Interventions in Traditional Clothing Systems Through Anthropological Perspective

V. Nithyaprakash, S. Niveathitha, and A. Thambidurai

Abstract This chapter discusses the characteristics of fashion, its Eurocentric ideals and its overbearing reference to modernity. The institutionalized meaning of fashion and its values in the history of fashion studies is summarized. The research challenges the Western perspective of traditional clothing systems. In this background, an inclusive definition of fashion from the perspective of fashion anthropology is used as an anchor to analyze the contribution of traditional or indigenous clothing systems toward the changing needs of the world. The representation of the traditional clothing styles and its textile art forms is discussed. Analysis of traditional clothing styles in the framework of art design compositions provides an opportunity to re-imagine their significance. The source of these information is collected from the different forms and domains of secondary information available in published space. The result of the analysis exemplifies the design propositions of the African traditional clothing styles: African wax prints/Ankara prints, kente cloth, Bogolanfini, traditional batik prints, Adinkra and Adire—tie and dye fabrics as an emerging aspect for promoting cultural diversity, decolonization and sustainable designs. Further the case study also explores the interactions with the fashion leaders, designers, artists, exposure to newer ways of life and relations with foreign nations.

Keywords Fashion · Traditional clothing styles · Culture · Art · Anthropology · Decolonization

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1   Introduction

The concept of fashion draws majorly from the Eurocentric idea of aristocratic, lifestyle values in the context of modern industrialized landscape. However, European fashion history reveals the adoption and appropriation of Indian, other Oriental and African Ethnic designs in large scale around the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when they exercised colonial powers. Albeit fashion exists in every country with the transcending characteristics of its own ethos and the behavior determined by its international relations and exposure to the Global market space. The growing multipolar world order, universal need to adopt sustainable fashion designs and country-specific fashion determined by its international relations and decolonial ambitions draws upon the necessity to reimagine and redefine the fashion concept in an alternative perspective along the lines of fashion anthropology. Examining the ecumenical aspects of fashion concepts and discussion of traditional textile craft practices, art forms in perpetuating its cultural identity shall set forth a positive premise to integrate sustainable values, relativistic cultural values as fashion's entities in decolonizing fashion.

2   Characteristics of Fashion

The concept of fashion constitutes two major characteristics, namely change and novelty. Novelty is the highly valued feature of fashion and Koenig refers the fashion followers as "neophilia" attributing human's receptiveness for new as the quintessential aspect for sustaining fashion behavior [1]. Barthes regards fashion phenomenon as neomania which emerged with the advent of capitalism in an instituted manner, with novelty as its purchased value [2]. Fashion characteristics also comprise three more properties; i. symbol of wealth, ii. Measure of up datedness and iii. leisure according to Veblan [3]. Fashion is conceived as a non-occupational identity according to crane especially for women [4]. In the 21stcentury, a man's identity is linked to his occupation as well as his influential social traits such as idea of lifestyle and appearing home to multicultural aspects [5]. Crane concluded fashion is decentralized where a sole standard style of fashion belonging a specific time frame might not appeal to everyone in the context of contemporary postmodern society [4]. From sociologists' perspective, fashion is referred to concept of imitation. Imitation is a relational concept that accords diffusion of certain fashion style from the upper sections of the society to the lower sections of the society as a sign of livelihood betterment for the lower sections of the society though there is no change in their material wealth and their social status [6]. According to Simmel, fashion promotes imitation and social equalization. Rather fashion is perceived to exist amidst the incessant process of change that discriminates one pattern of lifestyle from the other pattern [7]. The outcome of this incessant process of change creates different groups of people on basis of their choice of a particular fashion style. Sumner regards fashion

as "mores" a certain behavior characterizing the socializing activities likening it to a custom and traditional clothing as a "folkway" with no agenda for characterizing a certain lifestyle criterion [8]. The traditional clothing is defined as a habitual way of dressing associated with local cultural events, socially constituted practice of occasion specific etiquette and emotional disposition. The purview of traditional clothing system explains the dressing behavior in specific social and cultural contexts as each context constitutes different social meanings. The dress function of traditional clothing is to serve physiological protection and modesty.

Toennies, ascribes the dominating feature of fashion to the desire for distinction prevalent among the urban elites where the fashion outfit is different from the traditional attires and costumes of the place [9]. Fashion outfits like flapper dress, beach pajamas and sporty girl sported by the affordable upper sections of the society implies leisure and lifestyle that are markedly different from the traditional clothing functions. Bourdieu concluded that the desire for distinction is more prevalent among the bourgeoisie rather than it among the commoners [10]. The Bourgeoisie, patronize what is good style and good class for the example the Parisian upper class members of the society regarded a certain way of dressing and accessorizing as good style and good class otherwise known as Bon chic and Bon genre (BCBG). In fashion, group of people patronizing certain style are referred to a subculture. Analogous to BCBG concept, Preppy style did exist in USA, and in UK, it is referred as Sloane rangers. A subcultural group or member of style tribe does not follow any of the conventional dressing rules, in fact they are overwhelmed and opt for a dressing style that connotes their feelings and lifestyle preferences.

Contrary to the distinctive and discriminating virtues of French and British fashion, Italy's fashion is shaped by its history, artistic virtues, culture and its relationships with French and the USA. Blumer attributed the fashion quotient of the dress or outfit to be the key signifier of fashion and its acceptance among the fashion consuming public [11]. Blumer further lists consumer taste as the prime factor for defining the fashion outfit functions.

