

# *Creative Development Of Headwrap (Gele) Among Women In Southern Nigeria*

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**Abstract** – Head wrap is the covering worn on the head to cover the entire hair and the two ears for variety of purposes. This is commonly worn by women in many parts of the world. The use of head wrap in Nigeria originated among Yoruba of southern Nigeria which is worn as part of the dressing accessory to decorate the head. Despite the ephemeral nature of fabric and lack of chronology of head wrap in Nigeria, there had not been scholarly attention to its development in southern Nigeria. This paper studied head wrap (*gele*) among women in southern Nigeria with the aim of having chronological record of the head wrap in the annals of history. The study adopts descriptive research design using qualitative method to analyze the data. Samples of head wraps were collected from wearers and literatures, thereby arranged them chronologically. Findings indicate there is creative development in the way *gele* is tied among the women in southern Nigeria. Tying of *gele* has now reached the stage whereby it is very easy for every woman as the innovation of automated *gele* popular known as ‘auto gele’ makes it creative, beautiful and easy-to-wear.

**Keywords** – Head Wrap, Creativity, Fashion, *Gele*, Development, Auto *Gele*, Fashion Accessories.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Headwrap is a universal dressing attachment among women in Nigeria. Headwrap originally began in Africa in the early 1700s [1]. The *gele* is used to cover the hair and the head as a regal crown to grace the head of dignified African woman [2]. In Ghana and Malawi, it is known as ‘*Dukus*’, also in Zimbabwe it is called ‘*Dhuku*’. In South Africa, it is known as ‘*Doeks*’ while in Zambia, it is known as ‘*chitambala*’ and in Botswana called ‘*Tukwi*’ or ‘*tuku*’ [3]. It is called ‘*gele*’ among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, while among the Igbo of southeast and south southern Nigeria, headwrap is called ‘*ichafu*’ [4]. It is pronounced ‘*gay-lay*’ in Yoruba, while the Igbo pronounce *ichafu* as ‘*ee-cha-fuu*’.

Headwrap had its origin in sub-Saharan Africa whereby the women initially put on the headwrap around 1700s to show their age, marital status, and prosperity. [5] buttressed this that putting on of head wrap originated in sub-Saharan Africa. It was noted that the white overlord mistresses imposed the wraps as a symbol of enslavement while working for them. The white women believed that Black women covering their heads would make them to be less attractive to their own white husbands. It was believed that white slave masters get confused at the colour of hairs seeing on the slaves with different shades and textures. [6] reiterated that the wrap is a way to reduce the attraction and honour of culture in Black women while [7] buttressed it that the wraps is associated with subordination.

However, women began to use the headwrap as a traditional outfit in many African countries for practical purposes and as a form of resistance [6]. The headwrap became a form of defense for the hair especially when working in severe conditions. [8] reiterated that Mende women in Sierra Leone used the headwrap as protection for the hair to be well clad until it is time to expose it. Wearing of headscarves in Africa now represents affluence, culture, marital status, sorrow, or respect.

In Nigeria, headwrap is also known as ‘head scarf’ or ‘head tie’. It is also worn on the head like a turban. Due to the diversity of the people of Africa and other racial groups, the technique in which the head wraps are tied and worn differ between one country and the other. *Gele* among the Yoruba women was said to have emanated from the Yoruba culture [9]. It was described that *gele* had been around before 19th century. Usually, it is creatively wrapped on the head to cover the hair line and the ears, closing the ties at the back of the neck [10].

Historically, there are some beliefs associated with the way a *gele* is tied. Wearing a *gele* depicts a woman’s marital position. It was believed that tying the *gele* to the right shows that the woman is married, but when it is tied to the left signifies that the wearer is single [11]. But symbolically, *gele* is linked with obedience that is frowned upon by today’s women. Elegantly and well creative head wrap is a means to elevate and as an olden heritage, rank, and fashion statement [12].

Head wraps come in numerous shapes and sizes. The Nigerian *gele* is made up of different cloths such as tarpheta, damask, *aso-oke* woven fabrics or even printed Ankara fabrics of the same cloth worn. It has different colours and designs the wearer wants as long as it can accompany the dressing of the wearer and can thereby be tied creatively in any way the wearer wants – like big, small, short or tall, bringing out the beauty and culture that comes with them [10]. *Gele* of the Yoruba is traditionally used to complement the traditional wears of *iro* (wrapper) and *buba* (loose fitting blouse) dressing especially during special occasions, while the Igbo used the *gele* (*ichafu*) on double wrapper and blouse to complement the traditional dressing [13].

