

The Cloth That Eats Money

Şeghoşen as a Symbol of Prestige

Babatunde Onibode and Robin Poynor

In August 2019, Ajibade Gbadegesin Ogunoye was installed as Ogunoye III, the 32nd Olówò of Òwò and Paramount Ruler of Òwò Kingdom.¹ The steps leading to his coronation involved numerous ceremonies and ritual acts that transpired over more than two weeks. Several variations of attire were required over the period of intense ritual activity. On the day of his investiture (September 8, 2019, seventeen days after his installation), Ogunoye was crowned with the coral bead *ade* (crown) selected for the occasion from the collection of royal headwear in the palace (Fig. 1). The crown was topped by the *urere oken*, the tail feather of the bird associated with royalty among many Yoruba groups, perhaps the African Paradise Flycatcher, a tiny forest bird with long white tail feathers (*okin* in Yoruba but *oken* in Òghò). Beads of office around his neck, wrists, and ankles were noticeable as he danced before the joyous people of Òwò.² Two elaborate *ape* (dancing swords) made for the occasion bore his name along with the lion and unicorn emblem in cutout designs. Two large cloths called *ipanmeta*³ (each made of three panels of locally woven, blue-striped fabric) crossed over each other, one tied on the left shoulder, the other on the right. The crossed panels covered an elaborate ensemble of a tunic or gown (*ewu egha*) over trousers (*efa*), also crafted from panels of local women's weave in the pattern known as *şeghoşen*.

Neither of the textiles here, the blue-striped cloths or the elaborate *şeghoşen*, are considered “royal,” but each carries deep meaning. The indigo-striped panels are significant to Òwò history and to the textile industry of Òwò. Similar striped fabrics have been used over time as *uro* (wrappers), drapes such as *ipanmeta* (three-panel cloths worn as togas) and *ugbero* (cloths woven to mark the Ero celebrations marking the retirement of a man from public responsibilities), *gele* (head tie), and *uborun* (stole). Historically, almost all cloths of ritual significance are woven by women. It is the *şeghoşen* cloth used here for the Olówò's *ewu egha* and *efa* that is the

focus of this article. The textile has been referred to as *senwonsen* by Yoruba researchers not attuned to the Òwò (or Òghò) language (Akinwunmi 2005; Asakitikpi 2005; Lamb and Holmes 1980).⁴ *Şeghoşen* is the most admired and the most expensive of cloths produced by women in Òwò.

Şeghoşen has been esteemed for countless years, and in spite of the availability of imported fabrics, its value as a cultural icon continues into the twenty-first century. Over the last half century, changes in its manufacture and in its use as prestige clothing have taken place. In the 1970s and earlier, *şeghoşen* (or any cloth woven by women) was never cut and tailored. It was used whole as wrappers, head ties, or stoles by women or wrapped toga-like by men. Today it is sometimes cut and used as fabric for sewn and constructed garments, and it has even been used in the construction of purses, handbags, briefcases, backpacks, and shoes. It is not just the use of *şeghoşen* that has expanded, but the visual appearance and process of production have changed as well. A greater range of color combinations has been introduced, and the manufacture of cloth is no longer limited to older Òwò women as it was in the past, since younger women and those of other ethnicities have been allowed to weave cloths previously considered out of bounds for young weavers.

While *şeghoşen* continues to be the textile of choice to indicate wealth and position, it has also become a symbol of Òwò identity for those in the Òwò diaspora, whether they have moved elsewhere in Nigeria or live abroad. In the process, the name for the cloth has changed as well—from *şeghoşen* to *keghojo*, as will be explained.

THE MEANING OF DRESS

Dress is a means of communication. What one wears and how it is worn tells others who we are and who we associate with. What we choose to wear talks about our position among others and how we relate to them. It communicates something about our view of the world and how we perceive our own position in the scheme of things and our place within our community. Justine Cordwell observed, “The most important form of aesthetic expression to the Yoruba is clothing and its accessories. They have elevated the importance of dress to the point where they laughingly say, ‘We have always been born clothed’” (Cordwell 1983: 58). The Yoruba have long worn elaborate dress to proclaim their standing within the social order. Ruth Boyer observed that what a Yoruba man wears not only lends visual splendor but is also indicative of social prestige. She notes that a man covered in rich and voluminous handwoven cloth “demonstrates one means of achieving status in a society known for its emphasis on conspicuous display of economic means” (Boyer 1983: 42). She observes that the proverb “Greetings on the spending of money,” *eku inawo*, reflects the reality in Yoruba society that a man who has wealth must spend it to gain the admiration of his fellows (Boyer 1983: 42).

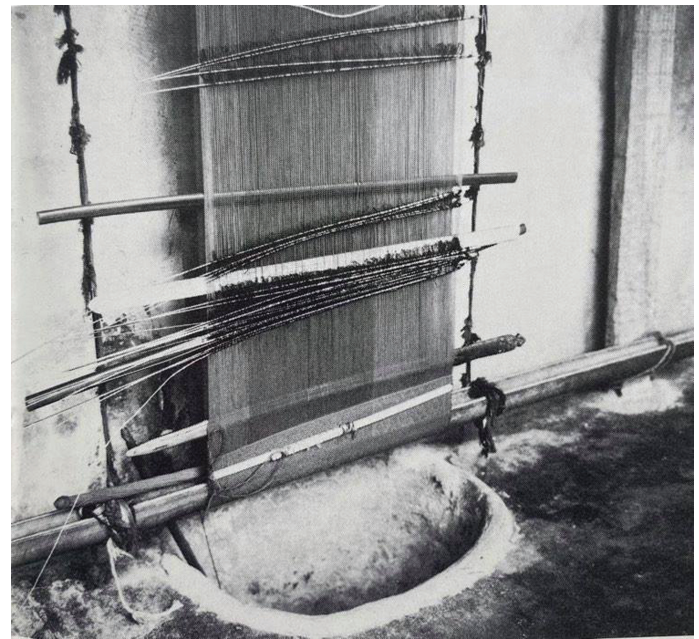
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1 Olówò Ajibade Gbadegesin Ogunoye III dances before his people on the day of his coronation. The traditional coral bead *ade* (crown), the wrist and ankle beads, and the brass *ape* (dancing swords) are markers of his title. He also wears two three-paneled blue-and-white striped *ipanmeta* woven under ritual proscriptions by women.

Photo: Babatunde Onibode, 2019



2 The traditional women's loom consists of vertical posts set in the floor of the veranda. An excavation for her feet allows her to sit on the floor. Warp threads are wrapped around the horizontal elements.

Photo: Judy Holmes, courtesy of Venice and Alastair Lamb

These general observations about dress among Yoruba peoples is especially true in the far eastern portion of Yorubaland where a similar greeting in the Ọ̀ghò language, *eku unagho*, means precisely the same thing. Individuals with wealth display their prosperity through attire and especially by displaying a variety of textiles in that dress. Such conspicuous display is not only appreciated by onlookers as appropriate, but it is considered necessary.

Poynor noted that traditional dress and textiles in Ọ̀wò were “significant for their roles as markers of social and political rank, indicators of ritual importance, and as symbols of wealth and prestige” (Poynor 1980: 47). And it was cloths produced by women that were required for many rituals and celebratory events.

