

**RECREATION OF AGBADA GARMENTS INTO
CONTEMPORARY CASUAL WEARS**

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project work is based on a personal study undertaken by me **Augustine Oghenemaro Reyner** in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Faculty of Environmental sciences, University of Benin under the supervision of DR (Mrs) Lovina Ebele Onwuakpa (Associate Professor) in fulfilment of acquiring a Bachelors of Art (B.A) degree in Fine/applied arts.in which all ideas and views are products of my research, where by the views of others have been expressed and acknowledged.

DEDICATION

I specially dedicated this project to the Almighty God, who has given me the wisdom, direction and encouragement to carry out this research successful. To my lovely parents Mr & Mrs Urowuhe Augustine, thank you for your consistent love and support towards the success of this project and also to many others who have helped me during the years of my study in school, I really appreciate everything you have done.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to God for his wisdom, guidance, and grace.

With sincere appreciation, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my project supervisor, Dr. (Mrs.) Lovina Onwuakpa (Associate Professor). Your encouragement, guidance, and support have been precious. I appreciate your time and effort in correcting and providing insightful criticism on my project .

Moreover, during the course of this project, I would say that my academic and non-academics experiences has played a vital role in the fulfillment of this project.. academically as a fashion student, I have gained essential knowledge in garment construction, textile studies, pattern marking, drafting and fashion illustration which has helped me developed a strong technical and creative skills necessary for producing quality designs . Alongside these ,my non-academic experience whicha includes participating in fashion shows, exhibition and events has also helped me understand customer preferences, current trends and professional work practices in the fashion industry . Overall, I would say these experiences has enabled me to create a successful project that is creative, practical and market-oriented .

I am profoundly thankful to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Urowuhe Augustine, for their love, prayers and support, which have been the groundwork for my academicl journey.

I would like to acknowledge my studio mates Israel, Victory, Precious, Adesuwa, Mercy, and Ene for your positive impact on my life. You have taught me what perseverance and personal growth are all about.

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the redesigning of traditional Agbada garment into modern clothing ,suitable for contemporary use . The African Agbada is an important cultural garment that represents the identity and heritage of the west African society . In which mostly this style is usually voluminous in size and structure . Which is used in attendance of a ceremony or occasion.

The study examined how the key features such as it's patterns, style and structure can be adopted into modern fashion designs while retaining it's cultural value. Whereby through the used of pattern making and garment a new designs developed and produced.

The results of this research shows that traditional Agbada elements can be successful transformed into stylish, comfortable functional contemporary outfits while preserving it's cultural identity through modern fashion invention.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The African continent has a wide array of traditional clothing, among them the long, gown-like garment that is popularly worn by several West African nations, namely Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Niger, Gambia, Guinea, Burkina Faso, as well as Nigeria. The garment has diverse regional names, with Senegal, Burkina Faso, as well as Mali referring to it as Grand Boubou, Ghana as Akan, Grand *Mbubb* in Gambia, *Babbbariga* in Niger as well as Northern Nigeria, while the Yorubas of Western Nigeria call it *Agbada*. The *Agbada* has been a long, flowing cloth that has been worn almost exclusively by Hausa Fulani communities within the northern part of the country as well as the Yorub communities within the southwestern part of Nigeria. Eicher & Joanne B. (2010) observed that The *Agbada* has been a long, flowing cloth that has been worn almost exclusively by Hausa Fulani communities within the northern part of the country as well as the Yoruba communities within the southwestern part of Nigeria. The *Agbada* may be of varying sizes, texture, and length depending on the occasion it is meant for. The *Agbada* attire is traditionally worn in conjunction with Hausa-Fulani "Wando trousers" and Yoruba "*Shokoto*." In Nigeria, *Agbada* is made from varying materials such as cotton, damask, wool, guinea brocade, Aso Oke, and Adire, which may be decorated with elaborate embroidery work. Variations of *Agbada* may be created based on those meant for royalty, wealthy, and high-ranking people, and those meant for the masses. The *Agbada* attire traditionally belongs to males. With time, women started getting into *Agbada*-like attire, making them in various designs and conceptual aspects. This was especially evident in Northern Nigeria, where the women's *Agbada* is a reflection of a modern transition that took place after colonization, when new methods, forms of style, and materials were introduced.

These modern-day *Agbada* are lighter in weight and of finer quality, yet very cultural. According to Professor Oyemeyi Okunye, "the modern *Agbada* represents a dialogue between tradition and modernity, a marriage of indigenous identity and international fashion standards."