### II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Headwrap is of various sizes, shapes, colours and quality. The accessory used to decorate the head, or the hair are usually created as crowns to beautify the head. Even though the use of *gele* as dressing accessory is an age-long tradition especially among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, it has not attracted much scholarly attention. Accessories generally is a form of fashion that appears for a while and possibly disappears after some time. Since headwraps are of different types depending on the wearer and the type of fashion she wants to use it for, it is ephemeral, it can easily go off if careful chronological record is not addressed.

Headwrap ranges from hair decoration to headgear used to complement an outfit. The hair decorations are of different colours depending on the dressing to use it for. But the headwrap ranges from simple scarves to creatively wrapped fabrics on the head making it look like crown on the head of the women.

More also, the fashion style of headgear is facing out gradually given way to wigs of different kinds. The styles of headgears in 80s and 90s is different from the type in vogue in these recent times. All these ways and styles of tying *gele* need be recorded chronologically before it fades out of fashion. Textile fashions have been extensively studied, but the study of headwrap has not been given much attention which this study is trying to fill the gap to get it recorded in the annals of art history.

### III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Against the background, this paper is an art historical study of head wrap (*gele*) with developmental creative skills of its tying among the women of southern Nigeria. The study was conducted with the aim of making a scholastic record of the development and skills emanating from *gele* tying among the women in southern Nigeria. Be that as it may, this paper investigates the origin of *gele* tying around the globe and in Nigeria.

The type of fabrics used, the usage of *gele*, the traditional wears of the southern Nigerian women and the developmental skills of the art in southern Nigeria were all captured to give a wholistic dressing of the women, The study was based on field research conducted in the year 2023 and it adopts descriptive research design method. Primary and secondary sources of data were employed to answer the research questions more effectively, while qualitative method is obtained to analyze the data. Since it is a theory-based design method, the data were critically gathered and well analyzed. Pictures of various headwraps (*gele*) were taken, old photographs were explored to chronologically arranged the *gele* between 1960s and 2020s. also, the type of fabrics used for *gele* and the creative skills of tying *gele* these days were recorded for proper documentation.

#### IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Headwrap is a hair accessory that women especially have been using over a thousand years ago [14]. It was recorded that the use of *gele* was traced back to around 13th century [10]; [13]; [15]. The usage ranges from social to religious status [15]; [16]; [17]. The southern Nigerian women attach much importance to *gele* apart from making it as ornamental head covering. It is used as a mark to honour their husbands. This is why [18]; and [19] buttressed that it is worn for day-to-day activities representing the marital status of a woman.

Head covering in religious setting is of difference to the social aspect of head coverings. In the Islamic religion, head covering called hijab is to serve as an identity that reflects their modesty in which it a command from Qur'an 24:31 instructing women to cover their heads [20]. While in Christian religion, the women were to cover their heads while praying as a mark of honour to their husbands [21]. The religious head ties are not creative in any form but purely religious in nature.

The creative ideas of tying *gele* are linked to skills that enables people to adapt and make unique approaches that are better suited than trial-by-error method [22]. This approach made the experts of *gele* to think outside the box by relating new methods to the work in creating auto *gele*. The challenge of struggling with *gele* and spending much time in front of the mirror on each outing or function has led to the inventive improvement of tying for others as a business venture, thereafter, metamorphosed into making ready-made *gele* to be worn like a cap.

Headwrap, according to [4] is generally worn to complement the traditional attire worn by women in their various tribes of southern Nigeria. *Gele* tying became more realistic around twentieth century and since then, the fashion begins to evolve into what is seeing today as auto *gele*.

Southern Nigeria comprises of southwest, southeast, and south-south geo-political zones which are mainly Yoruba and Igbo and some other tribes. The Yoruba puts on *iro* (wrapper) and *buba* (loose fitting blouse), *ipele* (the piece of iro fabric draped around the shoulder) and *gele* (head tie) as complete traditional attire [23]. The type of fabric used for *gele* in Yoruba land is mainly *aso-oke* [24], but other types of fabrics are also used. Among the Igbo, the fabrics used are printed imported tapheta or imported piece purposely made for *gele* [4]; [25]. This is tied by leaving the face and lower portion of the earlobes exposed but covers the entire hair with a highly creative skill.