Rowland Abiodun suggests that significant individuals essentially perform dress. The saying, “*Aşò là níki a tó ki èniyàn*” (“We greet *Aşò* before we greet its wearer;”) bears witness to the importance of dress among the Yoruba. In considering dress, Abiodun asserts that dress can redefine the spatial architecture of a performance arena and that dress, performance, and time cannot be separated. The self, he observes, is transformed and redefined through dress, which is an essential component of one’s *iwa*, the essential nature of a person or thing (Abiodun 2014: 142). Regalia can be considered important components of the performance of dress, and handheld objects discussed here are extensions of dress, thus being greeted by onlookers as well as greeting them.

WOMEN’S LOOMS

Women have always been the primary weavers in Ọ̀wò, and the looms used by women are different from those used by male weavers. Moreover, the resulting fabrics are distinct from those crafted

by men. The women’s loom in the past was made of uprights (*igi ofi*) planted in the floor of the veranda (Fig. 2). Horizontal beams (*egboro*) attached to the tops and at the bottoms of the *igi ofi* provided a place for wrapping the warp threads to begin the weaving process. Three sticks (*obiri*) made of the midrib of the palm frond were positioned into a pair of thin ropes looped over the top *egboro* and under the lower *egboro* (Fig. 3a). The warp threads were strung over the top, through the three *obiri* to create a number of sheds through which the shuttle (*otu*) would pass (Fig. 3b). These ordinary sheds were used for warp patterns. Further sheds could be created by manipulating *asa* or additional string heddles that could be pulled out, as seen in Figure 3b, and these created floating weft patterns. The vertical looms used by women were simple compared to the horizontal looms used by male weavers. As she wove, the weaver in the past sat on the floor of the veranda, her feet sometimes resting in a two-foot diameter hole (known as *ukoro*) to allow her to work comfortably on the face of the weaving.⁵

By the 1970s, the traditional *igi ofi* consisting of posts and cross beams was being replaced by carpentered looms (Fig. 4). The new loom was designed to be moveable. Sturdy legs balanced the vertical structure regardless of the surface on which it was placed. If a woman moved to another location, she could dismantle the loom and take it with her to another site. The uprights were constructed of pairs of timbers drilled with matching holes. The upper *egboro* was sandwiched between two boards that comprised each upright and were held in place by pegs. The upper *egboro* could thus be raised or lowered, allowing for different lengths of cloth. Otherwise, the warping of the thread was no different from that for the older



looms. To position herself in relation to the loom, the weaver now sat on a small stool.

While men's weave was produced in narrow bands of "infinite" length that were sewn together to create a larger cloth, textiles produced by women are broad pieces of two to three feet in breadth and about 80 inches long. The length is determined by the distance between the two *egboro*. As the weaver completes a portion of the cloth, she pulls the warp threads down so that a portion of the finished weaving slides under the lower *egboro* to the back of the loom, thus keeping the weaving "face" of the cloth at a comfortable height to work on (Fig. 4).

Women's weave customarily held a place of value in Òwò and superseded men's weave in ritual and ceremonial significance (Poynor 1980: 47). While men's *asoke* weaving has long been associated with Yoruba cloth production in northern and western Yorubaland, in Òwò it is the women's vertical loom and women's weave that has traditionally been deemed more important. Local names are given to the vertical loom and to its parts, while the horizontal loom associated with men's strip-weaving, at least in the 1970s, was referred to as the "Ilorin loom" or the "Kwara State

loom," suggesting that men's weave had only been imported from the north in the fairly recent past.

In the 1970s, few men were employed in weaving, but it was assumed that every woman in Òwò was capable of weaving, whether she practiced it or not. Their looms were visible on the verandas of many courtyards at the time, and in the early twentieth century they had abounded. J.A. MacKenzie, the Acting District Officer for Ondo Province, estimated in his 1928 report that 80% of the women at that time in Òwò were weavers and suggested that the quality of Òwò cloth was exceptional. He surmised that income from the craft must have been correspondingly high (MacKenzie 1928: 25).

Thus, when the newly crowned Ogunoye III donned the double indigo-striped *ipanmeta*, along with the crown and coral beads, he immediately connected his reign to the illustrious past of the kingdom. And it was women weavers who made the striped *ipanmeta*, which were so noticeable as the new Olòwò danced. Furthermore, when he removed those cloths for the celebratory activities that followed, the lustrous ensemble that had been constructed for his coronation was revealed—the *ewu egha* (shirt/tunic) and *efa* (trousers) (Fig. 5). The neck of the tunic, the ends of the sleeves, and the lower portions of the trouser legs were trimmed in multicolored appliqued piping of yellow, green, blue, pink, and purple. However, the element of the ensemble that would catch the eyes of the citizens of Òwò, perhaps unnoticed by other Nigerians, was the shimmering textile on which those patterns were stitched. The brilliant red ground of the cloth is enlivened by a geometric surface pattern in bright green.



3a Mrs. Elizabeth Aderogba begins warping her loom. To begin the weaving process on the upright loom, two ropes are looped over the *egboro*, the horizontal bars on the loom. Three sticks (*abiri*) fixed into the ropes allow the warp threads to be strung so they create sheds for the basic weft threads.
Photo: Robin Poynor, 1973

3b Warp threads fixed to the top and bottom horizontals of the upright loom are fixed with permanent wooden heddles as well as with "thread heddles" created for specific design patterns. Here Elizabeth Aderogba pulls out an *asa* to create a shed for passing the *otu* (shuttle) through.
Photo: Robin Poynor, 1973

4 Carpentered looms introduced in the late twentieth century have replaced the "post-and-cross piece" type of traditional loom. Mopelola Olawolu (a.k.a. Alege) is shown weaving the complicated *aleghaba* cloth with thirty-two string heddles. Her apprentices work on a pattern modeled after men's strip weave with floating weft or openwork designs.
Photo: Robin Poynor, 1973



5 Ajibade Gbadegesin Ogunoye, the 32nd Olówò of Òwò, poses on his coronation day seated on his throne wearing tunic and trousers of green on red *şeghoşen*. Photo: Lifted Photography, Akure, Nigeria, courtesy of Olówò Ogunoye III, 2019

6 Olanike Ogunoye, the wife of the newly crowned Olówò Ogunoye III, wears a polished lace *buba* with a *şeghoşen* head tie and carries a piece of the material for her shawl during coronation events. Photo: Lifted Photography, Akure, Nigeria, courtesy of Olanike Ogunoye, 2019



Olori Olanike Ogunoye, the wife of the new Olówò, also wore the red and green cloth in the form of an *uro* (wrapper), *gele* (head tie), and *uborun* (stole) to coordinate with the coronation garb of her husband (Fig. 6). During the time he wore the crossed blue striped *ipanmeta*, Olori Olanike had also worn a matching *upele* (over-wrapper) of the same pattern of blue-striped fabric.

ŞEGHOŞEN

It is women's weave, specifically one called *şeghoşen* (spelled *senwonsen* elsewhere), that is the topic of this article. Although Poynor's 1980 article mentions the cloth, little else has been published on its importance. References by Akinwunmi (2005) and Asakitikpa (2005) do add to the conversation, especially Akinwunmi's discussion of taboo in its production. Lamb and Holmes (1980) briefly mention the cloth in *Nigerian Weaving*. Here we examine the deep admiration people of Òwò have for the textile, how it alludes to prosperity, status, and stature in the community, and how it has come to project a sense of Òwò identity.

