

EMBROIDERY AS AN EMBELLISHMENT IN FABRIC DECORATION

By

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Abstract

Nigeria is endowed with abundant human, natural and material resources, which could be used in different vocational practices. Practitioners have consistently practiced their art with attention to uniqueness and high quality forms, styles and content. Embroidery as a decorative process in Art has played principal roles in entrepreneurship development. Hence, this paper made a critical analysis of the forms, content and significant of embroidery in art, the thread colours, fabric motifs and pattern suitable for a successful embroidery design would also be considered. The general conclusion is that if embroidery is properly done, it would increase the embroiderers sense of creativity in our societal growth and the interested individual should be encourage to learn the craft so that the tradition will remain forever.

Embroidery is an interesting stitching technique by which coloured threads, generally of silk or wool are used with a special needle to make a variety of stitches, and it is used to make an attractive design on garment, wall hanging or upholstery pieces. In Nigeria today, embroidery clothing are used far and wide and its unique feature and elegance remain the ability to trill and appeal to the people's fervent love for it whereby the artisan considered different textile materials such as guinea brocade, damask and bringing out the significance of thread with which it is worked.

Ojo (2000) defined, embroidery as an art of making pattern on textiles, leather, using threads of wool, linen, silk and needle. These designs are made of colours exhibiting intricate design. Akinlami (1999) opined that embroidery was noticed in the primitive form known in Europe in the Neolithic time, and today the art of embroidery is commonly used on traditional dresses, on the robes of priest and nobles on seat and book cover. Further, He observed that embroidery of today entrusted with the preservation of an art handed from one generation to another enriches the tradition of embroidery as a form of art. He concluded that embroidery is an ornamentation of fabric for decorative purpose. Embroidery is palmed in such a way that shape, tone, line, texture and colours are in the right places.

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Akinrujomu (2002) noted that the art of embroidery has been for long and the satisfactory the user gain from it makes it difficult to be replaced by any other type of design. The art has its beginning over a thousand years ago, in which we are re – learning how to express creative individualism and talents “The stitches employed are reasonably simple in intricate techniques.

The Trend of Embroidery in Nigeria

Embroidery is one of the crafts in Nigeria that undergo series of changes in styles, motifs and designs before shapes and linear motifs. Types of embroidery design had been a vogue until recently when floral motifs are combined with linear types and geometrical shapes. They are styles of the day on dresses, caps and sometimes at the edge of dresses. The design and styles in embroidery could turn a simple dress into an exotic and elegant one worn by our leaders. Embroidery pattern can be seen as modern or traditional among the Yorubas. There is a unique traditional design on the embroidered *agbada* which were in slanting position around the neck of the wearer, while the modern styles are uneven lines but with shapes that is unique.

Anderson (1979) noted that both modern and traditional designs are adaptable for fabric, depending on the one you may wish to produce, for an example, embroidery on woven fabric (*Aso Oke*) which are mostly worn among the Yorubas during ceremonies, show that the patterns are worked round the neck of *Dansiki or Agbada*, round the trousers mouth or the cap and this gives uniqueness to the outfit. Embroidery patterns are used widely among the Hausa, apart from their dresses, their caps are also heavily embroidery and many of their designs are in geometric shapes.

Fabric Embellishment

Embroidery is another artistic outlay on fabric to enhance its beauty and make it more appealing through pattern display. Most fabrics constructed are produced in white and it is through embellishment that most of the fabrics are appreciated by the consumers. The embellishment on fabric can be achieved through printing, tie-dye, batik, stencils, lamination, bonding and dyeing.

Printing as Fabric Embellishment

Printing is another method through which fabric can be embellished, with printing; the design is transferred on the fabrics. Through any of the printing methods the following methods are available in fabric printing: screen printing, roller printing and discharge printing.

Screen Printing: Is widely used for printing fabrics for small- scale production. The screen is placed on top of the fabric, ink is placed on top of the screen, and a squeegee is used to spread the ink evenly on the screen openings and onto substrate, the ink passes through the open spaces in the screen onto the fabric below the design to form an embellishment on the fabric.

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Roller Printing: is another method of fabric embellishment. In it, a printing block is prepared using the design, the fabric ink is then applied unto the block with a roller and the design is printed unto the fabric. In most cases the designs are so intricate and appealing, such designs are customized design where by the colours and the designs are matched together with the fabric.

