

# Fashion Dynamics of Aso-Ebi with the Use of Ankara and Lace Fabrics among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Aso-ebi is a traditional practice among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria that is continuous despite the modern trend in fashion and styles. Originally, it was referred to as a uniform dress worn by family members during social events in Nigeria but now, it has included a group of friends and well-wishers that goes beyond the Yoruba ethnic group. The practice was formerly used not to identify the social distinction, but in recent times the trends in fashion are creating a class of distinction among the wearers. The study critically examines the trends in aso-ebi fashion with the use of two prominent fabrics – Ankara and lace among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria. Methodologically, the study adopts a survey research design with the use of qualitative methods in analyzing the data. Groups and individual users were interviewed with an unstructured questionnaire while their photographs were taken with consent. The study reveals that aso-ebi is seen in almost all ceremonies while some people create a class of distinction out of the fabric in the same event.

**Keywords:** Fashion, dynamics, *aso-ebi*, customized, commemoration, Fashion, Yoruba

## INTRODUCTION

*Aso-ebi* is a uniform dress that is traditionally worn by a group of well-wishers during an event or celebration as a mark of solidarity and cooperation to honor and show love to the celebrant. The tradition started in Yoruba land (Shokoya, 2023:1) and later spread to some other African cultures. Bascom 1991:491 traces the origin of *aso-ebi* to the early days of the Yoruba in the 1950s to show brotherhood. The word ‘*aso*’ in Yoruba means ‘cloth’, while ‘*ebi*’ means ‘family’, therefore, *aso-ebi* translates to means ‘cloth of the family’ or ‘family cloth’. Nwafor (2013:2); and Ijimakinwa (2020) buttressed this that ‘*aso-ebi*’ means ‘family outfit’.

Oludayo (2020) opined that *aso-ebi* is the identical fabric used on special occasions by a group of people, also referred to as ‘matching cloth’. Olukoju (1992:120) and Adesoji and Olaniyi(2023:7) believe that it is a uniform dress code traditionally worn by Yoruba people that indicates cooperation, solidarity, and unity at the ceremony or event, or during festive period. Igbo people of Nigeria believe it has an artistic connection of Yoruba origin (Chuks, 2018:4462). He further reiterates that among the Igbo tribe, *aso-ebi* is known as *Akwa-Otu* and they believe that the *aso-ebi* culture has numerous sociological significance.

Fokwang (2015:678) sees *aso-ebi* as a uniform with the authentic symbol of association within a group like the military, nurses, and schools, both formal and informal. He then further opined that uniform with the use of wax prints is a potent symbol that carries diverse cultural significances. Irobunor and Ajiginni (2019:38) believed that *aso-ebi* started with the Yoruba people and also argued that the focal point of *aso-ebi* was strictly for socialization. In the Yoruba parlance, it is also believed that *aso-ebi* has a sociological function.

This is why there is an adage that says;

*Eniyanlaso mi*

*Bi mobawo 'waju*

*Bi mow'eyin*

*Ti mor'awoneni bi eni*

*Eeyan bi eeyan,*

*Inu mi a dun*

*Ara mi a ya gaga*

Literarily means,

“People are my clothing

When I look forward

When I reflect backwards

When I see fellows as fellows

Humans as humans

I will be joyous

I will be rejuvenated”.

The importance of cloth and clothing are held in high esteem among Yoruba people especially, this is why Yoruba believe that people around you in times of ceremonies are likened to covering your nakedness. Therefore, when the occasion arises, family and friends come together to honour the celebrant by buying a uniform dress called *aso-ebi* covering physical nudity (Areo and Areo 2017:40). Another Yoruba adage says, “*eniyanbonil'araj'aso lo*” meaning, “human beings give you coverings more than clothing”. This implies that having people around you in times of need or during your ceremony will give you joy even if they did not give you a gift during the ceremony.