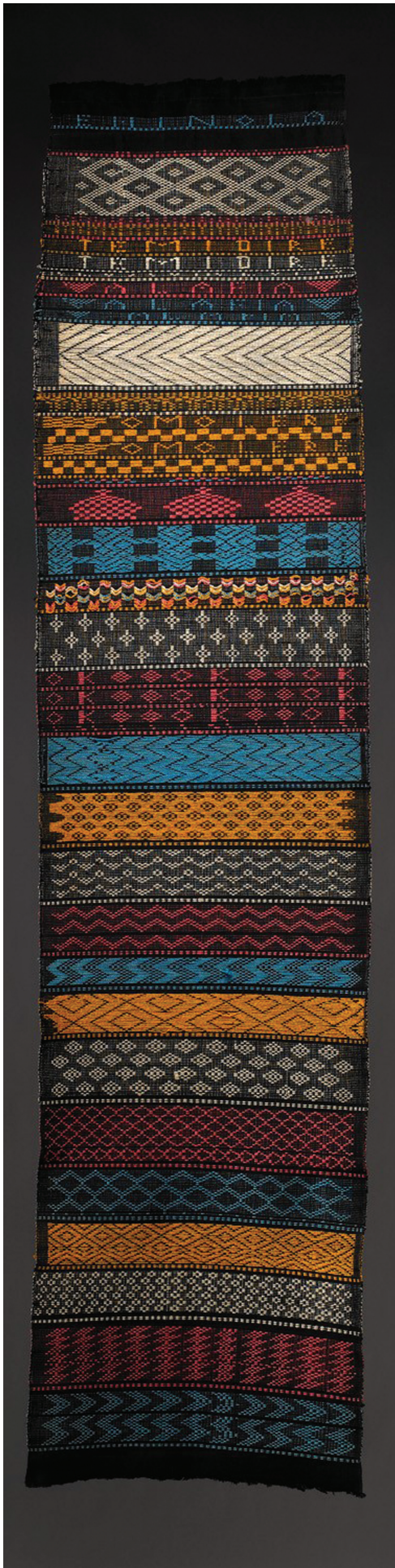
Many inlaid weft patterns are created by women in Òwò, each with a name (Fig. 7). Among these, *şeghoşen* (the topmost design on the sampler here) is a specific pattern, and the cloth with the elaborate design is deemed the most desirable of textiles, more prestigious than imported brocades or "polished lace," and it is the cloth that is most closely associated with "tradition" in Òwò. Although it is worn by royals and high chiefs, it can be worn for celebratory occasions by anyone who can afford it. It is given as gifts to those who leave to live abroad, and it is given as state gifts to officials and dignitaries from elsewhere.

While *şeghoşen* is still used in many instances as it was over a half century ago—as uncut cloths used as wrappers, drapes such

as *ipanmeta* and *ugbero*, head ties, over-wrappers, and stoles—in recent times it has been transformed as tailors and designers have begun to cut it as fabric for piecing together sewn garments. In at least a few instances it has been sold to foreign designers to create modern designs for a clientele far from its place of origin. With the changes that take place in *şeghoşen*'s use, it still maintains importance as an indicator of identities—about position, wealth, taste, and association or identity with Òwò.

In 1973, the ground of the cloth was produced with imported cotton thread in shades of brilliant red or maroon that contrasted with the bright green wool inlay or weft float. The green on red combination created a scintillating, shimmering effect that dazzled the eye of the beholder. Diagonally crossed bands frame lozenge shapes to give a diamond-within-a-diamond motif. The main pattern of diamonds is normally accompanied by horizontal straight linear patterns and *şuga* (sugar) or checkerboard patterns on each end of the cloth. By the 1970s, the red or maroon threads and the green thread for the floating weft patterns were for the most part commercially produced cotton, although wool was sometimes used for the surface design.

The complication of the surface design with multiple secondary heddles (*asa*) is one of the reasons for expense in weaving the cloth. Traditional warp stripes do not require *asa*. To create an *asa*, warp threads are carefully counted and tied in groupings according to the design to sticks, forming a number of sheds required for the pattern. One of the main weavers in the 1970s, Mopelola Olawolu, stated that the *şeghoşen* design required the use of twelve *asa*, or secondary string heddles (Fig. 5). Her daughter, Oluwatoyin (Toyin) Olawolu, who apprenticed to her mother and additionally studied textile science and technology at Government Technical College in Ado-Ekiti and is now president of the Òwò Weavers Guild, assured Poynor



that she can weave *şeghoşen* with either nine or seven *asa*. Variation of the numbers of *asa* will produce only slight differences in the pattern.

Some local enthusiasts of Òwò culture have stated that in the past it took some 240 hours to produce a piece of the costly *şeghoşen*. This would have included the soaking of the cotton yarn in dye for fixing the color, the warping of the loom, the tying of twelve or so *asa* required for the design (a very tedious process), and finally, the weaving of the fabric. Commercial thread has served to lessen the time required to produce a panel of cloth by bypassing the dyeing process.

STATUS CLOTH

Şeghoşen is recognized in Òwò as an “ancient pattern” that was not intended for “just any small boy.” In fact, the wearer of the cloth is usually a wealthy and highly placed person who deserves great respect and honor. It was meant to be worn by men and women of position and status on joyous occasions such as the installation of kings and chiefs, chieftaincy anniversary celebrations, funeral observations and celebrations, and marriage, among other social events. Its great cost assured that it would be limited to those who could afford it. Thus, the pattern has long been associated with position, wealth, prestige, and noteworthy happenings.

Like many purely prestige cloths in Òwò, *şeghoşen* is not associated with any particular ritual, family, or title but can be worn by anyone who has the means to afford it. Its costliness is suggested by its name, which was loosely translated as “the cloth that takes all the money,” “the cloth that depletes the pocket,” or “the cloth that eats the money” (*She*—to cause, *egho*—money, *shen*—to consume/eat/sink).

RESTRICTIONS AND TABOOS

Into the 1970s, cloth woven by women was carefully controlled through ritual and taboo.⁶ Not just anyone could weave *şeghoşen*. A number of taboos were formerly imposed to prevent young girls from weaving it. The aim was to ensure the quality of the cloth and to maintain a high standard of production. Younger women were believed to be too impatient to acquire the necessary skills to weave the textile, which takes even older women years to master. It was feared that younger weavers would rush to complete the weaving rather than observing the painstaking process involved in its production and thereby weakening the prestige value given to the cloth.

Previously, further taboos were imposed for the production of any cloths that might be woven for certain cultural or social festivals and especially for ritual. First, there was the requirement for the cleanliness of the weaver. She had to be physically, spiritually, and morally clean, especially if she was creating a cloth for ritual use. Thus, she had to bathe before starting to weave. She could not be menstruating, and she was prohibited from having sexual relationships during the time the cloth was being prepared. During the process, men, and children (especially boys) were not allowed into the room. Only women who were not menstruating were allowed even to visit the weaver.