3 Institutionalization of Fashion

McCracken (1988) observed that the imitation of fashion is facilitated and fostered by a fashion system [12]. He believes fashion system is the framework through which fashion values and style are constituted and promoted. White and White, Becker concluded fashion system is constructed by several institutions [13, 14]. Earlier Blumer had stressed the role of fashion designer in interpreting the consumer tastes and constituting the fashion values in the fashion outfit where the fashion designer works along with a network of closely connected professionals in the process of design creation [11]. The fashion system constructs the image of fashion and infuses its culture among the top five fashion cities: New York, London, Paris, Rome and Tokyo. Kawamura observes that fashion as a system existed in the form of Haute couture at Paris as early as 1868 [6]. Fashion system's existence lies in the network of

people connected with creating fashion, proposing changes to fashion and those who adopt it. The various agencies associated in the process of constructing the fashion image are creative artists in the cultural industry, photographers, journalists, fashion forecasters, models, etc. The French fashion system consists of different organizations with a hierarchy among those who design clothes: Haute Couture, Prêt-à-Porter for women and Prêt-à-Porter for men. It is always a group of people who are involved in the process of co-creating and legitimizing the fashion values. Fashion carries a culturally constructed meaning, created and disseminated by the likes of journalists, models, designers, fashion photographers and the creative industry professionals. The interpretation of fashion is exclusive to the traditional clothing and its association with the symbolic components of the culture. The French fashion trade organization that organizes fashion events, fairs and other fashion rendezvous activities also plays a pro-active role in choosing designers for creating fashion, engaging the fashion industry professionals for producing them and mobilizing the fashion agents: photographers, models, journalists, etc., for propagating fashion. This institutionalized framework sustains itself in the fashion business by perpetuating what is fashion and lifestyle for every season through its network of professionals. Bourdieu associates' fashion with three types of capital as social capital, cultural capital and economic capital [10].

3.1 Spread of Fashion—Influencing Factors

Europe and USA experienced rapid changes in fashion as a result of nineteenth-century industrialization. Industrialization of fashion manufacturing produced new fashion quickly and inexpensively. The social structure of the Western world underwent a great change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the population increased, productivity soared, money economy developed due to the growing division of labor, technology improved, commerce expanded and social mobility became possible [6]. Since fashion acts as a symbol of social relevance in a particular context [15], the drive for owning fashion clothing grew higher and higher than ever before. The classical perspective of fashion is the premise that fashion spreads from higher classes to lower classes. However, the contemporary view of fashion holds a different perspective that ascribes Individual's wish to update the tastes in the emerging scenario as fashion [11]. The individual's rate of change is characterized by the pattern of changes in politic, art and technology that constitute the contemporary society [16]. Roach higgins observes that the awareness for a fashion change has to be felt and nurtured by a group of people not an individual [17]. The convergence of webspace technology has brought fashion news to every individual's doorstep. Thus, in the interconnected Global scenario, fashion activities and the space occupied by them draws no parallel activity equal to its status symbol in the society. Bourdieu also observes taste as key signifiers of social identity.

3.2 Fashion as a Concept and Its Exclusivity in Fashion Studies

Prior to 1980s, the fashion studies were confined to what happened in and around the European continent with the emphasis on industrial development, historic social changes in North America and Europe [18]. The influence of other culture's textile art forms on European fashion was hardly noted [18]. Rather knowledge of fashion and its possession was used as a criterion to rank the progressive level of a country and its civilization. Thus, fashion was used by the Europeans and the Americans to discriminate the indigenous cultures and their textile art forms [19, 20]. Wilson ascribed capitalism and growth of urbanization in late Medieval Europe for the emergence of fashionable dress that symbolized leisure and lifestyle. Hence, the idea of fashion is markedly different from the traditional clothing and its social value. The fashionable dress is created with the purpose of embodying the bourgeois values, to express the aristocratic lifestyle tastes which were anointed by the fashion institutions and the associated agencies. These fashion values were markedly different from the cultural expressions, emotional dispositions and social values of the traditional clothing [21].

Fashion history accounts state fashion as place and time specific since it existed in several forms such as court fashion, Bourgeoise fashion and consumer fashion. So, contextualizing fashion with modern capitalism alone does not encompass the other associated values of fashion. Moreover, the extended associations of fashion with photography, creative arts and other cultural systems raised hopes about more inclusive definitions of fashion which resulted in much broader contextualization [22]. Twenty-first century witnessed more extended definitions of fashion such as Oriental fashion, Islamic fashion, African fashion, Latin American fashion through the Anthropological perspectives of fashion theory journal. Thus, fashion influences as a two-way process either from top to bottom or bottom to top came to be acknowledged [22]. However, empirical research did hold on to the fact that fashion changes were more frequently noticed in European and North American cities than in the other cultures and less industrialized countries. Based on the accounts of the findings stated by Jennifer craik, fashion is also associated with cultural identity of style [23]. This phenomenon was possibly more relevant among the aspiring societies of developing countries. Classical example is the changing semiotic values in Indian society. Post 2000's the new Indian woman adopted fusion styles; a blend of Indian and Western silhouettes which also furthered the contemporalities of ethnic silhouettes [24]. Charlotte Jirousek in her studies ascribes the emergence of mass fashion in Ottomon Empire to the changing local socio-economic conditions and a kind of lenience toward bourgeoise values [25]. Leslie rabine also highlighted the relevance of trans-national values among the clothing styles of African fashion and its diasporas [26].

