

A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF YORUBA DRESSING STYLES

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
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DECLARATION

I, **JOAN AGBEJE**, do hereby declare that this project is undertaken by me in the Department of Finance, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, under the supervision of **PROF (MRS) E.O IKOYO-EWETO**. The work embodied in this project has not previously been submitted in candidature for any other degree and is not concurrently being submitted for any other degree. All references made to works of other persons have been duly acknowledged.

Any litigation or liability arising from this work is wholly bone by me and not the supervisor for this work.

Joan AGBEJE

Date

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this research was carried out by **Joan AGBEJE**, a student in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, with Matriculation Number **ART2008912** has completed the requirements for coursework and research for the Bachelor of Arts Degree of the University of Benin, under my supervisor.

PROF (MRS) E.O IKOYO-EWETO
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Date

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(Head of Department)

Date

DEDICATION

I specially dedicate this work to God almighty, the giver of all knowledge and understanding. Who has been my source of strength, grace and wisdom throughout the period of my course, through whose grace and favor I have been able to run my course and scale through the hurdles of my academic pursuit.

Also, to my amazing and wonderful parents MR RAPHAEL AGBEJE AND MRS EVELYN AGBEJE and to my lovely siblings and my big mummy MRS ASO .O. UZUAZORARO.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the semiotic significance of Yoruba dressing styles, examining how traditional attire functions as a cultural symbol, a means of communication, and an expression of identity, spirituality, and social hierarchy. Using Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of signs and Roland Barthes' concepts of denotation and connotation, the research analyzes the deeper meanings embedded in Yoruba clothing, colors, fabrics, and accessories. The study reveals that Yoruba dressing styles are more than just fashion; they convey social status, religious beliefs, and ancestral connections. Key attires such as agbádá, aṣo-òkè, gèlè, bùbá, and adìrẹ serve specific purposes in ceremonial, religious, and daily life contexts. The research also highlights the symbolism of colors—for example, white (funfun) signifies purity and spirituality, red (pupa) represents power and aggression, while gold (òwú) is associated with wealth and royalty. Additionally, Yoruba festivals such as Ojúde Ọba, Èyò, Egúngún, and the Sàngó festival provide a platform for cultural preservation through dressings. Furthermore, the study examines the impact of modernization and globalization on Yoruba dressing, noting a shift towards hybrid fashion that blends traditional elements with contemporary styles. The method of data collections employs structure interview, photography and the analysis of the Yoruba fashion material.