The weaving of such cloth usually took between seven and nine days, depending on



7 A sampler woven by Elizabeth Aderogba on the completion of her apprenticeship demonstrates a number of patterns she has mastered. The topmost pattern is *şeghoşen*. The original *şeghoşen* pattern consisted of a ground of diagonally crossed lines framing lozenge shapes to give a diamond-within-a-diamond motif. Collected by Robin Poynor, 1973. Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville, Gift of Robin Poynor. Photo: courtesy of the Samuel P. Harn Museum

8 A man sews three panels of *şeghoşen* together to create his *ipanmeta* (“meta” is “three” in Yoruba). The multicolored stitching is called *ugba-aghon*. Photo: Robin Poynor, 1973



9 The Ojomo of Ujebu- Òwò wears a three paneled *ipanmeta* to celebrate *ulabi*, the festival of the new kolanut.
Photo: Babatunde Onibode, 2020



10 Each year the *ayoyos* or *ugbama* age grade from Uloro quarter process through town to the Oronshen Grove wearing *ipanmeta* of Òwò women's weave on Utegin Day. Leading the group is Adeyeye Adanigbo Olojuto, whose striped cloth has a band of *ikat*. Disu Onilakare lele follows wearing a red and green *şeghoşen ipanmeta*. The fourth man, Oluwarotimi Inoren Akogunren, wears *şeghoşen* of a slightly different color.
Photo: Adeniyi Olagunju, 2016

the cloth. It was taboo for such ritual cloths to be woven in a room that had only been swept or cleaned the day before, for the environment had to be swept and scrubbed daily. During that period, the weaver was not allowed to eat food prepared the day before. Her meals had to be prepared fresh each day. Items such as bitter kola, kola nut, alligator pepper, sugarcane, roasted plantain, smoked fish and meat, and garden egg (eggplant) were often placed at the weaver's feet, while her female visitors helped themselves to the food and engaged in singing as the cloth was being woven.

Owners and wearers of ritual cloths were subject to similarly strict taboos. Whether male or female, they were expected to adhere strictly to proscriptions that pertain to the use of the cloth. A major taboo concerning most Òwò ritual cloths centered on the cleanliness of the person who intended to wear it. This pertained to bathing but also to avoiding sexual contact with the opposite sex before and during the wearing of the ritual cloth. For women, menstruation was regarded as a state of uncleanness and thus menstruating women were strictly forbidden to wear or even touch a number of Òwò ritual cloths.

CHANGE OVER TIME

T.M. Akinwunmi observes that the taboos associated with the weaving of *şeghoşen* have been broken in contemporary times because of their inherent contradictions. He posits that

the advancing knowledge of the people, the increase in their adherence to Islam and Christian practice, the gradual challenge and erosion of the social roles and power exercised by the traditional chiefs,

undermined the basis for, and the established theories on taboos in the contemporary times, and consequently they are just anachronistic (Akinwunmi 2005: 26).

Not only has time relaxed many of the restrictions on weaving and wearing cloths, but fewer older Òwò women weave today than in the 1970s and earlier. Not only have younger women begun to weave cloths previously reserved for elderly women, but Ebirá weavers from the northeast of Òwò and others have moved into town to produce traditional women's weave to satisfy the needs of the population for the broadcloth produced on the vertical loom. Outsiders, like the younger women, have begun to disregard established prohibitions and notably engage in weaving high-status textiles. It has become accessible to sundry users since its production is no longer limited, and many weavers specialize in its production now.

Not only have younger women and those of other ethnicities begun to weave the cloths, but *şeghoşen* is being made in a variety of colors. Green on red or maroon is still created as in the past, but red on red, beige on brown, white on navy, pale blue on royal blue, white on white, white on burnt orange, olive on yellow, lavender on purple, etc., have been introduced.

Along with changes in production and color combinations comes a change in appellation. With its cost today, compared to that of other Òwò traditional cloths, *şeghoşen* has gained the new nickname *keghojo* (*ko*—amass/save; *egho*—money; *jo*—together), which alludes to saving money or amassing a fortune rather than depleting it, as the older name suggests. The term *şeghoşen*, some say, sounded derogatory, so a new name was applied. It is acknowledged, however, that even with a new name, it still depletes the pocketbook!

LEADERSHIP USES OF ŞEGHOŞEN

Although *şeghoşen* is a prestige cloth, it is not necessarily a cloth woven for ritual use, but it *can* be used for such purposes. Figure 8 shows a man sewing three panels of *şeghoşen* together to create an *ipanmeta*, using a long needle to stitch the *ugba-aghon* design.⁷ The resulting large, multipaneled cloth was worn tied over the left shoulder by older men. For example, when Òba Kofoworola Olatunbosun Oladoyinbo Ojomo (who rules as Aruliwo III, the Ojomo of Ijebu-Òwò) celebrated the festival for new kolanut (*ulabi*), when the



11 Ebenezer Adewunmi Ogunmolasuyi, the Olupenmen of Upenmen, dressed for his installation wearing a colorful *ewu egha* beneath a monochromatic *ipanmeta* of light green-on-red *seghosen*. Photo: Abimbola Williams Olaley, 2020

12a Oba Omotunde Alaba Ebiyanmi Adako, Iresin II, the Oliyere of Iyere, celebrates his first anniversary in office wearing an *agbada* of *seghosen*. Photo: courtesy of Oliyere photo album, 2011

12b A more mature Oba Iresin II poses with his wife for a commercial photographer to celebrate the tenth anniversary of being in office. They wear *seghosen* accessories with white garments. Photo: Bomac Studios, 2020

oba prays for his town and sets dates for festivals throughout the coming year, he wore a traditional *ipanmeta* of *seghosen* with green patterning on a red ground (Fig. 9). In this instance, the *ipanmeta* is tied on the right shoulder.

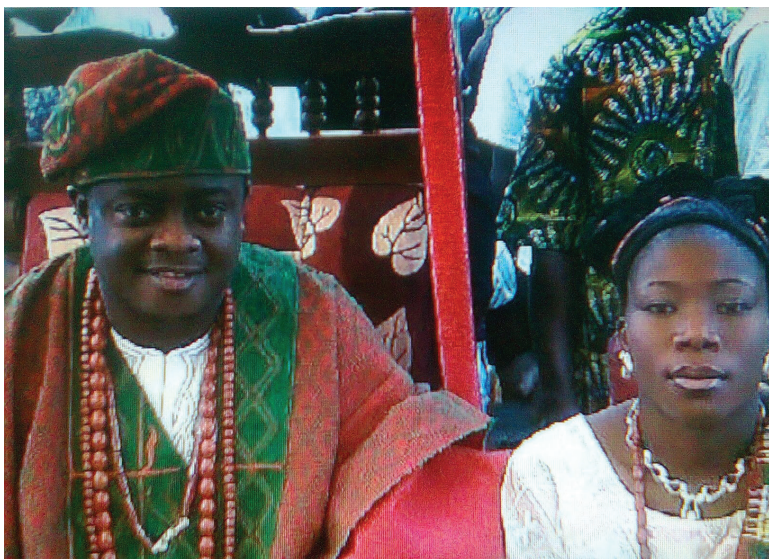
These large, multipaneled cloths could also be used for occasions such as the annual procession of the senior *ayoyo* or *ugbama* (age grade members) of Uloro quarter through *Qwò* to the Oronsen grove on the day called Utegin toward the end of the Igogo festival (Fig. 10).⁸ Their woven drapes tied on the left shoulder distinguish them from the junior grade of *ugbama* whose members dress in *aso egbe*, wearing matching commercially produced fabric. Most of the hand-woven *ipanmeta* worn by the senior grade are blue-and-white striped, like those worn in Figure 10 by the leader Adeyeye Adanigbo Olojuto (first in line), Osho Eleghobola (third), and Ojo

Abegunde Alamuren (fifth). However, Disu Onilakare Lele (second) and Oluwarotimi Akogunren (fourth), stand out in the group in that they wear elaborate and costly *seghosen* wraps.