Cloth has progressed from being purposely used to cover nakedness for mankind. It has moved from being a piece for looking excellent, but rather it has progressed to an instrument for the demonstration of cultural distinctiveness and unity among relatives and friends. The purpose of wearing this *aso-ebi* on an occasion is to serve as identification with family, friends, relatives, and well-wishers to show support and unifying force to the celebrant in a particular ceremony such as marriage, naming, funeral ceremonies, or festive period. Bascom (1991) believed that *aso-ebi* shows unity and a sense of drive for people of the same age status to come together to work in agreement for their community and assist each other in development. Orimolade (2014:22) added that *aso-ebi* is a uniform social dress of the Yoruba culture. This is because the chosen fabric is made into outfits and worn by some people who are connected in one way or the other to the celebrant. This is in tandem with Familusi (2010:2) who opined that the practice of *aso-ebi* is a way to express unity, love, and cohesion among the Yoruba.

The practice of *aso-ebi* originated from the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria culture which stipulates that

every housewife (*obinrinile*) in a particular clan has to share in common the same attire or outfit as a means of identification with the family compound. The practice is an age-long custom that had been in existence among Yoruba women or '*obinrinile*', meaning 'family housewives', and they are always present in most Yoruba social functions.

The tradition of wearing a uniform dress or family cloth can be traced back to around the 1920s whereby the '*obinrinile*' wore '*ankoo*' to a celebration in a family setting (Adesoji and Olaniyi, 2023:2). '*Ankoo*' is a borrowed and abbreviation English word which is 'and co' from 'and company' which connotes 'somebody and his or her company' wearing the same kind of dress. '*Ankoo*' of the same dress can be husband and wife wearing the same dress, parents and children, two or three jolly friends. Then, the housewives of a family clan started wearing '*ankoo*' as solidarity and identification so that they would be able to add colour to the occasion. It is this '*ankoo*' that metamorphosed into *aso-ebi* around the 1970s and early 1980s with age-grade meetings popular among the Yoruba communities (Iwalaiye 2022). She further pointed out that the importation of foreign textiles like Hollandaise, Lace, and George fabrics made *aso-ebi* popular in Nigeria because it became a class of icon and flamboyant show of wealth, and also a way for some people to demonstrate that they belonged to a high class. Moreover, Rice (2020:64) added that the growth of factory-printed fabrics and its day-to-day users made Ankara fabric the primary choice for *aso-ebi* for it offers a vast collection of designs in a varied range of classes and values

However, the practice now includes a larger scope of people, friends, associates, club members, groups, and well-wishers that even transcends the Yoruba ethnic group, extending to nearly all tribes in Nigeria. It has become an integral part of Nigerian culture which has gradually metamorphosed into a phenomenon trend that is unavoidable in nearly all social and festive events in Nigeria and Nigerians in the Diaspora (Nwafor, 2013:3; Olanrewaju 2011:11; Ijimakinwa 2020).

Wearing *aso-ebi* to an occasion is a show of love and social connection to the event. Oludayo (2020) corroborated that the use of *aso-ebi* creates social bonding and unity among wearers, while Shokoya (2023) reiterated that the use strengthens friendship. The practice now applies to anyone who can afford or would like to wear one to a social function to denote solidarity and unity and to represent which celebrant invited one. The practice is one of the attractions that add colour to any social event and it is mostly common among women. Badeji (2021:15) believed that women are the highest customers and top patrons of printed and embroidery fabrics which led to gift exchange and widespread consumption.

Usually, the celebrant chooses the fabric that blends with the occasion, and dictates the colour to her family members and well-wishers (Ogbechie and Anetor, 2015:29). She buys a large quantity of the selected fabric and sells to her well-wishers at a price that is a bit higher than the market price which the balance will be used to cater for the gifts to distribute for purchasing the fabric. The respect they have for the celebrant would not allow them to break the unwritten cultural system of exploitation as some would see it as an indirect way of supporting the celebrant (Ijimakinwa, 2020, Okemuo 2022).