Discharge Printing: Is a process in fabric embellishment where white design or pattern is applied unto a coloured fabric. A bleaching agent is used to remove the colour from the cloth to produce the pattern.

Batik: Batik is another traditional method of dyeing fabrics. The areas of the pattern are worked using wax which would resist the dye, and it is a manual process of dyeing cloth. In batik processing, stencil or free hand application of pattern could be used. In order to achieve an interesting and a unique design, if it is properly administered the end product is always clear and sharp. The Yoruba traditional resist methods of fabric embellishment are called *Adire Eleko and Adire Eleso*.

Tie-Dyeing: This is a process whereby some areas of the fabrics are tied to prevent the dye from penetrating unto the fabric. The tied or the folded areas formed the design or patterns and the method in Nigeria has proved to be effective over the years and the method proved to be the first method to be employed apart from dyeing. While Plangi is another way of embellishing a fabric and it is widely practiced in countries like India, Indonesia and Nigeria. The technique also involves the tie and dye of fabric, which also involve stitching dyeing and folding. In the process of embellishment, there are several techniques of resisting certain areas from absorbing dye reveal the pattern in white or any other plain colour. Some notable centres in Yoruba land for local fabric embellishment are Abeokuta, Osogbo and Ibadan. Traditionally, embroideries are applied manually but with the introduction of modern machine, it has made it easy to execute. The method is so fast in both its application and production. Embroidery is also similar to fancy stitches done on a sewing machine, with zigzag stitches, while printing is another way of embellishing a fabric. The designs are transferred into the fabric through printing method. (Anderson, 1979)

Materials and Equipment for Embroidery

Fabrics - Oguntona (1986) noted that fabrics are made from fibres. Textile materials and textiles are knitted and woven Fabrics which are made from fibres and a textile is a continuous manipulation of a simple thread which were woven to create a pattern. In order to make a delicate work, cloths of fine texture are taken into consideration such as linen and silk which could be used for a big bold stitching. It is advisable to place all fabrics on a frame because of its slippery texture and for easy handling

Types of Fabric

Types of Fabric are as follows:-

- i. Brocade: - This is a pattern weave using several metal threads for dresses

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- ii. Damask: - A pattern produced by dull and shiny thread for household fabrics
- iii. Chiffon: - It is a sheer, soft silk fabric mostly used for blouses and scarves
- iv. Satin: - A shiny weave with polyester showing only the warp threads
- v. Organdie: - It is dull surface cotton used for blouses

Equipment for Embroidery

Embroidery making requires some equipment in order to achieve a perfect and unique design or patterns. Some of the equipment is as follows:

Frame: is used by making the dimension of the accurate size of the fabric, the frame is in - form of rectangular shape such as the one used for picture. The embroidery will stay permanently after the completion of the work which will allow it to retain its form and tension. Arekta (2006) noted that while working with fabrics there must be a tension, and therefore frame is needed in order to hold the fabric so that the stitches will be accurate and the liners will be straight without waver

Needle: Needle is very important in embroidery for making designs and such needle should have a larger eye, which could be capable of sliding the thread and the fabric without tugging smaller size needles which are very good for working knot. Other embroidery tools include scissors, and pins. The scissors must be sharp, strong with pointed edge for the success of the work. Steel pins and rust – proof, taking are also used in order not to leave marks on the fabrics

Various Types of Thread

Threads are also called yarn, and of different sizes which can come in a wide range of colours. Each colour has its own effect on fabric. An example of fine wool for embroidery is crewel wool while other thread like 2 ply knitting wool could also be used. When applying appropriate thread to a particular design it brings great opportunity for making textile pleasure in embroidery making which lies on its texture appearance.

Raffia: It is like a rope but having shinny and dull version, which are available from craft shop. They are very strong and easily used with a big needle.

Knitting Wool: It is used when doing canvas work for chair seats. Example of these is the tapestry wool which is much cheaper.

Machine Thread: These threads produce a very fine handwork. Example of it is zigzag machine.

Button Hole or Twist on a Reel: It is used for bolder machine work and thin lines of hand embroidery

Motifs and Stitches

Motifs are the integral parts of the total design which are arranged to make a complete design. In embroidery, appropriate use of sense of imagination must be considered in creating motifs. A motif in embroidery includes floral and animal which could be in form of geometric, triangle and rectangular shapes.

Arueyingho (2002) noted that stitches are the use of needle and thread in making design embroidery on fabrics. He reiterated that stitches fell into three categories.