Rulers may choose to wear *seghosen* to mark ritual occasions, as evidenced by Olówò Ogunoye III (Fig. 5) and the Ojòmò (Fig. 9). In Upenmen, one of the satellite towns that comprise *Qwò* Kingdom, Ebenezer Adewunmi Ogunmolasuyi dressed in a robe decorated with applied piping for his installation as Olupenmen (ruler of the town). Over that chiefly garment he wore a monochrome *ipanmeta* of red-on-red *seghosen* (Fig. 11). The *akoko* (*Newboldia leavis*) leaves indicate the ritual nature of the event in which the Olupenmen-elect becomes the Olupenmen.

In these examples, *seghosen* has been worn as uncut panels, draped over the body and tied. One of the technical changes, as mentioned, is the cutting and tailoring of the textile. As a fabric, it can be used to construct a variety of garment types. Thus, when Oba Omotunde Alaba Ebiyanmi Adako celebrated his one-year anniversary as Iresin II, the Oliyere (ruler) of Iyere, another satellite town of *Qwò*, he wore an *agbada* (robe) of green on red *seghosen* (Fig. 12a). Nine years later he celebrated his tenth anniversary as Oliyere by sitting for a commercial portrait photographer. He and his wife, Omolola Adako, wore elegant white lace garments, but the traditional red and green *seghosen* was used to construct his *fila* (cap) and for her stole, providing a remarkable contrast to the white polished eyelet ensembles (Fig 12b).

The introduction of the wide range of color choices has also broadened the possibilities of dressing to impress with *seghosen* on such grand occasions. The Ojòmò of Ujebu-*Qwò* (pictured wearing an *ipanmeta* in Figure 9) wore a much more sumptuous outfit when the men of his town celebrated their becoming elders in the Ero celebration. While the men participating in the event would wear three-paneled *ugbero*, the Ojòmò stood out in an impressive *agbada* made of brown-on-yellow *seghosen*, lined in brown and completed with remarkable





13 Oba Kofoworola Olatunbosun Oladoyinbo Ojomo, who rules as Aruliwo III, the Ojomo of Ujebu-Owu, dresses in a brown-on-yellow *seghosen agbada* to celebrate the Ero festival.
Photo: Chief Yekini Adefemi, the Ajana of Ijebu Owu, 2019

14 David Victor Folagbade Olateru-Olagbegi III, the 31st Olowo of Owu, was chancellor of University of Jos. Shown here with his wife, he wears an ensemble of *ewu egha* (tunic) and *efa* (trousers) constructed of white-on-navy blue *seghosen* under his blue and gold academic robes. Ololade Adejoke, his wife, wears a wrapper and head tie of the same prestigious textile.
Photo: courtesy of Owu Kingdom Facebook group, 2018

embroidery that references the lozenge shapes of the *seghosen* (Fig. 13). The Ojomo, who had retired as a military general before taking on the duties of *oba*, would be aware of the importance of making a grand appearance.

The 31st Olowo, David Victor Folagbade Olateru-Olagbegi, Olagbegi III, had been trained in law in London. After serving as Barrister-at-Law in Nigeria and acting in many roles as attorney for the government, he taught law. Then, as a reigning *oba*, he sequentially served as chancellor of three universities—the University of Benin, the University of Abuja, and lastly the University of Jos. In 2018, less than a year before his death, Olowo Olagbegi III and



Olori (Queen) Ololade Olateru Olagbegi dressed for a convocation at the University of Jos. In his academic role, he donned standard academic regalia, calling attention to his role as chancellor at the university. He also chose to wear *seghosen* with it (Fig. 14). In selecting an ensemble of *ewu egha* (tunic) and *efa* (trousers) created with white-on-navy *seghosen*, he introduced this most prestigious of Owu textiles to the Jos campus in central Nigeria. As in the photo of the Oliyere of Iyere and his wife (Fig. 12b), Olateru-Olagbegi's wife, Olori Ololade Adejoke Olateru Olagbegi, wore a wrapper and head tie to match the *seghosen* worn by the Olowo.

Although the use of *seghosen* is closely associated with Owu Kingdom, which prides itself on the textile, the cloth is woven in a rather broad area encompassing a larger region than that of Owu and its nine “satellite” communities, but still well within the borders of what the ancient kingdom would have claimed in its heyday. As stated, Ebiru weavers from north of Owu have moved into Owu to weave specialty cloths for people of the kingdom. In 1973, Poynor purchased a piece of *seghosen* in Ifon Kingdom, some 23 miles south of Owu. A number of smaller communities to the north in Ondo State also use *seghosen*. Iboropa Akoko, a town about 28 miles north of Owu, although located outside the immediate area, would have been under the sway of the kingdom in its precolonial heyday.⁹ Tinuade Babalola was named regent of the Iboropa community in



2015 after the unexpected demise of her father, Oba Emmanuel Ayowole Adejuyigbe (Fig. 15). As the youngest female king in Nigeria and the first female king of Iboropa, she is concerned with the empowerment of women, actively working on campaigns to help reduce poverty, domestic violence, and sexual assault against women (Gesinde 2020). For her Facebook portrait, Regent Babalola poses on her throne draped in a green-on-beige *seghošen ipanmeta*, which she ties on her right shoulder (unlike the manner in which older men usually tie the *ipanmeta* on the left shoulder). Not only does she wear the esteemed cloth, but a second large *seghošen* is used as a drape covering the seat of her throne and the footstool.

Seghošen may also serve as a gift of distinction for dignitaries from outside of *Ọ̀wọ̀*. When the Honorable Yakubu Dogara, who was 14th Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nigeria, visited *Ọ̀wọ̀* in 2016 for the 4th Convocation and Award ceremony at Achievers University, Olówọ̀ Olagbegi III presented an *ipanmeta* of red and green *seghošen* to him (Fig. 16). On the same occasion, the Honorable Femi Gbajabiamila, the minority leader of the House of Representatives, was awarded a blue striped *ipanmeta*. Since Dogara ranked higher in the government, he received the preferred *seghošen*, while the less highly ranked luminary was given the striped cloth, still an admirable award. In February 2017, a picture on the website *Photo Story* shows Barrister Kola Olawoye, the leader of a delegation from the Olówọ̀ of *Ọ̀wọ̀*, bestowing *seghošen* on Imo State Governor Rochas Okorocha when the delegation visited Owerri (Fig. 17).

