

Basic Detail Report



Adire eleko, woman's wrapper ("Ko dele yi ri/I have not seen this before" design)

Date

ca. 1960s

Primary Maker

Artist not recorded

Medium

Cotton, indigo dye

Description

According to Yoruba taxonomy, there are two primary types of "classic" adire: eleko and oniko. Eleko is a starch-

resist technique, typically using cassava or corn starch applied by hand-painting, stamping, or stenciling. Oniko involves tied, twisted, folded, or hand-stitched resist patterns, created with raffia or thread. If machine-sewn, this variation is referred to as adire alabare. The 1960s, during Nigeria's post-Independence era, marked a period of increased popularity and market expansion for adire. This era fostered innovations in design, techniques, and the use of diverse dyestuffs and base fabrics. However, by the 1990s, experimentation had largely supplanted the production of "classic" forms, which were deemed old-fashioned. Today, high-quality "classic" adire is rare. According to our regular collaborator, Gasali Adeyemo, adire of this caliber is no longer produced in Nigeria and is considered incredibly valuable. Adire patterns often take their names from dominant motifs, but artists have significant freedom to interpret or combine these motifs with others, creating a vast array of designs numbering in the hundreds. This adire eleko cloth consists of 36 dyed blocks featuring two alternating patterns. Each block is inscribed twice with the phrase "Ko dele ri yi". One pattern depicts two fantastical nineteen-footed creatures and two birds, centered around a circle and oval shapes that extend toward the opposite corners of the block. The other pattern features bird figures in each corner, accompanied by additional stylized motifs. The reverse hem edges are adorned with decorative elements, possibly serving as signatures, adding an extra layer of detail to this remarkable textile.

Dimensions

75 3/8 × 70 1/16 × 1/8 in. (191.5 × 178 × 0.3 cm)