In Nigeria, different types of fabrics are used as *aso-ebi*, but the most common is the use of lace and Ankara fabrics. The high-class people use the most expensive lace fabrics while the low-class people go for cheap types of Ankara fabrics. On many occasions, the display of wealth comes into play. The more costly the fabric is, the more highly placed you are in the party or society in general.

However, the piece of fabric chosen by the celebrant is accorded a lot of value and importance no matter how little or expensive the fabric may be. There is always preferential treatment for people who wear the *aso-ebi* chosen to any social event, which includes special recognition at the occasion, getting a good seat, and having an assurance of being served with choice food and souvenirs. This results in making such a person feel unimportant because of the unfair treatment. This is the reason for a common slogan among the Yoruba in the southwestern parties which says, '*kowo Ankara ko je Semo*' meaning, 'if you did not wear the

chosen Ankara, you will not be served food (Semovita) at the party'. This translates to the fact that in a particular event, anyone that did not put on the same Ankara outfit is probably 'uninvited', 'a gate crasher', 'not part of us', and so, such a person will neither be served food nor given any gift.

Mostly, the fabric conforms to the colour choice of the celebrant that can be purchased by others from the market. At times, the fabric may be customized with pictures and the inclusion of texts; this mostly involves a larger number of buyers. In all, the practice has become a regular occurrence in all parties in recent times (Kenneth, 1974:142; Ajani 2012:110).

The Farlex Free Dictionary defines textile as any cloth produced by weaving, knitting, or felting while the Britannica Dictionary opined that textile is derived from Latin '*textilis*' and French '*textere*' means 'to weave'. These include fabrics like embroideries, woven fabrics, lace, nets, and printed fabrics, while Wikipedia reiterated that *aso-ebi* is domestic in purpose which is one of the consumer textiles. The origin of textiles and clothing in Nigeria predates modern history (Ibeto and Ogunduyile 2015:1) and this implies that the production of textiles is not alien to Nigerian culture. *Aso-ebi*, known as 'the cloth of the family' Ijimakinwa (2020) or referred to as group uniform, (Olukoju 1992:119; Nwafor 2011:45; Adelaja et al. 2016:170), came with the advent of colonization in Nigeria (Olukoju 1992:119; Badeji 2021:15; Iwalaiye 2022), and the tradition was developed as a means of identification for relatives at Nigerian weddings, funerals, and other celebration (Ajani 2012:108; Oyetunji 2020; Nwafor 2021:6). Manjie (2015) added that it is the uniform attire of the same material, colour and probably pattern design worn by close family during an event.

The practice of *aso-ebi* originated amongst the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria (Ogbechie and Anetor 2015:29; Ajani 2012:108; Ijimakinwa 2020) but it has now spread to other parts of the Nigerian ethnic group (Familusi 2010:2094; Oludayo and Ayebo 2014:66-67). Traditionally, Nigerian women have their styles sewn in wrapped, and draped on the body (Oyedele and Babatunde 2013:166) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: A woman wearing traditional Yoruba *iro* and *buba* attire

But in recent times, the styles predominantly sewn are custom-made apparel incorporating popular traditional text with the use of Ankara and colourful African cotton printed textiles (Adelaja, et. al. 2016:170) with the predominant use of Ankara and lace fabrics in Nigerian parties to express family and group solidarity (Nwafor 2011:47; Oyedele and Babatunde 2013:167; Adelaja et.al., 2016:170 and Oyetunji 2020. But Meyer (2022) believed that the current fashion styles resemble the 1990s fashion to some extent, for the styles are not new in trends. But in a real sense of it, *aso-ebi* practice plays a key role in society both functionally and culturally (Jacobs 2020), in that, though, the tradition is to honour the celebrant with the attitude and behavior of the social group, it is still adding colour and glamour to the event.