SOCIAL USES OF SEGHOŠEN: AȘO EBI

The celebrated textile is by no means limited to rulers and dignitaries. Any individual with means can use *seghošen* for any festive occasion. It is especially popular for funerals, memorial celebrations, birthday celebrations, and weddings. Any of these may call for luxurious dress, and if the family has the means, everyone will dress alike. The practice of *așo ebi* (family cloth) has long been associated with Yoruba communities. Okechukwu Nwafor explains that the meaning of *așo ebi*

is transcended in common usage where it simply means uniforms worn by a group of family members or friends as a solidarity dress to a social ceremony such as wedding, party, funeral, among others. However, those who normally dress in the *așo ebi* uniforms are also friends, family members, or well-wishers of the celebrants' friends (Nwafor 2011: ii).



15 Regent Tinuade Babalola states that she is the youngest female king in Nigeria and the first female king of Iboropa Akoko, Ondo State. Not only does she wear a green-on-beige *seghošen ipanmeta*, but *seghošen* covers the seat of her throne and the footstool. Photo: Action Photography, courtesy of Regent Tinuade Babalola, 2020

16 Olówọ̀ Olagbegi III presented a *seghošen ipanmeta* to the Honorable Yakubu Dogara, then the Nigerian Speaker of the House. On the same occasion, he gave a traditional, blue-striped cloth to the Honorable Femi Gbajabiamila, the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives. Photo: courtesy of the *Ọ̀wọ̀ Kingdom Group*, 2016

SOCIAL USES OF SEGHOŠEN: BURIALS

In his discussion of *așo ebi*, Nwafor observes that, according to some, *așo ebi* actually began as a funeral uniform. Anyone seen in the common dress of the group would be identified at once as a member of the deceased's family (Nwafor 2011: 43). Such elaborate garments shared by all the celebrants in honor of the deceased also "symbolically distinguish[ed] the elite from the poor, the person of higher from those of lower rank or accomplishments" (Nwafor 2011: 107).

What better way for a family of means to celebrate their loved one than using the most elaborate and expensive local cloth for *așo ebi*? In November 2020, the Ogunmolawa family celebrated the life of ninety-five-year-old Mrs. Ibijola Dorcas Ogunmolawa. Over several days of services and celebrations, the family and friends dressed in *așo ebi*. For delivering the casket to the home in preparation for the wake, they dressed in indigo-striped women's weave over white lace. White lace with orange accessories was the theme for the Christian wake at the family home. For the funeral at St. Andrews Cathedral Church and the subsequent reception at Imade College, they donned green-on-yellow *seghošen* for the funeral (Fig. 18). Wearing *așo ebi* on these numerous occasions over several days provided a sense of family commitment and solidarity as the children, family, and friends laid their loving mother to rest and celebrated her long life.

In his study of *așo ebi* in Lagos, Nwafor has pointed out that

By the early 1990s, wealthy Lagosians had started, more magnanimously, to patronize photographers ... Events such as title-taking, wedding ceremonies, child christening, funerals, birthday parties, memorial ceremonies, hometown anniversaries, political rally campaigns, among others were attracting more photographic patronage than in previous years (Nwafor 2011: 206).

The same is true for *Ọ̀wọ̀*. For the occasion of the several events celebrating the burial of Mrs. Ogunmolawa, the family arranged for Banky Photography of neighboring Akure to record the various services and thus document the matching clothing worn at each.¹⁰



17 Barrister Kola Olawoye, representing Olówò Olagbegi III, bestows white-on-peach *seghošen* on Imo State Governor Rochas Okorocha in Owerri. 2017. Photo:

18 The family of Mrs. Ibijola Dorcas Ogunmolawa gathers for the funeral service for their mother wearing garments featuring green-on-yellow *seghošen*. Photo: Banky Photography, courtesy of Olugbenga Olumolawa, 2020

Newspapers and magazines have long served as a means for such photographs to be shared with a broader audience, calling attention to the celebration of the deceased and the status of the family while at the same time proclaiming the style and fashion of the family (Lawuyi 1991).

While newspapers, magazines, and posters continue to be used to herald such events, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media serve as further means for sharing the photographs of the celebrations and to allow the family to communicate quickly and easily, showing the opulence of the event. At the same time viewers of such posts can relay their condolences and own memories of the deceased as well as express appreciation for the beauty of the services and the extravagance of the exquisite *aṣo ebi*.

Multiple posts of photographs and videos on Facebook each day alerted viewers to the stages of celebrating the life of High Chief Fehintola Famolagun, the Obajere-uwa of Ugboroko, Òwò Kingdom. When her own father passed in the mid-twentieth century, Fehintola Famolagun petitioned the Olówò to allow her to assume the chieftaincy title her father had held. When her request was granted, for decades she donned chiefly dress as the only female chief in the kingdom, performing before the king, wearing *agokun* and *orufanran* garb according to the occasion, dancing as a High Chief in the court of the Olówò, tossing her dance sword spinning into the air and catching it.

Having attained the age of 100 when she died in April 2021, High Chief Famolagun's family wanted to honor her with a significant week of observances. A full seven days of cultural awareness programs, free medical checkups for visitors, lectures and symposiums, a documentary film, musical performances by popular musicians, the presentation of a drama, and numerous other activities not only kept guests entertained but reminded everyone of the remarkable life and achievements of the first female High Chief, who was referred to as an "icon" in all materials advertising the events.



Friday to be taken with great pomp in a horse-drawn carriage and accompanied by a brass band, great numbers of family and friends wore green-on-red *seghošen* (Fig. 19). During the Christian wake, the daughters of the High Chief changed into blue lace dresses over which woven indigo and white *aṣigbo* sashes (a traditional ritual funerary cloth reserved for specific families) were worn. On the seventh day of celebrating the iconic chief, the family and friends gathered at New Church Cathedral for the memorial church service, where the family wore still another type of local cloth—*ilaari*.

SOCIAL USES OF ŞEGHOŞEN: WEDDINGS

Yoruba weddings have always required special uses of cloth. Today, marriage celebrations provide opportunities to claim connection to Òwò roots through dress as many couples today choose to wear coordinated outfits in traditional styles, *agbada* and *fila* for the groom, *gele* and *uborun* for the bride. Often, they opt for the elegance of *seghošen* for official wedding portraiture and for exchanging vows. A case in point is the wedding of Oluwatoyin Nihinlolu Ijadimbola Akinnagbe, who hails from Òwò. When she married



Omolayo Samuel Akinngbe, she looked to her hometown traditions and chose matching garments of *şeghoşen* for the wedding photograph taken by Savvy Photography (Fig. 20). In the photograph, the bride wears a dress of *şeghoşen* with pale blue weft pattern on a royal blue ground. Her head tie and stole are of the same. The groom wears a *fila* (cap) and flowing *agbada* constructed from the same royal blue *şeghoşen*.



SOCIAL USES OF ŞEGHOŞEN: BIRTHDAYS

Birthday anniversaries have often called for special dress in Yoruba country. On occasion, significant birthdays are celebrated with *aşo ebi*, as well-wishers “dress in” to demonstrate support. Celebrants commission photographs by professionals to document the occasion. For her fiftieth birthday anniversary, Debbie Kunbi Oyeneye, president and CEO of the upscale Country Kitchen + Events business, posed for an official birthday photograph by Top Three Photography (Fig. 21a). Her white, dry-polished-lace outfit of *uro* and *buba* is accentuated by an *uborun* and *gele* of red and green *şeghoşen*.

