-ofi in Iseyin which has therefore led to more changes. The changes starts with the production process of the aso-ofi, there emerged the large importation of different kinds of threads, rather than the usual manual production of thread, apart from mass influx of thread in the Nigerian market; there has also been improvement in the equipment used in the production of the aso-ofi which makes the production easy and fast [Ogunleye, 2023, 1-15]. The European goods and ideas entered the weaving industries and altered colour methods and design choices. This improvement has as well aided large and commercial production of the aso-ofi in Iseyin [Olade, 2022]. Even the China textile product have taken place in the past few years of the 21st century, these easily sorted ,material therefore changed the process of production of the aso-ofi, no one is interested in the cultivation of cotton and manual extraction of thread which were said to be long lasting compared to the imported ones. In fact there was the notion of lazy attitude which has taken over the textile production and business according to Chief Alarape, 'the youth are no longer interested in working hard to sustain the legacies of the forefathers in the aso-ofi businesses'.

In later years after colonial rule, production became more elaborate and easier, according to Mr Rasaq, several kinds of materials were and are still used in producing the cloths, which include silk, rayon, sewing threads and recently the importation of the metallic yarn from China [Rasaq, 2022, Personal communication]. The industry has also recently witnessed expansion through the influx of young entrepreneurs that engaged in the business, especially in the late 1990's this was found to be one of the factors responsible for the surge in the participation of people in all the major activities of the indigenous craft industry (ranging from procurement of materials and equipment, processing inputs, actual production of aso-ofi and its marketing) [Adamu, 2015, 2450-2452].

In the contemporary period, due to western influence the importation of all kinds of production material particularly thread have expanded on the use of the aso-ofi, a single panel of cloth may even be worked into a wooden chair to serve as the backrest as well as the seat. Apart from chair, the recent made aso-ofi can be sown into curtain, bed sheet, bags, shoes and other commonly used materials. This was justified to be because of the influx of foreign materials which are gotten easily. Mr Adeniran also confirmed that the old thread is mainly used for the worn cloth and even those who are able to buy it are those who are average or very well to do in the Yoruba society which therefore portrays classified society, this was because the thread was not easily gotten considering all the process it has to go through before the cloth is finally produced, so therefore such cloth cannot be used just for anything [Adeniran, 2025, personal communication]. For worn clothes, with massive importation of production materials, two or more panels of the aso-ofi can be joined together to be used as a wrapper by both sexes for different ceremonies. Such wrappers may also be used as a cover cloth for protection against cold and mosquitoes. Also the new textiles are being cut and sown into different

style, some even go to the extent of merging the aso-ofi with other textile materials such as lace, Ankara, etc. the styles to which the recent aso-ofi is sown into are now much more than the past, particularly the women now have more styles than the men. The western styles have also taken charge of the local textile industry, thereby the aso-ofi is being sown into western styles just to show creativity, sense of style and go along with the trend. The new aso-ofi gives a lot of room for such [Adeniran, 2025, personal communication]. With the attainment of independence there was the re-emancipation of the traditional clothes in Nigeria, thereby people had to go back to their wardrobes and bring out their originally made clothes including the aso-ofi just to express themselves and portray freedom from the hand of the colonialist, this therefore again popularized the traditional clothing tradition; and later at the turn of the 20th century aso-ofi became tied to Yoruba (and Nigerian) cultural identity. Yoruba intellectuals (often from slave returnee families) rejected the formal wear of the British Empire in favor of this local cloth. The twentieth century witnessed an increasing surge in demand for aso-ofi which has meant that its production is widespread throughout South Western Nigeria. It has become synonymous with Yoruba identity and the cloth is used for the manufacture of garments associated with prestigious moments such as weddings, graduations, religious festivals (of all beliefs) and other important events [Atanda, 2015, p 114-131].