This evolution is also reflected in gender equality issues, discussed by Temitope 2018 in *Gender, Fashion, and Reclaiming African Identity*, where the author speaks of how modern fashion designers break the Mold of traditional gender roles by making *Agbada* designs for females. This discovery has rebranded the attire as something worn by both genders, irrespective of tribe, background, or social status. Well-known female celebrities like Tiwa Savage and Toke Makinwa have popularized *Agbada* in wearing one during musical performances and public events, thus stamping its existence in modern fashion. However, *Agbada* is still kept majorly for special occasions and ceremonial events.

This study, therefore, is centred on reinventing *Agbada* as modern casual wear. This is because it is based on the analysis of how expressive designs, new technologies, and versatile materials can be used to reinvent *Agbada* as modern casual wear. This study will ensure that *Agbada* is not only viewed as clothing meant for formal occasions but as modern wear that can be worn during daily tasks and that can cross cultural borders internationally.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study attempts to investigate how the traditional *Agbada* dress has been modified to conform to the fashion standards required for modern everyday wear. The objectives of this study include:

1. Incorporate the *Agbada* attire into modern fashion designs.
2. Recreate *Agbada* as Casual Wear that can be worn for Daily Use.

3. Incorporate African "*Agbada*" designs into contemporary fashion trends, thus increasing their acceptance within fashion circles globally.
4. To promote gender equity, the adaptation of *Agbada* designs by men and women can be encouraged.
5. Introduce new technologies, designs, and fabrics for the production of *Agbada* aside from the common fabrics like Adire, Aso Oke, brocade, damask, and Ankara fabrics that were used earlier.

Significance of the Study

This research emphasizes the need to be conscious of cultural heritage while appreciating fashion trends of modern times. Inasmuch as *Agbada* is remade into a modern casual wear, the research will secure its relevance and appeal to new generations. The application of *Agbada* in daily life increases its relevance from ceremonial and special occasions to everyday wear.

The potential benefits to fashion designers, tailors, and textile makers bring into perspective innovative styles, techniques, and design concepts that would probably open up more business opportunities and, at the same time, boost the African fashion industry's growth while pondering over cultural identity.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is strictly focused on the adaptation of the *Agbada* design into modern female casual wear. This study is specifically concentrating on the design and creation of *Agbada*-inspired outfits for day-to-day events as well as some selected occasions.

The practical aspect of the research work would take place at the fashion studio, where the experimental designs and fashion variations would be developed based on the current fashion

trends and preferences. This research work does not target mass production but provides a basic foundation and platform for further research work to be carried out related to fashion designs and the preservation of cultural heritage.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section will highlight relevant peer-reviewed articles written by scholars on the *Agbada* attire with regard to its cultural value, components, as well as the different perspectives into which it has been interpreted within the Nigerian as well as West Africa cultural traditions. Special attention will be given to articles written by scholars over the past two decades where topics pertain to African fashion, indigenous textiles, as well as transformations of traditional wear in the modern world.

2.1 *Agbada* and the Culture of Dress in Nigeria and West Africa

Agbada is an important ceremonial attire worn by the Yorubas, mainly found in southwestern Nigeria, as well as some neighbouring nations to Nigeria in West Africa. In addition, premised on the assertions by Eicher & Ross (2010), other wear together with *Agbada* act as symbols that serve as visual signs for the people from the continent Africa. This is in that the fashion systems in Africa, as supported by the above-mentioned authors, are highly integrated with the sociocultural context. In Yoruba culture, *Agbada* is adorned during important social and ceremonial events such as weddings, festivals, chieftaincy ceremonies, and religious celebrations. The most imposing form of this garment, its rich embroidery, and an exquisite selection of fabric marked the difference with other ordinary clothes and highlighted the symbolic affiliation with prestige and respectability (Eicher 2010).

Figures: 1 & 2



Transitional *Agbada* for the king's in Yoruba land and *Agbada* for subjects

sources : : <https://www.wikipedia.org>

The Yoruba *Agbada* is typified by characteristic embroidery, sometimes in combination with the grand knot design at the neckline. Conversely, embroidery in *Agbada* attire worn in Northern Nigeria tends to have more defined functional and ideological undertones, depending on the wear occasion and corresponding social significance of the cloth. Among the Hausa-Fulani, the *Agbada*, also generally referred to as *Babban Riga*, tends to be produced for three specifically defined usages: as robes for emirs and titled chiefs, as robes to be worn on formal occasion, prayer, and ceremonial sessions, and as robes to be worn in actual operations. The Yoruba *Agbada* can be distinguished by intricate embroidery that is normally centred on a topmost opening in the front of the jacket commonly called the grand knot. This is mainly aesthetic in nature. In contrast to the ones in Northern Nigeria, the