While such solemn occasions call for more conventional demeanor and ways of dressing, more informal occasions, especially in the digital age, seem to beg for more casual approaches of presenting oneself. The young woman in Figure 21b poses in a relaxed yet animated pose, smiling as she shows off her wrapper of dark green-on-red *şeghoşen*. Like Debbie Kunbi Oyeneye in Figure 21a, Olayinka Oladimeji Ogunleye, whose father was chief of staff to Olówò Olagbegi III, commissioned the photograph to celebrate her birthday in 2019. Perhaps her pose is carefully planned to position the body in a more contemporary way, disregarding the previous generation’s formal postures required for portraiture. Compared



19 The body of High Chief Fehintola Famolagun, the Obajere-uwa of Ọwò Kingdom, is taken to her home for the Christian wake. Her daughters and others wore green-on-red *şeghoşen* for the occasion. Morenike Ogunseitan, shown here, joins the procession for the delivery of her mother’s coffin wearing *şeghoşen* headtie and wrapper. The brilliance of the cloth can be seen on the shoulder of a family friend in the foreground. A piece of the textile was draped over the casket as well.
Photo: courtesy of Morenike Ogunseitan.

20 Matching *şeghoşen* finery is worn to mark the wedding of Oluwatoyin Nihinlolu Ijadimbola from Ọwò to Omolayo Samuel Akinngbe.
Photo: Savvy Photography, 2018.

21a President/CEO at CountryKitchen + Events Debbie Kunbi Oyeneye poses for an official photograph to celebrate her fiftieth birthday anniversary. Her white dry polished lace outfit of *uro* and *buba* is accentuated by a stole and head tie of green-on-red *şeghoşen*.
Photo: Top Three Photography, courtesy of Debbie Kunbi Oyeneye, 2020

21b Olayinka Oladimeji Ogunleye, daughter of chief Olusola Ogunleye, the Olubola of Ọwò (chief of staff) to Olówò Olagbegi III strikes a casual pose. She wears a *şeghoşen* wrapper and head tie of dark green-on-red to celebrate her birthday anniversary.
Photo: Perfection Photography, Akure, courtesy of Olayinka Ogunleye, 2020



22 Ololade Adejoke Olateru Olagbegi, the wife of the 31st Olówò and Chancellor of the University of Jos, wears a wrapper and head tie of *şeghoşen* with beige weft patterns on a brown ground at a university function. Photo: courtesy of *Òwò Kingdom Facebook group*, 2015

23 A wedding ensemble for bride and groom consists of green-on-silver *şeghoşen*. The textiles were woven by Toyin Olawolu, president of the *Òwò Weavers*. Photo: courtesy of *Toyin Olawolu*, 2020



to the pose assumed by her *oba*'s wife in Figure 22, Ms. Ogunleye seems very spontaneous. She wears a wrapper rather than a dress (although she does not wear the traditional *buba*), and the *uro* is positioned high under her arms.

SOCIAL USES OF ŞEGHOŞEN: AGE DIFFERENCE

Those in Ms. Oyeneye's and Ms. Ogunleye's generation of businesspeople in *Òwò* are very social-media conscious. Perhaps, *şeghoşen* has taken on new significance in the digital age as both a signifier of *Òwò* identity and an indicator of elite status and prestige online. Such photographs are used on social media outlets and sent by email. Regent Babalola (Fig. 15) has a Facebook page. Ogunoye III (Figs. 1, 5) has both Twitter and Instagram accounts. He and his wife (Fig. 6) have individual Facebook pages. And the "Owo Kingdom" Facebook page has over 36,000 members. Birthday pictures such as those in Figure 21 receive numerous comments and are shared by many on Facebook.

Mature women of position often wear *şeghoşen* as a traditional wrapper with a lace *buba*. Olori (Queen) Ololade Adejoke Olateru Olagbegi (see also Fig. 14) wore a wrapper and head tie of *şeghoşen*

with beige weft patterns on a brown ground, harmonized with a beige eyelet lace *buba* (Fig. 22). Even the pose she takes on such an occasion is different from that of a younger web-savvy woman such as Ms. Ogunleye (Fig. 21b). The event was the investiture of her husband, Olówò Olagbegi III, as the chancellor of the University of Jos and the conferment of the degree of Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa, "for his remarkable contribution to peace, stability, excellence, and service to humanity and legal education in Nigeria." The occasion coincided with the fortieth anniversary of the university. As in the 2018 occasion depicted in Figure 14, Olori Olateru-Olagbegi's outfit was coordinated with that which her husband wore beneath his academic robes. Although she was photographed in a somewhat candid shot in the audience as she observed the event in Jos, her demeanor is that which would be expected of a mature woman of her status.

CHANGE: CUTTING AND TAILORING

In the past, men's weave (*aşoke*) could be cut and tailored, but it was the exception to cut cloth woven by women. It was normally worn as the three-panel *ipanmeta* or *ugbero* by men or as a two-paneled wrapper or stole or the single panel head tie by women. Today, imaginative designers and tailors cut the fabric to create stylish garments. Men commission tailors to produce fashionable *agbadas* (Figs. 12a, 13, 20, 23) or as ensembles of tunic and trousers (Figs. 1, 5, 14). Women commission dresses of the fabric (Figs. 20, 23). This suggests a renewed appreciation for the textile as an *Òwò* tradition but also demonstrates the desire for it to be more "wearable" in a contemporary context, thus blending ideas of modernity and tradition.

Oluwatoyin Ibilola (Toyin) Olawolu is a master weaver and a major provider for traditional cloths to satisfy the needs for ritual



use as well as for dress in Òwò. She wove the *şeghoşen* for wedding ensembles (Fig. 23) using pale green weft on a ground of pale silver. After Toyin wove the cloth, her clients negotiated with tailors and embroiderers to complete the work. The tailor who created the groom's *agbada* was able to match the silvery tone of the ground for selecting the lining of the robe. Many seek Toyin's cloth and then hire tailors to construct traditional garments as well as more contemporary outfits.



24 Toyin Olawolu has woven *şeghoşen* for a tailored *agbada* (men's robe) of pale blue pattern on royal blue ground.
Photo: courtesy of Toyin Olawolu, 2020

25 Toyin Olawolu provides textiles to the contemporary British Brand, Karen Gold, which presents itself as "Ready to wear and Bespoke tailoring; Ethically Made in London." Karen Gold tailors used portions of traditional *şeghoşen* panels to construct the blue and black bomber jacket.
Photo: courtesy of Toyin Olawolu, 2020

26 Bags and shoes made of traditional Òwò textiles allow those who live elsewhere to show off the beauty of Òwò cloth and maintain a sense of connection with their hometown.
Photo: courtesy of Babatunde Onibode, 2021

Toyin learned weaving from her mother but then studied Textile Science & Technology at Government Technical College Ado Ekiti. She is president of the Òwò Weavers, and her products are highly prized. The *şeghoşen* she wove to be tailored into an *agbada* (Fig. 24) has a pale blue weft pattern against a royal blue ground. The tailor to whom the cloth was taken for sewing pieced the robe together with several panels of the costly material. A single piece can be seen comprising the central front and back, while other panels are used for the "sleeves." After the tailor completed constructing the *agbada*, it was turned over to the embroiderer, who matched the color of the embroidery yarn to the royal blue of the ground of the *şeghoşen*.