Finnane's findings about the Chinese dressing style changes between sixteenth and nineteenth century also records the evolving socio-cultural patterns and transnational values among the urban people [27]. Penelope Franck's study based on the evolution of Japanese kimono styles of eighteenth century Japanese society owing

to the industrialization also cites the shift in socio-cultural values [28]. The Japanese fashion was deciphered as Avantegarde and the reason behind its cultural identity by greenwood with reference to the creations of Japanese designers Rei Kawakubo, Isse Miyake and Yohji yamamoto. These designers incorporated the Japanese elements such as the folds, pleats and wraps with appealing material fantasy that Rivalled the Eurocentric origins of fashion.

In a multiracial society like Jamaica, the contemporary clothing style is an evolution of the dominant afro-European clothing styles an outcome of the continuous interaction between European and African cultural elements along the process of development movements, changing patterns of political and social life [29]. The different genres of Kanga textiles which reflect the socio-cultural values of East African people evolved from late nineteenth century onward with influx of Indonesian batik motifs, Swahili script and Indian printing techniques [30]. Indonesian batik-printed national dress is a confluence of Islamic culture, Western culture and the local dress. The Filipino national dress evolved from sarong and sari style wrap skirt to fuller skirt embodying the cultural values of modesty brought forth by the Spaniards.

Mexican fashion that reflects broader version of Latin American culture is attributed to co-existence of multiple cultures like native culture, European culture and African culture. The Mexican clothing co-opted the Western designs within the existing native elements allowing itself to adapt to newer ways of life and culture. The shift in socio-cultural clothing values and the resultant semiotic evolution of clothing entity of Indians, Chinese, Africans and Japanese connote a different identity and property to fashion apart from its Eurocentric ideology. Thus, the fashion identity appears to accommodate the pluralistic values of culture.

3.3   Fashion and Subculture

According to Deschamp's fashion devices: Society and norm go hand in hand; in other words, if society changes, norms changes and if the norms changes, fashion changes or vice versa [31]. Though style in clothing is a combination of personal expression and social rules, neither a member of subculture group nor a movement follow any of these social rules [32]. The societal changes, social movements and subculture are regarded as cultural phenomena [33]. Along the discourse of fashion history, there has been numerous accounts of subcultural movements and social movements inspiring fashion or being central to fashion concepts. These subculture movements especially Japanese style tribes has contributed a lot to the development of unique Japanese fashion characteristics in its revival during the 1990s.

3.4 Unconventional Aspects of Fashion

Frida Kahlo the Mexican artist chose to express disability, overwhelming passion for life and fashion through the traditional Tehuana dresses and contemporary jewelry. The choice of traditional dress to hide her disability, provide movement comfort and accommodate support braces expresses the convenience of traditional dresses in manipulating them according to the needs, deep affection for own culture and the choice of contemporary accessories brought forth her complex style statements in unapologetic way. It showcases her cross-cultural aesthetics which influenced Givenchy, Dolce and Gabbana. Alexander Mcqueen added a dimension of raw emotions in his designs including sufferings, darker side of romantic life and unconventional aspects of beauty. Thus, fashion is not complete without these extended expressions of beauty, passion, imperfections of life. And it is true that fashion is perceived as culturally constructed and embodied identity.

4 Fashion Anthropology

Fashion anthropology in the context of cross-cultural, holistic and cultural relativistic perspectives promotes inclusive definitions for fashion. It considers fashion as a universal system with a wide range of local variations in the same way that political or economic systems are universal with local variations. Eller recommends classifying the human behavior on the foundations of his/her diverse ways of being and behaving in life that is otherwise referred as cross-cultural perspective [34]. A cross-cultural study by Elodie Gentila et al. suggests that youth of France and US preference for luxury fashion brands share commonalities irrespective of their different origin [35]. Another cross-cultural study across two countries of vastly different cultures like Tehran and Berlin indicated that the preference for fashion seems to be inspired by their own traits and local culture [36]. The multidimensional attributes of the luxury fashion clothing is equally preferred by Generation Y cohorts of Germany and China, irrespective of the value differences perceived by them according to Maximillan Fraschan et al. [37]. The luxury fashion attributes, its global identity, perceived social value influences the purchase intention of Americans and Thais provided thais religious commitments is low according to cross-cultural study by Jieqiong Ma et al. [38]. And the attempts to explore cross-cultural communication abilities of fashion design concepts showed it is possible to interpret the concepts from a cross-cultural background [38]. Further studies also hold the fact that a fashion clothing irrespective of its Narrative content and perceived original value might appeal to other cultures with varied connotations [39]. The interpretation of fashion values differs from one region to another region as the way the information is structured is not always understood in the same context and fashion hardly follows any hierarchical concept in its deployment of icons and symbols [32]. The Western fashion dress idea constitutes intangible values visualized through pictogram, icons

or mood-based imagery is open to the consumer perspective and his/her knowledge while deciphering the different levels of fashion subject [32]. The visualization of fashion design and its narrative connoting the intangible values is anchored by the subject matter contextualized in the Aesthetic views of Art. The discourse about fashion and its narrative is disseminated extensively the social media sources, fashion magazines, fashion shows, music, cultural events, festive occasions and soap operas.