Different styles are created with the art of tying, some embellishments are added to some *gele* like sequins, beads, Swarovski crystals, embroideries and many other design aesthetics to create a unique look for the *gele* [13]; [26]; [11]; [25]. Initially, *gele* is traditionally tied on the wearer's head [15], but the evolution in the recent time has made it easier for the wearer with no skill of how to tie *gele*. There are ready-to-wear types of *gele* called 'auto *gele*' [25]; [27]; [28]; and [29].

#### V. DISCUSSION

##### 5.1 Origin of headwrap in Nigeria

[10] asserts that headwrap started as far back as 1700 AD. He further states that *gele* started with Yoruba pre-slavery period, while [9] believed that the origin is unknown. Wearing of *gele* in Nigeria has a very long history dated back to before nineteenth century. [15] reported that archival pictures of over hundred years old showed that *gele* had been in use even longer than the time those pictures were taken. He further reiterates that the picture of a seated Efunporoye Osuntinubu (a popular Nigerian business tycoon) shortened as Efunroye Tinubu, taken in 1887 revealed that she has small *gele* on her head but the *gele* was covered by *borun* (shawl) which goes down her shoulders behind her (Figure 1). The *iborun* is also part of dressing accessories of women in Yoruba land which moves along with *gele* [9]; [2].



Figure 1: Madam Efunroye Tinubu (Ca. 1805-1887)

Courtesy: [30]

*Gele* has become a significant dressing accessory among the Black people and Black women's history. Meanings are linked with the wraps in colour and shapes of the tying. At first, the culture and marital status of a woman is recognized by her type of wraps. But later, the wraps metamorphosed into reasons why a woman should tie the head wrap at a particular time, such as going for religious functions, visitation to her in-laws' house, attending social gatherings and the likes.

It was also recorded that during the slave trade, the Black women were compelled to wrap their heads as a sign of servitude, and in some part of Europe or white countries, Black women were not given the opportunity to wrap their hair the way that pleases them. But later in the century, grace was given to bind their hair with scarf. After the end of slavery, Black women began to relate the use of headwrap with slavery, then the usage began to diminish. By early twentieth century, when women were being exposed to using relaxers on the hair, there is need to wrap the hair against heat and moisture for preservation of the hair from being damaged. This was upheld by women identifying that they have their roots in Africa in wearing headwraps around 1990s showcasing African pride.

Naturally, the head wrap used usually represent the spiritual, wealth and social status of the woman wherever she finds herself in a community. It shows whether the woman is a maiden (not yet married), married, grandmother or even a widow. It shows from the style, designs or colour of the head wrap of the lady. Since head wrap became fashionable in Yoruba culture, it spreads across Nigeria especially among the Igbo culture as an important and must-have accessory in their dressing.

*Gele* is generally worn in Nigeria as a decorative head dressing and fashion accessory that is worn casually or on special occasion [31] like attending church services, wedding, funeral or naming ceremonies, to beautify the face, complementing the outfit and also act as a crown to prettify the head of a proud dignified African woman [2].

## 5.2 Traditional wears of the Yoruba and Igbo women with *gele*

Yoruba women traditional wears are three-piece dress, these are, *iro* (wrap round skirt), *buba* (loose fitting blouse) and *ipele* or *iborun* (shawl) which is draped on the shoulder as dressing complement. The *gele* is then tied on the head as regal crown to make a complete dressing. This means, without the *gele*, the dressing of the Yoruba woman is incomplete. They are seen wearing the *gele* casually at home, in the market, on special occasions, etc. Mostly, the casual *gele* could be made of the same fabric of the attire worn (Figure 2) or ordinary scarf to cover the hair. But woven fabric or Swiss imported *gele* is used for fashion type of *gele* [24].



Figure 2: A woman with casual gele of the same ankara worn

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2020)

The Igbo women traditional wears are double wrappers of either Hollandaise Ankara or George materials with lace blouse used on special occasions. The *gele* mostly used are the imported shining stiff fabrics purposely made for headwrap. Spray starch is usually applied to make the *gele* remain crispy and smooth (Figure 3).



Figure 3: A complete dressing of Igbo woman wearing double wrapper George fabric with shining stiff fabric purposely made for *gele*

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

Many Nigerian women specially the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria wear traditional attire that has become their lifestyle, getting more concerned in their culture and traditions with the *gele* looking like crown to complete the dressing. The *gele* is usually obvious or completely unconventional when it is tied for a particular social occasion. Whereas ordinary casual *gele* are made smaller and moderate [18].