Fashion today is fast-paced and global (Stone 2008), and there are lots of innovations among various users especially the Yoruba people (Braide 2016). However, *aso-ebi* is seen as a leveler (Ajani 2012; Ijimakinwa 2020), buttressed by Chuks (2018:4462) that it bridges the gap between the high and low classes making them equal. The wearers of *aso-ebi* by this common uniform are equal at least for that particular event or occasion to avoid financial inadequacies of the less privileged (Familusi 2010; Ajani 2012:111). Fashion designers still create a class for the rich with their creative innovations to bring out a unique cut for the wearer (Olanrewaju 2011; Sonibare 2012:108; Nwafor 2013). (Figure 2)



Figure 2: A woman wearing *asoebi* with a unique cut created by a fashion designer

As good and acceptable as the practice had been, it goes along with some challenges that are stressing the buyers such as dishonesty on the part of the celebrant in selling the material at a price that is higher than the market price, special treatment at the party with choice food and souvenir even if some give the celebrant good gifts but did not wear the chosen fabric to the event (Manjie 2015). Some people have lots of *aso-ebi* in their wardrobe because they buy for every occasion they are invited to, some people have to buy shoes and bags and head ties to complement the colour of the *aso-ebi* bought which is becoming burdensome to some who do not want to be left out among friends and well-wishers (Ajani 2012:109, Ijimakinwa 2020; Nwafor 2021)

Despite the stated facts that the tradition of *aso-ebi* is age-long and it adds colour and glamour to social events in Yoruba people's ceremonies, the trends in fashion are yet to properly attract scholarly attention adequately. The trend at which the practice is moving in Nigeria is fast-paced compared to the existing literature on the subject, hence the need for this study is to add to the existing literature. Moreover, adequate investigation needs to be carried out on the advantages and disadvantages of the tradition. This is to ascertain whether the tradition has outweighed its purpose and so be discouraged or rather give it more publicity and encouragement.

This study examines the fashion trends in *aso-ebi* practice among the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria with the use of the two prominent fabrics commonly used in the region on almost all special occasions; these are Ankara and lace fabrics. The paper focuses on the trends in styles and how the fabrics are mixed with other fabrics to make a befitting outfit. Initially, the practice is to make the wearers look the same so as not to identify the rich from the poor, it is now used in recent times as a classification with affluence. These are seen in some wearers adding exclusive embroidery and additional layers of other fabric materials to their own to create a class of distinction for them. The creativity of the designers to meet the taste of the rich and wealthy customers makes the wearer look outstanding among the buyers of the same fabric (Ajani 2012:108; Nwafor 2021; Okemo 2022). (Figure 3)



Figure 3: Some women wearing exclusive embroideries on their *asoebi*

The data for this study were collected randomly from social events in some states in southwestern Nigeria which include Osun, Oyo, Ogun, Lagos, and Ondo States to collate the trends in fashion before and how they metamorphosed into different styles in vogue in recent times. The methodology followed a survey research design with a qualitative method for analyzing the data. The data was generated from both individuals and groups of wearers in random selection. Groups of people wearing *aso-ebi* were

photographed with individuals having their outfits sewn in outstanding and costly styles and were interviewed with an unstructured questionnaire.

## FASHION TRENDS IN ASO-EBI

The use of *aso-ebi* in southern Nigeria is of two types, these are customized usage and general usage.

Customized usage is very broad in span. Ankara print designs incorporate those things that have occurred in the past or what is happening presently. The subjects for commemorative cloth range from political situations, honouring an important individual or visiting dignitary, religious gatherings, church anniversaries, advertisements, social clubs, and school uniforms (Robinson 1969:118). In this type of occasion, the design on the Ankara fabrics has portraits, and or inclusion of text to mark the social event (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Group of women wearing *asoebi* with realistic portraits and inclusion of text

Ankara fabrics are made for this kind of occasion whereby there is the design, pictures, or realistic portraits and the inclusion of text to mark the social event. As early as 1928, European designers produced customized roller prints in this style for Africa based on special orders. Roller printing is particularly more suited for this type of pattern because of its capability to produce fine linear details and at the same time combine numerous colours (Kalilu and Adeoti, 2022). Moreover, the low cost of roller prints makes them accessible to a larger number of people who may desire to join in the commemorative act. For this reason, roller print is used more frequently than wax to make customized prints.