embroidery on the *Agbada* worn in other places is mainly of functionality and ranking in that each type of embroidery represents the particular use of the clothing item (Eicher, 2010). For the Hausa-Fulani, *Babban riga*, known as *Agbada*, is manufactured to meet three major aims. The first group is for the emirs, titled chiefs, and highly placed persons. The second group is for ceremonial occasions, prayers, and religious events. The third group is manufactured for those who need them to go about their daily chores, as Eicher & Ross (2010) asserted. In Yoruba culture, there exist two major forms of *Agbada*. The first form is referred to as *Agbada Ìwòlé*, also referred to as casual *Agbada*. It is comparatively small, less bulky, and can be made from thin normal cotton fabrics. It is largely worn by regular people for everyday chores. The other form is referred to as *Agbada Àmúròdé* and is mainly ceremonial. It is quite bulky and heavily embroidered. It can be made from thin cotton fabrics, along with local fabrics like *Aso-Oke*, *Adire*, and *Ofi*. This form of *Agbada* mainly belongs to kings, chiefs, and people of high social prominence, thus is quite pricey and more elaborate because of their nature and complexity in design (Picton & Mack, 2010).

One of the notable variations among the Yoruba people regarding their *Agbada* attire is referred to as *Sapara*. According to modern fashion historians, this type of attire was developed during the early decades of the twentieth century, and it was a variation of the *Agbada* tradition, which was made smaller and shorter for comfort and mobility. This, therefore, marks one of the earliest examples of innovation in Yoruba traditional dress as a means of addressing their changing social and working requirements. According to Eicher and Ross, this is indeed a true manifestation of cultural change and innovation.

2.2 *Agbada* Wears to Contemporary Wears

Agbada was more than just a cosmetic attire among the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria; instead, it was a very rich tradition of genealogy, authority, and recognition by society. While the *Agbada* was traditionally known as a royalty attire, the fabric type, embroidery pattern, and size of the robe served to define the status of the person who wore the attire within their society. Full *Agbada* made of *Aso-oke* fabric of larger size with rich embroidery was traditionally worn by the royalty during occasions as a mark of cultural recognition and identity.

Secondly, the twenty-first century, especially 2025, marks a great change in the role and perception of *Agbada*. *Agbada* can no longer be seen in royal courts alone but has come a long way as a cultural emblem, now accepted at different social gatherings. Modern designs combine cultural heritage with individual identity as *Agbada* appears at wedding ceremonies, social gatherings, fashion shows, as well as international cultural demonstrations, exemplifying the mix of cultural heritage with modern trends. All these are a reflection of modern trends witnessed in Nigerian fashion as cultural clothes are redesigned according to modern preferences but remain culturally relevant. Were it being traditional, the *Agbada* suit was customized by artisans over several weeks, with the complete ensemble, comprising the fila cap and the inner garments, adhering strictly to traditional styles. But current fashion designers use this rich background for an interpretation of this robe in accordance with modern settings in terms of legacy, identity, and creativity in fashion in Nigeria (Olugbenga et al., 2025).

Figures: 3 & 4



Contemporary designer koch-house and Asatafo male *Agbada* garment outfits

sources : <https://www.researchgate.net> and : <https://wordpress.org> (main site)

The runway *agbadas* are being used as storytelling pieces. At the 2024 GTCO Fashion Weekend, a designer had a model walk the runway wearing an *agbada* with a flowing design and ancestral facial art print, paying homage to the Yoruba royalty. There is also the use of *agbadas*, with a fusion of traditional *agbada* designs, northern embroidery, Igbo collars, and international influences such as Japanese kimonos on the sleeves. *Agbada* for women, as a trend, is not something that will be a thing in 2025, but rather it will be a standard in the fashion world. Women will be seen rocking *agbadas* to different social events, such as dresses, suits, or gowns, looking stylish and effortless in their *agbadas*, with or without heels on their feet. There is a clothing brand, SGTC Clothing, that is redefining the look of

agbadas for women, looking stylish and elegant in their *agbadas*, with different designs such as body-hugging *agbadas*, puffed sleeves, and a belted look. Female celebrities can be seen rocking *agbadas*, and it is no shock or drama, but rather the evolution of fashion, with *agbadas* being part of the evolution.

Figures: 4 & 5



Koch -house and Elegant by Tiannah Female *Agbada* Outfits

sources:<https://www.wikipedia.org> and <https://www.researchgate.net>

One of the newest trends in the fashion industry in 2025 is the emergence of NFT *agbadas*. Some Nigerian fashion startups have begun launching NFTs for *agbadas*. By buying the NFT design, one also gets the robe in real life. *Agbadas* have been worn virtually in metaverse events and gaming avatars. However, the *agbada* has not lost its traditional roots. Instead,

this is a testament to how technology is progressing the fashion industry while the robe maintains its cultural identity.