1. Repeated stitches – those that overlap
2. Broken stitches – those for texture
3. Linear stitches – for making lines.

Design and Colour

Banjoko (2009) saw design as a scheme of a material construction on which artist/designer usually base their formal organization of the total work. All the motifs and design should be able to possess the characteristics of formal rendition of forms, shapes and colours that would give rhythm and balance to the fabric design and colour which are very important to embroidery. The colour used depends on the likeness of the artist and for getting a suitable colour, it is advisable to make a choice from natural colours. However every colour ranges from light to dark

Methods

Ojo (1997) noted that hand embroidery is still the most effective way of producing a high- quality product, especially when producing a gift items for decorations. He also noted further that the best method for fabric embellishment is to first choose an appropriate background for the fabric, with a suitable colour of thread and the best stitches for the design. After choosing this, the next state is to work on the fabric He concluded that the following stitches are very good for embroidery:

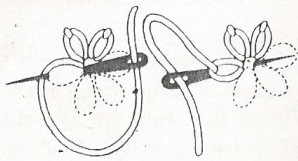
1. **Buttonhole Stitch:** This is an upright stitch with a knot at the top worked over single or double materials. The space between each stitch should be the thickness of the thread used.
2. **Overcast Stitch:** This is stitch used for kneading edges with tend to fray. This stitch is something like sewing except that the needle is put in at an acute angle and not at right angles to the fold.
3. **Hemming Stitch:** This is done on the wrong side of the material from right to left.
4. **Running Stitch:** This is a horizontal stitch, worked on the right or wrong side of the material, from right to left. The stitches and spaces are equal.
5. **Blanket Stitch:** This is a stitch worked on the right side of the material from left to right, it is generally worked over a raw edge, but some time it is done over a folded edge.
6. **Stem Stitch:** This is a line stitch where the needle will be inserted into the fabric in about one stitch length to the right to make a slightly slanted stitch.

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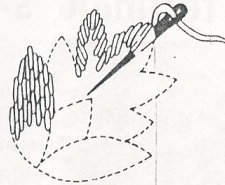
The second stitch will be directly above the first but shifted slightly to the left to the first stitch.

- 7. **Rope Stitch:** Rope stitch can form a thick line or narrow shape by bringing the thread up through the fabric. A little below the guideline and a little above the line, bring the needle to the surface again and twist the thread once around it pull the needle and thread through the twist.
- 8. **Speckling Stitch:** Speckling does not describe a particular stitch but indicates an area covered by tiny stitches to give a textured effect. It could be arranged randomly or at regular intervals

Diagram of Stitches



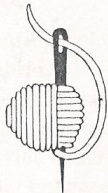
Lazy daisy chain



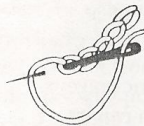
Long and short stitch



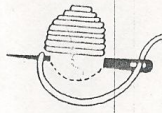
Seed stitch



Double satin stitch



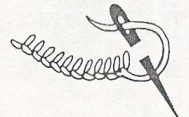
Chain stitch



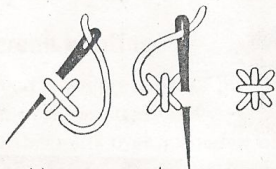
Satin stitch



Back stitch



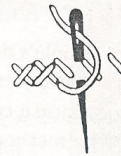
Buttonhole stitch



Double cross stitch



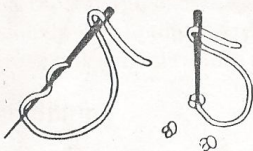
Stem stitch



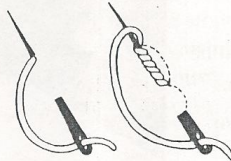
Cross stitch



Bullion or grub rose



French knot



Bullion stitch



Herringbone stitch

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Conclusion

There is no doubt that embroidery brings joy and satisfaction to whoever engage in working. It makes one feel useful to him and the society at large. It is important to note that if embroidery is properly done, it can increase embroiderers sense of creativity and as well influence her future choice of home finishing

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this paper, the following recommendations are put forward to preserve embroidery design in Yoruba land:

1. Government should set up institutions that will train embroiders to update their knowledge and skills.
2. Embroiders must be well trained in the contemporary methods of production.
3. Government and society should encourage embroiders by patronizing them.
4. Interested individuals should be encouraged to learn this craft so that the tradition will remain forever.

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