Cross-cultural comparisons by way of cross-temporal methods and cross-generational methods are used for investigating the cultural patterns and changes [40]. The devices of fashion such as society, gender and norm are also common among the objects studied in cross-cultural perspective. So cross-cultural perspective might be useful in ascertaining the assimilated human behavior patterns and interpreting the generic commonalities of universal value. The generic commonality of human behavior is also analogous to "Zeitgeist" phenomenon, that is central to different areas of social life across a specific period. Zeitgeist themes is characteristic to overlap and escalate in complex ways across different cultures. [33] Zeitgeist is also represented through the dominant theme, meanings and objects seen in fashion trends.

The holistic perspective refers to the process of studying a particular culture as a wholesome existence instead of ascribing to a narrow list of traits. The concept considers all aspects of culture such as politics, economics, religion are interrelated and interdependent on each other [41]. Given the state of fashion's desirability defined on a set of wide-ranging values [42] such as social, politics, sports, inclusivity, nationalism, youth, etc. nevertheless further strengthens the interdependencies between the different parts of the culture.

Cultural relativism points out that the standards of one culture cannot be applied for evaluating another culture rather permits relative assessment of a well understood phenomenon of one culture with another culture. If social psychology over individual psychology is ascribed by Yuniya Kawamura in the institutionalization of fashion values, likewise interpreting fashion's ideological aspects: gender, human body in the perspective of cultural relativism shall add new dimensions to fashion. Fashion by itself has no universal values and varies greatly across disciplines [32]. The stereotypical masculine or feminine qualifications are socially constructed representations of gender, based on what society expects of each sex [32]. Breaking away from socially constructed representations of values and qualifications is referred as perversion. So when Hippies or beatniks symbolized freedom and liberation from stereotyped gender characteristics by sporting long hair, people belonging to the conventional social culture interpret it as perversion of gender. Likewise different values are associated with the dresses in different cultures.

Our living environment irrespective of its culture origins has evolved continuously owing to an extent through industrialization and post World War effects in the twentieth century and certain extent through acculturation resulting out of globalization. And twenty-first century witnesses the promotion of multicultural practices for inclusive human resource development of different ethnicities, decolonizing fashion values and gender equality that is analogous to Postmodern fashion where all and

sundry ways of making of fashion is appreciated rather than aligning with the idealistic perspective of making art. Due to the influences, People's living environment changes and so does the attitude and outlook of life which culminates in the fashion choices an individual makes [43]. Yet traditional clothing and textile art forms is not naïve to these changing perspectives about life, lifestyle and attitude. Today's traditional clothing styles and art forms not only constitute the social values of the local culture and its entity but also subtly reflect the assimilated values of Global events perceived to affirm a sense of appropriateness.

Hence from the fashion anthropology perspective, the intent is to examine the African traditional clothing styles in the framework of art design compositions to posit a Universal narrative with its sustainable characteristics essential for its progress but also to preserve its indigenous representation, its cultural identity and not to decide its superiority or inferiority. In this case study, the essence of traditional African clothing styles: African wax prints, kente cloth, Bogolanfini, Adinkra, Adire and African traditional batik is investigated through the secondary published sources. Their cultural content, knowledge systems and the scope for design value propositions in the context of sustainable textile art forms is elaborated. Understanding the nuances of these African traditional textile clothing styles could serve as the microcosm of the much larger "sustainable fashion phenomenon." Oriental concepts of clothing style, African patterns and it myriad of colors, traditional fabric designs down the timeline since ages, the cult status of Ponchos, Bohemian style, etc. have influenced fashion clothing more than once. Representing the traditional clothing cultural values is also crucial to decolonization of fashion values.

5 African Traditional Clothing Styles

According to Webster the word tradition is an inherited, cultural feature handed over from the past [44]. Traditional clothing acts as medium to render the cultural expressions and fulfills dress functions of the ethnic representatives of the society. According to Yoder, in folk culture or traditional society, the clothing reflects the age, sex, relationship status of the individual rather than his or her personal style statement [45]. WIPO acknowledges the original owners of the traditional cultural clothing; knowledge systems associated with the traditional clothing manufacturing practices and recommends rightful interpretations of the traditional clothing elements [46].

5.1 African Wax Prints/Ankara Wax Prints

The traditional wax-printed fabrics of Africa is inspired and adopted from Indonesian batik-printed fabrics. West African soldiers posted in Indonesia choose this batik-printed fabrics for Africa. Batik is an ancient resist wax dyeing/printing technique, where the molten wax is applied on the fabric surface in specific places that constitutes

a non-colored distinctive part of the design landscape, and later, the other colors are added in the remaining spaces to complete the design. The African wax prints are known by other names like Java, Ankara and Hollandais. The African wax prints are indeed based on Javanese mechanical resist printing techniques with its artistic style borrowed from several countries. The intricacy of the batik print design stems from the tools and technique used for making the pattern, especially the traditional pen like tool "tjanting" holding liquid wax used by the Indonesian artisans is said to produce the most intricate design patterns for the wax print designs. Since the design pattern creation using the traditional hand held pen is slow and tedious task, the Dutch converted the process into roller inscribed design patterns using chemical resists to enhance the production. The traditional wax print fabrics are produced through mechanical resist process, where the molten wax is applied in the non-colored distinctive part or the lighter part of the design prior to dyeing process. The dyeing process is repeated several times by hand according to the print intensity and depth required for the producing the multicolored print design story. In the later stages of dyeing, the fabric is boiled to get rid of the wax applied on the cloth and hand dyed again for imparting color in the wax applied areas. The multiple stages of dyeing deposits one color layer after another color layer to achieve deep saturated hues and multiple colors. Indigo pigment is the dominant color source where each color is ascribed to a particular dye source; indigo or mixture of two or more sources. These wax prints are machine made adaptations of original hand-printed batik fabrics of Indonesia. In the adapted machine-made fabrics, the wax was replaced by resins which was applied on both the sides of the fabric prior to printing [47] (Fig. 1).