Figures: 6 & 7



Some contemporary fashion designer *Agbada* garments

sources: <https://www.wikipedia.org> and <https://www.pinterest.com>

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research methodology that was used in the transformation of the traditional *agbada* garment into modern-day casual wear will be discussed. The research methods used in this study include primary and secondary research, as well as data collection methods, to give an in-depth analysis of the research methods that were used in the practical execution of the *agbada* garments. The researcher's initial approach was to draw various design illustrations on the *agbada*, which was then transformed into a dress through a step-by-step construction process. The main objective of this research was to give the traditional *agbada* garment a modern look and feel, with a well-defined look, while still retaining its cultural heritage and evolving with the fashion world.

3.1 Data collection

While collecting relevant information for this project, the researcher used various recommendations from different scholarly articles, internet sources, historical documents, fashion runway shows, and art exhibitions. After analyzing the gathered information, significant concepts were identified.

3.2 Tools and Materials used for the production of *Agbada* garment into contemporary casual wears

These are the essential tools and Materials needed for a smooth-running process for the production of this project.

- **Pattern paper:** A simple brown paper, usually large in size in terms of length and width, which is used in drafting patterns before cutting or sewing the fabric.

• **Fabrics (Crêpe, Pocketing, Denim):** These are the fabrics which are used for making practical designs as shown in the project. The fabrics vary in thickness, texture, and length, usually measured in yards.

• **Cloth stay (Interfacing):** A soft material which is usually light in weight and added to fabrics to give them thickness.

• **Sewing thread:** A long, thin piece of fibre made up of different materials which is usually used for sewing. The thread varies in colour, thickness, and type.

• **Buttons:** Used for sewing two parts of a garment together or as a part of decoration in the finishing process..

• **Zipper:** A zipper is a essential sewing agent used to join to two parts together.

• **Eyelets (annulets):** These are circular elements that have inner and outer components, primarily used to make clean and defined holes in fabric.

• **Buckle:** This is a fastening tool that assists in the joining of two elements in a secure and adjustable way.

• **Measuring tape:** This is a flexible measuring tool that assists in measuring body measurements such as length, width, and height. It has markings in both inches and centimetres, primarily used in garment making.

• **Sewing machine:** This is a tool that assists in stitching fabrics, threads, and other materials together. It assists in faster, cleaner, and more efficient stitching, as compared to stitching by hand.

• **Pressing iron:** This is a sewing tool that assists in pressing fabrics and garments, thus removing wrinkles and smoothing out creases using heat and steam.

• **Scissors:** These are cutting tools that have two blades with a pivot point in the middle, used in cutting various materials such as fabric and paper.

• **Seam ripper:** This is a small tool that assists in the removal of unwanted stitches during the stitching process.

• **Safety Pins:** These are small metal pins used to keep the pieces of fabric in place before sewing or cutting the material to ensure accuracy during the sewing process.

• **Press Buttons (Snap Fasteners):** These are small fasteners used to cover the opening of a garment, usually used instead of buttons or zippers.

• **Needle:** A long, thin instrument with a hole at the tip used to hold the thread for sewing materials or fabrics with great accuracy.

CHAPTER FOUR

VISUAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULT

4.1 Analysis of work

This research also helped in improving the way the agbada garment is recreated to fit the current casual wear style using modern materials, methods, and techniques. As a result of this study, five different designs were created, varying in size, style, and color.

4.2 Construction and production procedures

This section discusses the step-by-step production processes involved in creating each of the five redesigned garments.

Step 1: This step involves creating an illustrated design of the agbada garment to be redesigned into modern wear. The illustration acts as a guide in the production process and the final product.

Figures: 8 & 9



Front and Back Views Illustration of the Cargo- Jean
Agbada garment



Jacket

Figures: 10 & 11



Front and Back Views Illustration of the turtle -
neck *Agbada* garment



Front and Back Views illustration of a
jumpsuit *Agbada* garment

Step 2: This stage involves sourcing the materials needed for the fabrics, threads, buttons, and other important materials from the market to ensure an effective production of the *Agbada* dress.