In general usage of clothing kind of *aso-ebi*, the celebrant searched intensely for and chose the one that matched her occasion both in colour and designs without any picture or text inclusion (Figure 5). The family, relatives, friends, and well-wishers purchase from her in support and solidarity with her during the ceremony. This type of *aso-ebi* is common in any social event. Factory-printed cloth like Ankara and embroidery fabrics (lace) have a broad range of colors and designs. Ankara fabric is comfortable to sew, wear, and take care of because of its lightweight. So, this type of Ankara fabric is found in weddings, funerals, cultural events, political rallies, and any social event.



Figure 5: Women wearing *asoebi* with no portraits and text

Lace is part of tradition in Nigeria because it is now used by all and sundry. It is a type of cloth that is highly respected in southern Nigeria for its uniqueness in aesthetic, opulent, and elegant nature (Adeoti, 2022:417). The first products in the early sixties were white all-over perforation embroidery, and later, companies started producing bi-coloured textiles as suggested by the importers to the producers in Europe and in the early 1970s, heavy multi-coloured perforated embroidery textiles came into fashion (Kalilu and Adeoti 2020:352). Clothes fashioned out of these embroidery textiles are considered 'traditional dress' and it is usually worn on occasions such as naming, weddings funeral ceremonies festive occasions, or even public appearances of politicians or celebrities at home and abroad thus defining the image of Nigerians worldwide. Therefore, Lace could also serve a social function and also day-to-day clothing. From the social function, there is a specific use called 'commemoration'.

Commemoration in Lace fabric differs a little bit apart from its use in Ankara. The usage of Lace fabric for the commemoration is all in 'general use' which deals with the use of Lace as '*aso-ebi*'. Many people claim that lace is light, airy, and more also, there is a high prestige accorded to the wearers grouping them among the high class, especially on occasion. Lace is a fabric that has rich and conspicuous characteristics and so, many people in south-western Nigeria prefer this type of fabric that could place them in a class of its own.

Lace fabrics in *aso-ebi* attire give a spectacular sight when there are a group of women sitting together at a party, or dancing through the streets in identical wrappers or head ties and this affects the widespread use of Lace fabrics. People wearing Lace fabric as *aso-ebi* are given high recognition because the fabric is regarded as high class. Jacobson (2013) buttressed this that many people around the world have seen and admired the brightly coloured snow-white lace dresses worn by Nigerians especially people outside southwestern Nigerians commemorating one occasion or the other.

Although *aso-ebi* started in Southwestern Nigeria as earlier discussed but sooner, it translated into cultural



tradition throughout Nigerian fashion. It now applies to anyone who can afford the fabric chosen by the celebrant; they thereby buy the cloth as a mark of support and love to her. This practice is mostly common with women on any occasion and it attracts glamour to the social gathering. The celebrant or people in such gatherings treat these set of people with a difference and possibly ill-treat those who do not wear the appropriate dress (Nwafor 2011:46; Adelaja, *et. al.* 2016:171).