CONCLUSION

Though up till recent times, there has been increase demand in the purchase of the aso-ofi in Iseyin, this which has also helped in sustaining the production of the local hand-woven textiles in the area, that is why when you get to Iseyin today, most of the families are still very much involved in the business, in fact there is no other major vocation in Iseyin rather than the production of the aso-ofi. That is why in recent time there was the trending slang which became popular on a social media platform (Facebook) which states “show me a compound in Iseyin without where dem dey do aso-ofi & I show u bank without money/” translated to mean all the compound in Iseyin are aso-ofi producers. This may be true in the sense that aso-ofi production is the major vocation of these people and almost all the compounds are endowed with this indigenous knowledge. Despite the fact that the Iseyin people are still majorly involved in the hand woven textile business, there has been much changes over the years in the production process, these which ranges from procurement of equipments, that is to say the changes in the ofi (the place of weaving) from the molded shed to the wooden one which is moveable; improvement on other equipments which makes the weaving process faster, use of foreign thread which gave way for mass production of the aso-ofi compared to the past.

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ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ ПРОИЗВОДСТВА ТРАДИЦИОННОЙ ТКАНИ АСО-ОКЕ В ГОРОДЕ ИСЕЙИН НА ЮГО-ЗАПАДЕ НИГЕРИИ

Аннотация. Производство асо-оке представляет собой важную часть историко-культурного наследия народа йоруба и отражает преемственность традиционных знаний, ремесленного мастерства, эстетических ценностей и социально-экономических практик Юго-Западной Нигерии. В Исейине традиционное производство тканей ручного ткачества сформировалось задолго до колониального периода и стало значимой формой местного ремесла, социальной идентичности, культурного самовыражения и

межпоколенческой передачи традиционных навыков. Вместе с тем распространение западного культурного влияния в период британского колониального господства и последующие социально-экономические трансформации привели к изменениям в традиционном текстильном производстве и создали серьёзные проблемы для сохранения, изготовления и использования асо-оке. В связи с этим в данной статье анализируются историческое развитие производства асо-оке в Исейине, процессы получения и обработки сырья, традиционные технологии ткачества и особенности использования ткани, а также трансформация местного текстильного производства под воздействием колониальной политики и западной культуры на основе историко-нарративного, междисциплинарного подходов и критического анализа первичных и вторичных источников.

Ключевые слова: асо-оке, традиционный текстиль, Исейин, народное ремесло, культура йоруба, текстильное производство, культурное наследие.

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JANUBI-G‘ARBIY NIGERIYANING ISEYIN SHAHRIDA AN’ANAVIY ASO-OKE MATOSI ISHLAB CHIQARISHNING TARIXIY RIVOJLANISHI

Annotatsiya. Aso-oke ishlab chiqarish yoruba xalqining tarixiy-madaniy merosining muhim tarkibiy qismi bo‘lib, Janubi-G‘arbiy Nigeriyada an’anaviy bilimlar, hunarmandchilik mahorati, estetik qadriyatlar va ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy tajribalarning davomiyligini o‘zida aks ettiradi. Iseyinda an’anaviy qo‘lda mato to‘qish mustamlakachilik davridan ancha oldin shakllangan bo‘lib, mahalliy hunarmandchilik, ijtimoiy o‘zlik, madaniy o‘zini ifodalash hamda an’anaviy ko‘nikmalarni avloddan avlodga yetkazishning muhim shakliga aylangan. Ammo Britaniya mustamlakachiligi davrida G‘arb madaniyati ta’sirining kuchayishi va keyingi ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy transformatsiyalar an’anaviy to‘qimachilik ishlab chiqarishida jiddiy o‘zgarishlarni yuzaga keltirib, aso-okeni saqlash, ishlab chiqarish va undan foydalanish bilan bog‘liq muammolarni kuchaytirgan. Shu munosabat bilan mazkur maqolada Iseyinda aso-oke ishlab chiqarishning tarixiy

rivojlanishi, xomashyoni olish va qayta ishlash jarayonlari, an’anaviy to‘qish texnologiyalari va matodan foydalanish xususiyatlari, shuningdek, mustamlakachilik siyosati va G‘arb madaniyati ta’sirida mahalliy to‘qimachilik ishlab chiqarishining transformatsiyasi tarixiy-narrativ va fanlararo yondashuvlar hamda birlamchi va ikkilamchi manbalarni tanqidiy tahlil qilish asosida o‘rganiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: aso-oke, an’anaviy to‘qimachilik, Iseyin, xalq hunarmandchiligi, yoruba madaniyati, to‘qimachilik ishlab chiqarishi, madaniy meros.