### Creative development of head wrap

The choice of *gele* supported by (Empire Textiles) is usually a coarse, closely hand-woven, sleek, cotton cloth, fashioned in a variety of traditional designs and colours. The *aso-ofi* used for *gele* is woven in strips of two meters long and 10cm wide which either three or four of these strips are sewn together to form a rectangle and used as head wrap as in Fig. 4.



Figure 4: A woman tied *aso-ofi* head wrap

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2022)

But if it is imported shining stiff fabric of rayon or metallic lurex fibres, it is of about one and a half yard specially made for the purpose of head wrap having solid colours, designs and embroideries. *Aso-ofi* is not the only fabric used to tie *gele*, though, common and elegant among the Yoruba. Other fabrics include Damask, tarpheta (Figure 5), brocade and even Ankara printed fabric [4]. The *gele* piece could be of the same colour with the attire worn, and it could be of various textures contrasting with or without prints.



Figure 5: A woman with imported shining stiff fabrics purposely made for head wrap

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2021)

Some *aso-ofi* used as *gele* are usually made purposely on request. The designs or colours are followed through in details. The patterns or embroideries and embellishments add more to the attractiveness of the *gele*. At times, flashy, ostentatious jewelry like precious stones, beads, Swarovski crystals, etc are attached either at the edge or throughout the whole *gele* as much as it can

take for more aesthetics, this type of *gele* is called *bling gele*. The wearer adds sparkle to the special occasion especially if she is the celebrant.

Before entering the new millennium, *gele* tying used to be worn on *iro, buba* and *ipele* of the Yoruba and George or Hollandaise Ankara of double wrapper and blouse of the Igbo, but today, it is worn on all attires like skirt and blouse, gowns or cocktail dresses. Head wrap or *gele* worn for special occasion is of paramount importance as it stands like a crown on the woman's head. It is usually a sign of completeness and flamboyance as it completes the dressing of the wearer, in colour, shape and size of the creativity (Figure 6).



Figure 6: A woman tied Ankara-made gele on skirt and blouse for special occasion

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

Recent times in Nigeria especially among the Yoruba culture, headwrap is now reworked upon and becomes more celebrate. It is no more treated as an accessory but as the focus of the dressing. The *gele* of today has different cut designs, beads, stones or Swarovski crystal attached to it, scalloped edges, embroidery design, sequins and lots of more designs that beautify it. Tying of *gele* has now become a lucrative job or service for many make-up artists in Nigeria and all over the world (Figure 7).



Figure 7: A woman wearing Gele made of aso-ofi embellished with beads and embroidery.

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

Traditional attires have become the lifestyle of the Yoruba women. They get more interested in their culture and tradition with *gele* to complete the dressing. The new trend of tying *gele* made southern Nigeria women find creative ways of tying it. The more complex and extravagant the headwrap is, the more striking it is [27]. *Gele* have been worn by women from ages past, but in the modern days, it has been re-designed with the touch of classic styles in various creative ways, thereby taken fashion to a higher level, and now become the greatest fashion accessory in almost all events [26]. *Gele* speaks for the dress worn on any occasion which add more aesthetics to the dressing [32]. In most cases for some women, the major challenge in dressing up for an occasion is to tie *gele*. It is then appropriate to look for experts around them to tie the *gele* for them (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Creative expert (professional) helping to tie *gele* for a woman.

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

Tying *gele* is an artistic exercise and so, it takes great precision to accomplish the anticipated outlook [33]. This is why a popular musician known as Lagbaja had it in his song:

“...*gele o dun bii ka mo o we*  
*Ka mo o we ko dabi ko ye ni...*”



meaning,

“Gele is not as beautiful as knowing how to tie it

Knowing how to tie, is not as beautiful as to make it fit the wearer...”

It takes great skills to tie *gele*. The skill is learnt through endurance and curiosity. This difficulty in tying *gele* led to the emergence of the *gele* experts seeing at every function beckoning to women to come for tying in any style of their choice. This creative skill is usually done as fast as possible. After tying, the expert collects a certain amount for the service rendered.