Contrary to the industry-scaled wax prints, the handmade wax prints color fastness quality was more superior [48]. These wax-printed fabrics introduced by the colonial rulers contrast the more indigenous Yoruba adhire/Adhinkra cloth/Asooke, yet has become part of African cultural legacy. Irrespective of the origin, wax-printed fabrics not only reflect the African ideas, symbols and local art subjects, but also canonized African beliefs and culture [49]. The local African woman ascribed the cultural themes to these Dutch-produced fabrics. The African wax prints are kitschy composition of multicolored patterns juxtaposed adjacent to one another. Each wax print design composition connotes cultural expressions, emotional dispositions, memorable moments and interactive experiences. Alphabet design wax print symbolized colonial education and mathematical literacy, fly swatter design wax print represented power and prestige, the iconic wax print "Darling, don't turn your back on me" indicate the values of the local cultural milieu [49]. The traditional wax-printed fabric designs reflect the African proverbs and social values with each design marking a special purpose and occasion of their usage. "Leaf trail design' wax-printed fabric symbolizes the African cultural saying "empty barrels make much noise", whereas a blue motif wax print represents pregnancy phase of women in Ghana, the family of hen and its chicks fabric design refers to Happy African family [50]. The African wax-printed fabrics counts to around 54 types with each type connoting a social value and purpose.

The wax print fabric irrespective of its foreign origins permeated the African ethos with relishing interactions of its cultural milieu and acquainted itself the Ethnic

Fig. 1 Ankara wax print. *Source* (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mills,_Obama,_GHANA-USA_wax_print_GTP_cloth.jpg)

African lifestyle. The Africa's emotional disposition about the theft of Asante King's Sword which lies now in British museum was expressed in a classical wax print design named "Staff of Kingship" [51]. The subject of the wax print design could be commemorative function with cultural signifiers or more abstract with social signifiers [52]. Thus, the wax print fabrics got absorbed in the African culture by continuously incorporating the local cultural elements as the subject of the print design [53]. Analogous to how Choco Chanel gave the New modern look, leading African ladies infused the cultural subject to the Dutch wax-printed fabric.

Anthropologist Nina Sylvanus perceived that Africans relish a colorful design palette with a shimmering surface and a crispy fabric that contrasts the tactile comfort and pliable preference of Europeans [54]. Among the machine produced wax print fabrics meant for Africans, the intrinsic organic motif arrangement was replaced by the geometrical motifs with defined margins that acted as color blocking lines. And the evolution of African wax print designs further incorporated commemorative designs, current events, public art subjects, social art subjects and emotional dispositions. Therefore, every African wax print design artwork evolved as a consequence of interaction between the artist, local fashion influencers, manufacturers and the traders. The artistic style of the wax print design and its meaning is thus influenced by the market forces [55, 56]. The market forces in turn operate within the framework of the PESTEL factors, namely Political, Economic, Societal, Technology, Environment and Legal. In the earlier days, the African wax print followed the Vasari's model of art development [50]. Vasari proposes that every artwork has a lifecycle with concept of inception, maturity and decay [57]. In the twentieth century, Wolff contemporized the lifecycle concepts as art concept creation by the artist, concept maturity associated with the consumer [55]. According to modern lifecycle concept, the developmental stage of artwork is guided by the continuous interaction between the artist and the consumer similar to Codesign concept. Consequently, the artwork embeds a functional value in the product value stream creation but also in the mindset of the consumer. However, the prevailing market systems do not guarantee the existence of such artwork models instead prone to the market disruptions such as the Cheaper Chinese wax prints.

At every stage in the life process, an artwork assumes a functional value which is aesthetic, social or economic in nature. The development in stages and changes in value are facilitated by the interaction of the artwork with the creator and the consumer. The African wax prints originally inspired by Javanese batik work, shared an Indigo base was strikingly similar to African tie and dye techniques [58]. Today these wax-printed designs are applied on silhouettes like jumpers, T-shirts along with other Western coordinates to produce everyday casual look [59].

5.2   *Mud Cloth or Bogolanfini*

Bogolanfini, otherwise known as mud cloth, derives its name from the dyeing process using fermented mud. Bogolanfini derives its name from the literary translation of mud-cloth in Mali. The fabric is assemblage of several woven strips of around 10.5–14.5 cm width and around 21–24 m length upon which the decorative motifs are arranged [60]. The Bogolanfini designs are basically graphic patterns in rustic red, beige and earthen colors. The woven fabric is made of spun cotton and woven in narrow strips which are later converted into a wider width by joining together the strips using handmade stitches [61]. The assembled fabric is dyed with organic extracts sourced from tree branches. The fabric base is smeared with mud to impart the characteristic color at the desired location according to the arrangement plan.

The whole design pattern is developed one after another across several part stages. Generally, the mud painted/dyed parts constitute the background. Initially, the fabric is soaked in a liquid which is prepared from leaves of N'gallama tree. N'gallama extracts absorbed by the fabric acts as a fixative for further color dyeing process. Black color on the fabric is produced by a combination of mud and tannic acid. Different tones of colors are prepared by varying the mud layer compositions. The graphical patterns are hand illustrated prior to dyeing. These graphical patterns comprise abstract leaf motifs, grid lines, geometrical shapes and point clouds. The Bogolanfini is referred to mark birth, marriage and other occasions along with leather accessories in the traditional folk lore (Fig. 2).