Fashion cannot be separated from our daily lives. Cloth means nothing until someone lives in them. As clothing and fashion are undergoing several transformations in the early modern world, some attires known by some specific people far above the rest influence their sense of dressing. Among them are Nigerian clothing styles such as tie and dye (*adire*), batik, and *aso-oke*. *Adire* or tie and dye is the traditional cloth Nigeria uses for clothing. It is the dyed cloth made by the Yoruba women of southwestern Nigeria using a variety of resist dye techniques (Okunlola, 2014)

The Yoruba woven fabrics known as *aso-ofi* were the natural choice in *aso-ebi* before the advent of imported fabrics like lace. The lack of mechanization of these native fabrics and the inability to meet the mass demand of the *aso-ebi* phenomenon, particularly from the period towards the independence of Nigeria, gradually gave rise to the demand for imported fabrics such as Lace. Perhaps the beauty of *aso-ofi* is the native hand-woven and customized characteristics. However, whatever the embroideries such brands as *sanyan*, *alari*, *etu*, and others in the *aso-ofi* family had, these imported Lace fabrics attempted to equal (Makinde, *et.al.* 2009:142)

Though, Lace fabrics are not always customized but the set of people wearing the same attire on any occasion are treated specially with the best of foods and gifts. The only thing is that the fabric may be specially made for the occasion and the design may not be seen in the market. But most of the time, the celebrant chooses any design type from the market and sells it to would-be buyers. In most cases also, the head tie (*gele*) to match the lace is chosen and sold to the buyers of the lace so the wearers will be in matching outfits (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Group of people wearing *asoebi* of lace fabric

Courtesy: Adeoti A.A. (2023)

## USAGE STYLES IN FASHION

The traditional dress styles of both men and women fashioned out of lace materials are also significant like their use with Ankara fabrics. The women use *iro* (wrapper), *buba* (blouse), *iborun* (shawl), and *gele* (head tie) or one-piece dress and robe called *kaba*, while the men use *buba* (blouse), *sokoto* (trousers or pants with drawstring), *agbada* (flowing gown) and *fila* (cap) which may be ordinary one that sits on the head or *abetiaja* (one with long sides that looks like the ears of dog). Lace materials are sold in 5 yards which could

cost as low as #15,000 for lesser ones of 5 yards and as high as #200,000 or more for the Swiss or Austrian lace of 5 yards which is of high quality.

*Aso-ebi* is usually taken to a tailor or fashion designer to cut into the desired style according to the dictate of the wearer. The usage can be in single usage or combined usage. The single usage is when the chosen fabric is used alone without the mixture of any other fabric to make an outfit, while the combined usage is when the chosen fabric is used in combination with other fabrics (Figures 7 and 8).



Figure 7: Group of ladies wearing *asoebi* in single usage (without other fabrics)



Figure 8: Group of women wearing *asoebi* in combined usage (mixed with other fabrics)

Ankara and lace fabrics have infiltrated the fashion world, they have gone beyond wrapper and loose blouses (*iro* and *buba*), now it is enjoying the favour of contemporary fashion styles; with the skills of creative designers, Ankara, and lace fabrics when blended with other matching fabrics are made into endless styles and designs for both office and formal occasions (Sonibare, 2012:108). The designers in South-western Nigeria are now enticed by the light-weight texture, multi-coloured nature, and patterns of Ankara fabric, and if this is well understood and able to mix and match with contemporary fabrics properly, it produces creative designs that expand the creativity of the designer. The fabric is mixed up with some other textile fabrics to make simple but attractive attires. These other textile fabrics include satin, organza, net, lace of various kinds, chiffon, hand-woven *asoofi* fabric, Guinea material, and plain material of cotton textures simply referred to as plain and pattern (Kalilu and Adeoti 2022). Figure 9



Figure 9: Women with the same aso-ebi but mixed with different fabrics to make attractive attires

The recent popular fashion style currently found among the ladies in southwestern Nigeria is a style called '*oleku*'. The name '*oleku*' is derived from the movie of TundeKelani '*oleku*' where Asake, a character in the movie wore this short-sleeved *buba* and a mini wrapper. *Iro* and *buba* had been a traditional dressing for the Southwestern women from time immemorial. The wrappers are tied around their waist reaching their ankle; the *buba* too was usually a long-sleeve blouse reaching their wrist. This has made the youths and teenage girls feel and consider the dressing unfashionable. But recently, there have been some creative alterations made to *iro* and *buba* dressing called '*oleku*' to give it a modern fashion that is more appreciable to the present youths and young ladies. This style is tailored with a short-sleeved *buba* of the round neck or four-corner shape. The wrapper is tied above the knee, unlike the older version that is tied reaching the ankle. This style is common in parties where youths or young ladies are in attendance in *aso-ebi*. (Figure 10)