Step 3: This phase of making is taken up by getting exact body measurements, which vary from one body size to another, in order to effectively make patterns and cut fabrics in preparation for making the garment. The body measurements that are used in making the *Agbada* garment include:

Measurements for the production of Tuttle- neck *Agbada* garment Uk Size 16

Shoulder length -20inch

Neck line -2inch

Neckwidth-1inch

Round waist -38inch

Waist to hip-9inch

Skirt length _24inch

Measurements for the production a Jump-suit *Agbada* garment Uk Size 14

Shoulder length -18inch

Neck line -3.5inch

Neck width- 2inch

Waist -34inch

Waist to hip-8.5inch

Crache length-8.5 inch

Shorts length -18inch

Measurements for the production of a cargo jean *Agbada* garment Uk size 14

Shoulder length -18inch

Neck line -3.5inch

Neck width-1.5inch

Garment length-20inch

Waist -34inch

Waist to hip-8.5inch

Skirt length -18inch

Measurements for the production of the jacket *Agbada* garment size14

Shoulder length-18inch

Neck line -3.5inch

Neck width-3inch

Garment length- 20inch

Waist 34inch

Waist to hip- 8.5

Skirt length -20inch

Step 4: This stage involves joining pieces of fabric together using both electric and manual sewing machines for garment production.

Figures: 12 & 13



plain brown fabric



crape fabric

4.3 The design of the garment was a turtle-neck Agbada with a skirt, and it was made using plain coffee-coloured crêpe fabric and featuring a turtle neck with fancy buttons and a gathered skirt made of the same material.

Figures: 14 & 15



Pattern drafting of the turtle -neck *Agbada*



using the pattern to cut the fabric

Figures: 16 & 17



Sewing of the turtle-neck *Agbada* garment



Ironing of the gathered splits skirt

Figure: 18



Ironing of the split gathered skirt

4.4 Design 2: is a Jumpsuit *Agbada* garment design. This design represents a reinvention of the traditional *Agbada* design as a Jumpsuit. This design is created as an asymmetrical one-hand design with an *Agbada*-style top created in a corporate design.

Figures: 19 & 20Drafting and cutting of the Jumpsuit *Agbada* garment shorts**Figures: 20 & 21**Sewing of the jumpsuit *Agbada* garment and shorts

4.4 Design 3: is the cargo- jean *Agbada* garment.

This dress is made from jean fabric mixed with white and black fabric to create a modern Cargo casual look, with a zipper inserted at the centre for added style and functionality.

Figures: 20 & 21Cutting of the cargo- jean *Agbada* garment and skirt**Figures: 22 & 23**Sewing of the cargo- jean *Agbada* garment and skirt

4.5 Design 4: is the Jacket *Agbada* garment

This is a dress that has various design features, such as pockets, a belt, and a zipper in the middle, which makes it look like a jacket. The dress was made from plain cream-colored material.

Figures: 24 & 25



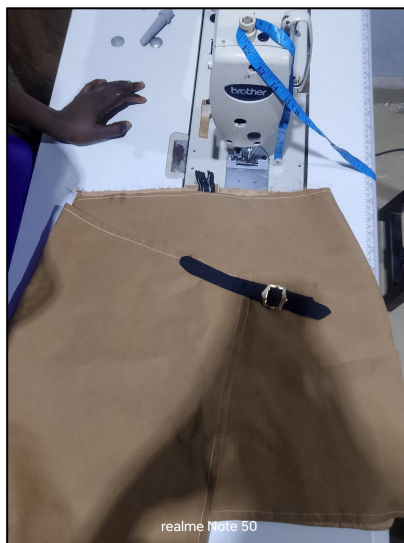
Pattern drafting and cutting of the Jacket *Agbada* garment

Figures: 26 & 27



Sewing of the Jacket *Agbada* garment and skirt

Figure: 28



Sewing of the Jacket *Agbada* garment Sewing of the jacket skirt

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

This research is based on the recreation of the *Agbada* garment into a well-fitting piece of modern fashion that is appropriate for daily wear. The research sought to determine how the cultural heritage of the *Agbada* dress style can be preserved using modern styles. The objective of this research is to make *Agbada* designs versatile, attractive, and adaptable enough to be used for daily wear and modern fashion.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the recreation of the *Agbada* garment to function in the modern world serves to bridge the gap between traditional and modern fashion, ensuring that the African traditional garment is made relevant in the modern world. This is due to the incorporation of innovative materials, hence making the project a highlight of the importance of making traditional garments relevant in the modern world.

5.3 Recommendations

Through the integration of modern fabrics, designs, and technologies, the remodeled *Agbada* clothing can be designed to appeal to a broader audience within the fashion industry. Technological advancements and expertise will also add to the appeal of the remodeled *Agbada* clothing. Moreover, market research will also help in understanding the target audience and collaborations, thus adding to the design identity through fashion runways and trends.

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