The design pattern arrangement is not confined to any style, all forms starting with graphics to symbols, different compositions using various resist painting techniques are encouraged. The Bogolanfini characters comprise traced outlines and footprint like patterns of household objects, local flora and fauna. These characters do not serve any as any signage nor any art world interpretations, rather their sole purpose is to convey the message about life; a characteristic set of beliefs that have a unanimous appeal among the cultural milieu. The local Mali people revere the Bogolanfini in their beliefs and consider it to be representative of earth, river and forests [62]. The tools used in producing Bogolanfini are either made of wood or other naturally available materials of animal source. A study by Mukta V et al. confirmed Bogolanfini method and materials as a potential for futuristic dyeing and processing techniques [63].

5.3   Kente Cloth

Kente cloth is a handwoven four-inch-wide narrow fabric made by the Ashanthi tribes. These narrow width fabrics are joined together according to the required design by hand stitches [64]. The kente fabric connotes the history, etiquette and cultural expressions of the Ashanthis, Ewe and other Northern parts of Africa [65]. However, the Kente design patterns vary from one region to another. It refers to kente fabric among the Ashanthi, Fugu among the Northern parts of Africa and kente among the Volte region. Though the same weaving and assembly techniques are used, the motif shapes, the pattern of arrangement against the respective color background are different from one another. In traditional manufacturing setup, the men take care of the weaving process and women are engaged for hand spinning the yarns that make up for the loom weaving [66]. The kente fabric derives its color from the organic dyed yarns used in weaving the patterns. Along the weave, iconic shapes of symbolic animals are also interwoven in the fabric using figuring techniques. The narrow strips of woven fabric are assembled by lapping the fabric strip edges equal to 1/8th of an inch and joining them by zig zag stitches. The edges protruding the seam width are folded and hemmed. The kente fabrics for men is an assemblage of 24–25 strips and 11–12 feet in length with gender distinctive draping and wrapping style [67]. For women, the fabric width and length are smaller compared to the men's

Fig. 2 Bogolanfini, the mud cloth. *Source* (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:S%C3%A9gou_(11).JPG)

fabric that is wrapped around the body along with a blouse. The wrapping style of the kente fabric resembles the Roman Toga wrapping style [68] (Fig. 3).

In the contemporary scenario, the kente fabric is converted into tailored Western silhouettes for wedding occasions and African party themes. Nowadays, the kente design is incorporated in African wild silk fabric base to enhance the Aesthetic value of the product [69]. The traditional vegetable dyed cotton yarns are replaced by silk and spun rayon yarns to add more prestigious value to the kente cloth [70]. The kente fabric design is identified in diverse products such as scarves, hats, stoles, bags and footwear in the contemporary scenario [71]. Traditional kente fabric design pattern

Fig. 3 Kente cloth. *Source* (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kentecloth.jpg)

is a block arrangement of several pattern repeats tending to represent a moire of grids with embedded motifs. In the modern-day usage across artefacts and products, the block arrangement of pattern repeats, their size and shape amidst the background landscape is manipulated to connote the desired aesthetic function. The kente design and its pattern arrangement draws semblance to modern Pop art concepts with switching colors in blocks. The kente design is also combined with Adinkra print fabrics with the purport of adding more visual depth [72].

5.4 Adinkra Fabrics

Adinkra fabrics comprises the Adinkra symbols which are either woven or hand stamped on the fabric. The Adinkra symbols are seen in other products like Jewelry, wood works and artworks [73]. Adinkra fabrics are produced either by hand block prints or screen prints. Unlike other print designs, adinkra design features an array of symbols and icons arranged on a red colored base or black colored bases that acts as a visual communication language. The dark colored pigment used in the print paste is obtained from the badie tree bark and the roots of kuntunkuni trees [74]. Adinkra symbols are systematically designed and organized in five different disciplines: Education, Politics, Spiritual, Funeral and Social [75]. The Adinkra symbols are abstract 2d shapes of 3D objects composed from lines, points and shapes exploring the figure ground principle in its rendered existence. Though Adinkra owes its origin to the Asante tribe, it is equally preferred by other tribes of Ghana [76]. Adinkra symbols in its visual communication context express the attitude, mood and social

values of the cultural milieu. The arrangement of the symbols and the visual communication is designed with reference to the nature of the event and the etiquette. Other than the traditionally prepared red or black color base fabric, imported fabrics in different color bases are also identified in the modern-day usage. The choice of symbol color and the base color draws from the color scheme where the intent is to provide apparent contrast that enables the observers to gaze and feel the theme [76]. The Adinkra symbols were also found in the 19th-century British clothes design as motifs [77]. However today, the adinkra symbols take several variations while incorporating the influences of foreign cultures. In the current scenario, the adinkra symbols finds itself in logos of corporate institutions, Conglomerates, National agencies. Hill [78] considers symbols as very old forms of visual communication to convey a meaning or the mood. Popular paintings like the starry night by Vincent van Gogh [79] and Guernica by Picasso [80] represented the larger life themes symbolically through the contextual elements of the scenario enacted. Wiz Kudowor [81] one of the celebrated artists of Ghana uses Adinkra symbols along with the subject matter to convey the themes in his paintings. While the Eurocentric fashion reflects on the lifestyle and evolving tastes, the Adinkra primarily conveys the emotional disposition and the behavior patterns. Adinkra symbols and their meanings serve as inspiration in shaping the cultural identity of Ghanian youth [82]. Analogous to the Bauhaus concept of designing economically feasible functional products where aesthetics compliments the function, Adinkra prints using the abstract symbols to convey the message is synthesized by the craftsmanship and technology of the Asante tribe. The Adinkra symbols non only connotes the cultural heritage of Ghana people but also has the potential to convey larger themes besides fulfilling the aesthetic functions [83]. The meanings of these Adinkra symbols are constituted from the social cultural knowledge systems of the Ghana Culture [84]. And the symbols share an undisputed mutual understanding in its meaningful existence among the Ghanians [85]. The vast repertoire of the Adinkra symbols and its abstract expressions lays out a premise for complex nonverbal designs in the contemporary existence [86] (Fig. 4).