### 5.3 Contemporary *gele* fashion in southern Nigeria

*Gele* headwrap could be tied on the wearer’s head in different styles. Some women find it difficult to look for experts at the time the *gele* is to be tied for the outing. This led to the ready-to-wear *gele* popularly known as “auto *gele*”, meaning, “the *gele* is automated” to make it convenient for the wearer. The *gele* is worn just like a cap and still looks elegant on the wearer’s head.

Auto *gele* is a blessing to lots of African women [29]. It is a sort of technical solution to the problem of struggling with *gele* when going for an event. The invention and innovation of auto *gele* makes the use of *gele* much better for the wearers. It is an already styled *gele* creatively shaped to fit the head by wearing it like a cap and adjust to fit and look like a scarf with matching attire (Figure 9).



Figure 9: A woman wearing already-made gele (auto gele) for a special occasion

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2020)

The innovation of auto *gele* has come to stay [34]. Women find it more convenient to wear instead of sitting for longer time struggling and folding the *gele* directly on the head. It saves time wasting but rather gives extra time for event preparation. This auto *gele* can be neatly removed from the head and reuse for another occasion without losing the style. The tie is loosened and keep for future use. Even with this, it is neat and remain neat for future use. While folding and tying, it may become rough and untidy, but the innovation of auto *gele* makes the headgear to remain neat whenever it is to be used. Having many types of *gele* being automated, makes outings more elegant for women especially in southern Nigeria. Whichever type, style, colour of this head wrap needed could be picked and worn [35]; [36].

Chronologically, there is great development in the way women in southern Nigeria tie *gele* especially when going for an important occasion. Though, as earlier discussed, *gele* is part of women’s complete dressing, but much importance was not attached to it before, but in recent times, the fashion experts and professionals in tying *gele* have made tremendous contributions in adding creativity to the styles of *gele*. This eventually adds much beauty to the face and dressing of the wearer. Below is the chronology of *gele* in Nigeria before 1960 independence till date.



Figure 10: The women with style of head wrap prevalent before 1960 independence

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

The Fig 10 above shows the picture of four women with similar style of tying *gele*. This style was prevalent before Nigeria independence in 1960. The *gele* is folded in to four horizontal shape holding it with two hands, placing the head in the middle to make it equal halves on both sides from the back. The right hand goes from the back to the front and moves again to the left and to the back. The left hand also moves from the back to the front of the head and then move to the right and end it again at the back. The two remaining will be tied at the back.



Figure 11: Women wearing the style of *gele* between 1960 and 1970

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2020)

The picture in Fig. 11 shows three women with similar style of tying *gele* between 1960 and 1970. The tying is slightly different from the ones before the National independence. The difference is that the ties is usually at the right side of the head. It is either the left side or the right side.



Figure 12: Women wearing style of *gele* predominant between 1970 and 1980

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

The style of *gele* in Fig. 12 above shows two women in the style of tying *gele* between 1970 and 1980. The tying at this period was becoming sophisticated. The style is becoming more attractive because the women are conscious of their dressing more than before. The style is more stylistic than the previous decade.



Figure 13: Style of *gele* between 1980 and 1990

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2020)

The above picture of Fig 13 shows a woman in a particular style of tying *gele* between 1980 and 1990. During this decade, women stylistically tie *gele* in large shapes. The peculiarity at this period is the large form of tying *gele*. Mostly, the *gele* is very large on the head of the wearer. The larger the *gele* tied, the more sophisticated it is.



Figure 14: Tying of *gele* between 1990 and 2000

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

The picture in Fig 14 shows a woman with the style of *gele* predominant between 2000 and 2010. During this period, the fashion style of *gele* usually ends by the side. There is usually a bow or knots at the side of the ear, either left or right. The size of the *gele* also reduced and not as large as the last two-decade fashion style. The style of the *gele* here ranges from simple pleats to centre knots styles



Figure 15: Style of head wrap predominant between 2000 and 2010

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2021)

The above picture in Fig. 15 shows a woman with the style of *gele* of the period. The *gele* of this period is not as large as the style of the last decade, but there is reduction in the size. The tying is usually round on the head making it look like a crown.