CHANGE: BEYOND ÒWÒ

Toyin sells her products not only locally but abroad as well, and not just to those with Òwò connections. She has provided textiles to the contemporary British brand, Karen Gold, which presents itself as "Ready to wear and Bespoke tailoring; Ethically Made in London." In one advertisement, the company touted "Something for the guys. This handloomed bomber jacket is handwoven from the inimitable *#asooke* fabric made from cotton by local artisans in Nigeria. As a result of our sustainable practice, Karen Gold awakens Africa's authenticity and power through Africa's women and



youth.” In another iteration of that jacket, Karen Gold tailors used portions of traditional *şeghoşen* panels provided by Toyin to construct a beautiful blue and black jacket (Fig. 25). The precisely tailored garment introduces an entirely new use for *Òwò* traditional cloth. Like the newer outfits created of *şeghoşen* in *Òwò* today, it too proclaims prestige, beauty, quality, wealth, and elegance.

Babatunde Onibode has the same idea in mind when he commissions stylish bags, purses, briefcases, backpacks, and shoes from *şeghoşen* and other recognizable women’s weave patterns (Fig. 26). He takes his materials to Mr. Abidemi Obijade Ola Jesu, an *Òwò* maker of shoes and bags, who creates the patterns and makes the objects using *Òwò*-created fabrics. Onibode’s reasoning is that

individuals from *Òwò* who travel outside Nigeria to other points on the continent, and especially those who go to North America or Europe, should carry with them quality products that will speak to others of beauty, quality, and elegance and that will simultaneously remind their owners of their hometown, *Òwò*.

Karen Gold’s slogan is “Updating the classics for a timeless wardrobe.” Those words could easily apply to the production and use of *şeghoşen* over the past several decades in *Òwò*. The pattern of *şeghoşen* is maintained as a time-honored symbol of luxury, sophistication, and affluence, but the ways in which it is produced and worn are “updated.” It is the classic cloth of *Òwò*, but it is contemporary as dress.

Notes

We thank those who looked at drafts of this article, especially Joanne Eicher, and the anonymous peer reviewers, all of whom made excellent recommendations.

1 *Òwò* Kingdom was believed to have been “the largest, most influential and enduring kingdom in the whole of Eastern Yorubaland before the nineteenth century,” according to historian Oladipo Joseph Olugbadehan. Since the colonial period, it consists of the City of *Òwò* and nine “satellite towns” over which the *Olówò* (the title of the king) of *Òwò* wields administrative power. When Poynor was carrying out research in 1973, Ajibade Gbadegesin Ogunoye’s father was the reigning *Olówò*, and sat on the throne from 1968 to 1993. Before Ajibade Gbadegesin Ogunoye became *oba*, he was educated at the *Òwò* Government Primary School and *Òwò* High School and finished his secondary education in Ibadan. His postsecondary education included the Honors BA in Religious Studies at Ondo State University, Ado Ekiti (now Ekiti State University). At Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, he earned the LLB with honors, and the Master of Public Administration Degree (MPA). He completed the BL at the Nigerian Law School at the Abuja Campus and was called to the Nigerian Bar as Solicitor and Barrister of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. He was subsequently appointed Administrative Officer by the Ondo State Government in 2001 and has served in the management of various Ministries/Departments/Agencies of Government (Resume of *Olówò* Ajibade Gbadegesin Ogunoye III, Facebook, Owo Kingdom. Tuesday, July 16, 2019).

2 Photographs of the series of events can be seen on the *Olówò*’s Instagram account: <https://www.instagram.com/olowoofowoogunoyeiii/?hl=en>.

3 The *ipanmeta* is a large drape worn by men on auspicious occasions. It is made of three large panels sewn together edge to edge, thus its name, meaning “three cloth panels.” The approximately 6’ x 12’ cloths are normally worn tied at the left shoulder, leaving the right shoulder bare.

4 The *Òwò* language, *Òghò*, is significantly different from other Yoruba languages. For example, the “w” sound given to the name of the kingdom and city has been accepted, but *Òwò* people do not use the “w”. The sound is a related “gh”. Most of the words that begin with an “I” in Yoruba use the “u” in *Òghò*. For example, the word *iro* is used in other variations

of Yoruba. The “i” is often replaced in *Òwò* Yoruba (*Òghò*) with a “u”. This is especially apparent in place names like Uloro, Ulale, and Ugboroko, quarter names in *Òwò*, which may be spelled in Yoruba as Iloro, Ilale, and Igboroko. Other towns considered “satellite towns” of *Òwò* include Ulale-uli, Udasen, Upenmen, Usuada, Uso, Upele, and Emure-Uli which may be named on maps as Ilale-Ile Idasen, Ipenmen, Isuada, Iso, Ipele, and Emure-Ile. The cloth addressed in this article is *şeghoşen*, spelled by Yoruba scholars as *senwosen*. In this article we will use *Òwò* spellings.

5 Information on looms were provided to Poynor during interviews with Mopelola Olawolu and Elizabeth Aderogbe during field work in 1973. Subsequent information has been supplied by Toyin Olawolu. Venice Lamb and Judy Holmes (1980) discuss Nigerian looms at length in *Nigerian Weaving*. Poynor’s initial research was supported by a Fulbright Hays Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship.

6 Akinwunmi analyzes the taboos associated with the weaving of *asigbo*, *girijo*, *ugbero*, and *şeghoşen* in his 2005 article on taboos and the control of social roles in the creation of *Òwò* ritual textiles.

7 *Ugba-aghon* literally means “tortoise shell.” Some suggest that earlier iterations of the design created by the stitches suggested four legs protruding from a shell. Now each color section can be seen as an abstraction with two projections on each side of the color section.

8 Igogo is the most important annual festival in *Òwò*. It commemorates Oronsen, the wife of Renrenjenjen, a fourteenth century *Olówò*. During the seventeen days of its celebration, no headgear may be worn, and no drums can be sounded. Each day the *ugbama* grade of Uloro quarter, the ones descended from those who accompanied the first *Olówò* from Ile-Ife on the journey to the present site, parade and perform the rituals required for the festival. The junior-grade members wear commercial cloth made in Nigeria, some with wrappers of women’s weave over their trousers.

9 Settlements in the areas of Akoko, southern Ekiti, parts of Afenmai (in Edo state), and Iyagba (in present day Kogi state) once had to pay yearly tribute to *Òwò* (see Olugbadehan 1999).

10 Photographers have long abounded in Yorubaland. In the 1970s local photographers worked in their darkrooms, producing only black-and-white images. Today digital color abounds, and the numbers of professional photographers have multiplied.

In this article alone, dress and prestigious events are documented by the following photographic enterprises in Ondo State: Bomac Studios, Lifted Photography, Action Photography, Savvy Photography, Top Three Photography, Perfection Photography, Infinix, and Banky Photography. Most of these photography studios mark their work with noticeable logos.

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