5.5 Traditional Batik of Africa

Traditional batik of Africa is hand block-aided resist wax print style where the wax is applied by hand. The block patterns of African batik are replete with line grids, ornamental designs, abstract figurines [87]. Among the African batik prints, the wax is melted and applied on the distinctive non-color areas of the print either using a wooden block or a paint brush and dyed several times. The wax is made from the starch of cassava plant or rice paste and the design is illustrated on the fabric by means of bird feather, stick, bone, or comb-like structure [88]. In the traditional method, dye is extracted from the indigo plant. Cotton fabric is the base for batik printing albeit occasionally wild silk is also used.

African batik tradition is passed from the Mother to daughter along the family lineage [89]. The African batik print pattern is inscribed on a foam block as well as

Fig. 4 Adinkra cloth. *Source* (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NtonsoAdinkra.jpg)

wooden blocks. The flexibility of the African batik method lies in the application of dye using the block or paint brush that opens up the design space for both elaborate and intricate arrangement of the design elements in desired colors and style.

The art production style is more spontaneous and draws semblance to artist style expressed in romantism art movements. Artists Dr. Abraham ekow Asmah and Sylvester Lumor add a contemporary Western art touch to batik style by painting the entire Human art subjects on the fabric using batik resist techniques. Such art works portray the technical capabilities and the finesse of batik style to render complex art subjects in dynamic postures [90]. Resist and stamp method, hand painting and stencil dyeing methods fit the process of producing the batik prints.

5.6   *African Tie and Dye—Adire*

The African tie and die is referred as Adire Yoruba woman of Africa, is an indigo dyed fabric comprising of tie and dye patterns. The tie and die technique embody the local practice of producing the design pattern deploying thread to tie the fabric at design specific non-colored ground areas to resist dye indigo intake. The tying techniques are called by the names of Gara and Adire [91]. The Adire fabric unlike other textile art forms exists as a cultural production and heritage across several African nations. The multiple hues of the Adire pattern is developed over multiple layered stages where the fabric is dyed in indigo color initially, later the resist areas are marked and

Fig. 5 Adire. *Source* (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aso_Adire.jpg)

tied prior to dyeing the fabric in subsequent colors. Thus, there is no single ground color exposing the pattern rather a multitude of overlapping grounds created through dyeing in several stages. As larger patterns require more depth of color across a vast area, the fabric apparently heavy [92]. The traditional Adire attire of the royal king features blue and white colors, where blue symbolizes rain and white stands for peace [92]. The tying work at the resist locations on the fabric deploys many techniques such as 1. binding: where the portions of fabric are held firmly in round or square shapes using thread, 2. knotting: the fabric portion is twisted and self-knotted and 3. sewing: a heavy thread stitch is made reminiscing a line or curve shape holding the neighboring fabric parts in gathers. Over the years, the African textile artists have incorporated the Japanese Shibori techniques of stitching and clamping to produce new age expressions and complexity of tie and dye designs [93] (Fig. 5).

5.7 Significance of African Traditional Clothing Styles

The African traditional clothing styles reveal the emotional dispositions and social meanings of the design patterns and symbols deployed in communicating a message or two. The cultural significance, etiquette of the occasion and its environmental setup acts as the norm for the choice of the design composition in an African

traditional clothing. The interaction between the Native African artists, fashion leaders/influencers and textile craftsmen provides the platform to choose the desired design patterns and structure the socio-cultural meaning of the Ankara prints. In other words, this process is sort of co-design activity set out to put forth the design scheme appropriate for time and occasion. Therefore, Ankara prints is classical example of cross-cultural aesthetics. Such interactive process approach sustains the cultural production of African traditional clothing styles and acts as a source of equitable income generation for ethnic Africans. Therefore, sustaining the African traditional clothing styles production facilitates smooth transition of their manufacturing knowledge systems from one generation to other generation.

The African traditional clothing styles: kente cloth, Adire, Adinkra and African traditional batik's Structure and semiotics has the potential to draw parallels along with contemporary art styles. Kente cloth assemblage with Adinkra symbols is analogous to pop art assemblages. The interventions in Adire have enabled it to express more complex visual renditions on the lines of Japanese style. The Spontaneity of African traditional batik clothes has inspired the contemporary artists to deploy its techniques for producing Artworks and Tapestries out of them. Therefore, these traditional clothing styles possess the capability to co-build and branch out beyond their traditional forms with market energy design propositions and sustainable material sources. Irrespective of these interventions, the African textile art forms retain their uniqueness, in the framework of Art-based compositions.