Figure 10: Group of ladies wearing *oleku* style with lace blouse at a social function

Photograph by BellaNaija (2013)

## **SOCIAL CHALLENGES OF *ASO-EBI***

*Aso-ebi* is fully an acceptable cultural practice in the south-western Nigeria, it goes beyond family members and friends network, and there is great misuse and misinterpretation of *aso-ebi* practice especially among women and politicians in Nigeria. The women have the greatest patronage of the *aso-ebi* and so therefore, in any party there are different types of *aso-ebi* both in lace and Ankara fabrics and the likes. Some women decide to create a class of their own by choosing and demonstrating the politics of dress in trying to outdo each other in parties. Areo and Areo (2017) pointed out that in some occasions, celebrants chooses colour code for invitees which serves as an exclusive characteristic at the social function.

Nwafor (2011:111) buttressed this that national culture is invoked in Nigeria and the concept of *aso-ebi* clothes as traditional dress is a consequence of commodification and global capitalism. Also, Nigerian politicians have hijacked the use of *aso-ebi* by distributing clothes to those in their political parties even at no cost to the wearer. This is to make people feel the wearer belongs to them. This is beyond family and friends (Figure 11).

The dynamic nature of the practice allows it to have appreciable transformations because of its contents and the extent to which it covers. This is why Ajani (2012:112) reiterated that each new generation reshuffles and changes the system of ideas, meanings, and rules so that the social tradition is unchanging in any society. This implies that some practices in culture will disappear while there will be some that will be greatly accepted with little or no alteration. The practice of *aso-ebi* as lofty as it is, though, regarded as a leveler, that is, making all the wearers be of the same level, comes with a financial burden on those who are struggling to purchase with stress (Oludayo and Ayebo 2014:70; Badeji, 2021:18). Some purchase the fabric but not satisfied with the fabric, while some purchase to create ostentatious competition. These and many other challenges are attached to the practice but the benefits of the practice are sustaining and upholding the practice to date.



Figure 11: A lady wearing customized Ankara for a political rally

## CONCLUSION

Even though fashion in Nigeria and all over the world is dynamic, Ankara and lace fabrics have been able to stand the test of time and have now become the choice of all and sundry. The two fabrics are categorized among the fabrics of those who want to remain fashionable, colorful, or stylish and those who want to add colour to their wardrobes. *Aso-ebi* is an in-thing in the culture of the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria, especially women. Ankara fabrics formerly the wrapper worn by the illiterate women, the very poor, and the elderly in Nigeria, have now become the choice of fashion designers and fashion-conscious wearers. The Ankara in today's fashion trend is versatile and this has made it very acceptable among people from different works of life. This is unlike the times past when Ankara was mainly used as a wrapper by native women and relatively poor people. *Aso-ebi* is acceptable for its lightweight and easy-to-sew material. No matter the class in which somebody belongs, using *aso-ebi* on the very occasion places every user on the same pedestal.

The level of Ankara stylish fashion is now competitive and if you're not ready to equip yourself with the more sophisticated pattern of Ankara and lace design, you will not have a place to stand in the current trends of the latest Nigerian fashion. At one point in time, it was very fashionable to wear 'ready-made clothes' and the traditional or ethnic printed fabric was only sewn into 'iro and buba' which was regarded old-fashioned. However in Nigeria today, things have turned around drastically, and now, wearing ethnic printed clothing is in vogue. It is so much easier to have clothing sewn from traditional fabric like Ankara and lace, *Adire*, or *Aso-ofi*.

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