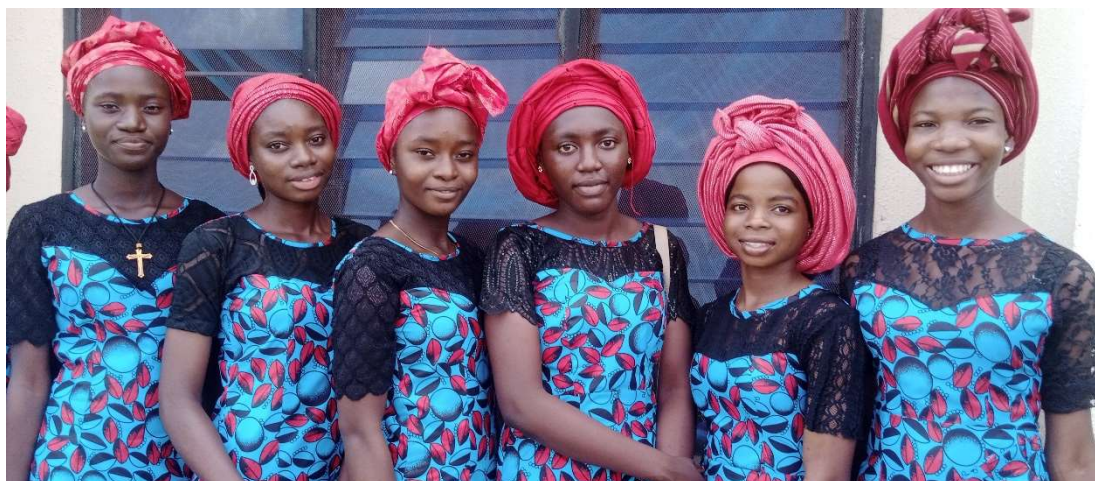


Figure 16: Pleated style of head wrap common between 2010 and 2020

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2020)

The picture above in Fig 16 shows young ladies tying their *gele* in pleated style that is predominant at this period. The fashion of this period speaks more of pleated style and most women prefer to tie their *gele* to bring out the pleats stylistically. Most women are not skillful in the art, therefore, the service of professionals are sought to help tie the *gele*. Different style of pleats are available but the frontage must always bring out the pleats.

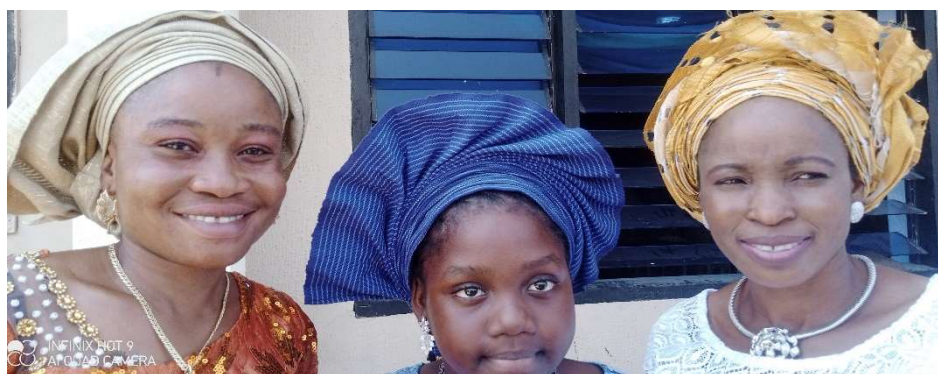


Figure 17: Modern day *gele* from 2020s

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

The modern-day head wrap in Nigeria is seen here in Fig 17 whereby women have developed creative ways of tying *gele*. The common style is the presence of pleats in whatever style of tying the woman chooses. In recent times, pleated *gele* became the most common stylistic way of creating the head wrap and it is always well-designed and gorgeous on the wearer. It is a development that is worthy of note in the fashion of women at this period.



Figure 18: Group of women in an occasion wearing auto gele

Photographed by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

*Gele* tying has become more sophisticated with different style made-easy. The fashion style has made the *gele* to be more interesting and easy-to-wear. The above women in Fig. 18 are all wearing auto *gele* in which the frontage also end up in pleats. The styles range from round pleats to single fan *gele*.

Head wrap has become part of fashion all over the world. It is an important aspect of culture in African fashion to enhance beauty, and the creativity of styling is endless. There are various names attributed to styles of *gele* in the recent times, such as, pleated *gele*, infinity pleats or multiple pleats *gele*, centre knot *gele*, single fan *gele*, centre twist ruffles, double fan *gele*, perfectly round *gele*, butterfly *gele*, bridal *gele*, pinnacle *gele*, double zigzag *gele*, etc.