6 Scope for Decolonialization of African Fashion Values

It used to be the practice of the Afro-Americans those who represented HBCE culture prevailing in the historically black colleges and universities to blend the African colors and other signifying elements in a respectable fitting manner with the Eurocentric fashion silhouettes as a means to be at par with the White man's sartorial standards [94]. In other words, only certain aspects of African signifiers were fitted in the fashion entity that served the Eurocentric interests. The Anthropologist Sandra Niessen believes that the existence of binary concept: Eurocentric fashion and the other fashion in fashion parlance will only enhance the opportunities for defining the distinct identity of other fashion [95].

Decolonization refers to the process and practice of restoring the indigenous peoples rights and livelihood through cultural, psychological and economic freedom [96]. Dominique drakeford reckons reclaiming the indigenous cultural identity through inclusive representation of traditional African cultural values for decolonizing fashion [97]. The African traditional clothing: Adinkra, Bogolanfini, kente, Adire and traditional batik are indigenous textile art forms that has sustained through continued craft practices since a long time even through the hard times of colonization. And the discovery of handwoven cloth fragments in the Tellem caves of Mali, only reproves the historical precedence of African clothing [98]. The cultural continuity of craft techniques, symbols and motifs that defines the indigenous cultural

identities and ideologies of the people serves as a measure of anthropological self referentiality [99]. Such continued practice of producing African traditional textile clothing brings forth not only the knowledge of the craftsmen, but also highlights the preference for visual aesthetics of the textile craft and the cultural context of the themes used in them among the indigenous people. The Kaba and Slit, the prominent women's traditional dress silhouette of West Africa, comprise three garment pieces: top that resembles a blouse, a long skirt and a cover cloth [100]. This iconic women's dress features vast range of print patterns and color which has evolved in line with the changing preferences of the customer is referred as classic dress/outfit for women in West Africa. One can find this silhouette used regularly for multiple occasions like social gatherings, cultural events, festival holidays, family get togethers. Such traditional silhouettes rooted in the cultural context and social milieu convey a cultural identity and has perpetuated the indigenous beliefs and way of life. Meanwhile, the kente fabric remains the signifier of Pan African identity and has also pushed forth outward influences on the global sportswear designs [101]. Hence, the rich resource of African visual aesthetics present in the African traditional clothing like traditional batik, Adire, Bogolanfini, Adinkra and kente provides vast opportunities for the budding African designers to further enrich, recraft and extend its visual aesthetics in a culturally relativistic manner. Oppel, Marie Claire South Africa's fashion director opines that the African designers have learnt the art of interpreting the traditional prints and giving them new extended forms. African fashion designer Chris seydou's design interventions in Bogolanfini, contemporarized the motifs and their stylization, thereby adding exquisite design value to an indigenous clothing [102]. Designers like Maki Osakwe combined the traditional African clothing elements and the Western construction to lend a contemporary look to her designs [103]. Bwesigye bwa Mwesigire relates the prevailing African fashion identity to its contemporaneous culture: a blend of African traditional clothing elements, its culture and the Western notions of clothing etiquettes; its silhouettes [104]. The indigenous African designs are hand-made and belong to the slow design mode. Additionally, to represent the cultural identities of African traditional clothing styles in a non-discriminating and non-exploitative manner, it is also necessary to engage and aid the anthropological self-referential craft practices, the motifs, symbols through holistic perspective. The African designer Sindiso Khumalo believes in the social empowerment of the African Artisans by employing them to create modern sustainable dresses laced with its cultural elements in a Western silhouette [105]. Lisa Folawiyo's garments are worked upon by the local craftsmen in the African visual aesthetics which are listed in Selfridges [106]. Maki Osakwe hand-dyed indigo colors, and repetitive prints are constructed with the help of traditional craftsmen [107]. These design interventions refashioning the traditional African clothing elements not only increases the cultural and social mobility of the local African culture but also acts as a means of building their identity. Further, the immense success of brands like Black Panther, the fictional characters of Wakanda and Avengers: Infinity war has established African visual aesthetics much beyond the notion of being a mere trend [108].

7 Conclusion

The extended discussion of fashion reveals the unconventional aspects amidst the culturally constructed and embodied identity. As fashion in post-modern culture encourages variation and flexibility in the cultural sphere, its disposition naturally supports cross-cultural aesthetics. And the perspective of Anthropology within the framework of art design compositions underscores the need for promoting cultural diversity, decolonizing fashion values, preserving indigenous dress functions. Hence, the discussion on the African traditional clothing style and its textile art forms: kente cloth, Adinkra, Adire, Bogolanfini, traditional batik prints and Ankara or African wax prints proves their versatility to incorporate evolving cultural values through interactions with the fashion leaders, artists, exposure to newer ways of life and relations with foreign nations. The case study findings suggest African traditional clothing and their textile art forms is routed in the cultural and symbolic interpretations beyond its dress functions of physiological protection and modesty. Further sustaining the continued craft practice of producing African traditional clothing not only acts to preserve traditional knowledge systems but also serves to improve cultural and social mobility of the local African culture. So it is inferred that sustaining the growth of traditional African clothing styles and its inclusive representation from an anthropological perspective addresses the growing universal need to adopt sustainable fashion designs and encourage non-discriminating fashion values. However, further studies are required to extrapolate this concept of traditional clothing styles, textile art forms and their applications to more wider corridors of fashion institutions and industry.

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