Figure 19: Infinity pleats

Photograph by Adfeoti, A.A.(2023)

This is also a pleated gele in Fig 19, as the style is made in such a way that there are pleats at the frontage of the wearer. This style could also be referred to as Infinity gele, Round gele, Perfectly round gele or Multiple pleats gele. It is bulkier on the head but the pleats are formed right from the beginning of the tying till it end at the back.



Fig 20: Centre knot by [37]



Figure 21: Single fan gele

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

This style is known as single fan gele. The fan is made like hand fan but ends at the side of either of the ears with a knot as if holding to fan.



Figure 22: Double fan gele

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

The above style is known as double fan gele. The fans are made to end in the front without knot but either close a little bit or wide open to show the double fans. This style can also be made using two different *aso-ofi* of different colours to show the two fans stylistically.



Figure 23: Double Twist Half Fan gele

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

This is double twist half fan gele in Fig 23, the fan is twisted by the side but without knot.





Figure 24: Centre twist ruffle gele

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

Centre twist ruffle gele is a style that is ruffled in the middle of the frontage part of the wearer (Fig 24). The gele is twisted at the centre but ruffled in the middle fitting the wearer's head elegantly, making the wearer to look great.



Figure 25: Butterfly gele

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

To create Butterfly gele (Fig. 25), first create about 6 or seven pleats on the *aso-oke* and place it to the frontal part of the head. It must be equal as the head is placed in the centre of the fabric. Take the two hand to the back and cross it, then bring the two hands to the front and make sure the pleats are well arranged. Knot the two hands at the middle and make sure the excess are of equal sizes. When it firm, cross the hand and take the middle to the back and use pins to make it firmer and tighter on the head. Use pins as much as it is required to style each of the hands to bring out the bow



Figure 26: Bridal *gele*

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

There is no specific style for the bride called bridal *gele*. Any of the aforementioned style can be used for the bride to make her unique more than any woman present on her occasion. Bridal *gele* is always created bigger and more stylish to bring out the beauty in the bride. As seen in Fig. 26, the *gele* has more pleats and appears big on the head of the wearer. This makes her look elegant and great on her day.



Figure 27: Pinnacle *gele*

Photograph by Adeoti, A.A. (2023)

The name implies. Pinnacle *gele* is made to look tall in the frontage of the wearer. The *gele* ends at the back but the frontage is made to have excess to accommodate the pulling up to form the pinnacle. The pinnacle is made to be narrow at the top to form the pinnacle.



Figure 28: Double pinnacle gele by [38]

Double pinnacle (Fig.28) is also a beautiful style. The centre of the length of the gele is placed at the frontage of the head of the wearer. The first half pinnacle is pleated completely making the pinnacle to form and then tucked-in by the side. Then the second half which the wearer is holding is later pleated and tucked-in by the side. Then, the two pinnacles are formed on the same head.



Figure 29: Double zigzag gele by [39]

Double zigzag gele is simple but very beautiful. Two *aso-ofi* of different colours are used to make the style. The length of gele is always 2 yards which is divided in to two equal halves. The two colours are sewn in the centre once and placed at the frontage of the head. It should not start from the back as one colour will submerge the other colour. Pleats are formed one after the other with a colour and then the other colour until it gets to the middle of the head whereby pleats are formed in the round and thereby ends tucked-in at the back.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Head wrap or gele is a symbol of communal standing and position. It is like a regal crown on the wearer thereby become more important in the dressing culture of an average Nigerian woman. The gele is used to complete the traditional wears of the women of southern Nigeria. Though, the traditional wears of modern women include gowns, skirt and blouse and the likes. There are mini gele used casually on wears that much importance is not attached to, which includes ordinary scarf or the one created out of the attire worn. But when going for an important occasion, gele is tied or the automated gele is used to add more glamour to the occasion. There is need for both creativity and innovation to make a beautiful and artistic gele [40].

There are gele experts - both males and females, tying for women especially when there is an important occasion. These experts are seen around the venue of the ceremony, beckoning on women who are willing to patronize them. The women who would not want to be subjected to this stress at the venue either have professionals to tie for them at home or rather opt for automated gele that is not stressful but elegantly prepared creatively to the taste of the wearer. The development of the creative tying of gele is seen in the invention of this automated gele popularly called 'auto gele', and in recent times, many women prefer the auto gele since it saves time and easy to wear at any time of the day. A woman with different auto gele chooses each of the auto gele that suits her attire in colour, style and sizes.

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