ADAPTATION OF THE DAGI MOTIF FOR PAINTING

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research study titled **"Adaptation of the Dagi Motif for Painting"** was carried out by me and that no other person in any place and any time has previously conducted a similar work before it. All the quotations and information utilized and their sources are acknowledged by means of references.

_____	_____
Umoru Ibrahim	**Date**

CERTIFICATION

This project report titled **"Adaptation of the Dagi Motif for Painting"** by Umoru Ibrahim meets the regulations governing the award of the Degree of Master of Fine Arts of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

_____	_____
Mr. Jerry Buhari (Major Supervisor)	Date
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Almighty God.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank all those who, through their publication, works and knowledge have contributed to the preparation of this project work. Among these are my major supervisor and his co-supervisor, Prof. Jerry Buhari and Sani Mu'azu Mohammed (Associate Prof.).

My sincere gratitude also goes to my lecturers Prof. Jacob Jari, Dr. Kefas Danjuma, Dr. Philip Gushem and the Post Graduate Co-ordinator Dr. (Mrs.) Rose A. Nkom whose quality advice was of tremendous assistance.

Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to all my family members, friends and well wishers too numerous to mention for their support and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

The research titled: "Adaptation of the Dagi Motif for Painting" is aimed at bringing to light the aesthetic qualities that are inherent in Northern Knot motif which bears the nomenclature "Dagi" with the view to further advance the study of the ubiquitous icon as a source for artistic purpose (particularly for painting. The data for the study were therefore, based on selected Dagi Motif as found on palace gate, door post of houses, embroidery and other household utensil found in Zaria Emirate council. However, similar forms of interest in books and previous paintings were also made use of. They served as creative models for the study. Result and findings of this study are presented as plates followed by discussions. At the end of the research, certain observations were made. It was found that in exploring the Dagi motif, mere visual representation could be carried further to highly complex visual sophistication as a play of light upon the dagi motif can be interesting with certain areas reflecting or refract light with fascinating results. Thus, painters should continue to tap into "Dagi" inspirational depth to further advance modern painting.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Baka	-	Bow
Bayan Kunkuru	-	Tortoise shell
Dagi	-	Feline Paw
Fitsarin bijimi	-	Bull urine
Fulani	-	A nomadic ethnic group in northern Nigeria
Ganyen tsamiya	-	Tamarind foliage
Kafin Laima	-	struts of an umbrella
Katantawa	-	Snail Shell
Kayar kifi	-	Fish bone
Kwado	-	frog
Kwarya	-	Calabash
Manne	-	Emir’s drum
Sakar zuma	-	Honeycomb
Sarka	-	Chain
Shentu	-	A long Hausa musical instrument
Tafiyar tsutsa	-	Worm track
Wuri	-	cowry
Wutsiyar hawainiya	-	Chameleon’s tail

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

There are research works currently in print which deal with icons, symbols and motifs from the northern part of Nigeria. However, no book about pictorial symbols would be complete without some consideration of the Dagi. Dagi is a motif incorporated into almost all Northern Nigeria artistic expressions such as cultural and traditional embroidery, wall decorations, architectural design and durbar. It has equally evolved over a period of time into different shapes, designs and patterns.

The focus of this study is narrowed to this motif which serves as a medium for personal expression for the artist but this role however, does not prevent it from serving other purposes. According to the Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary of current English (2000), a motif is a design or a pattern used as a decoration. While Banjoko (2000), sees a motif as a unit of a design or major theme in an art work especially in pattern making. Motifs can be formed from natural or artificial objects, abstract, geometric, regular or irregular shapes. (Chambers 20th Century Dictionary (1983), Defines a symbol as an emblem; that which by custom or convention represents something else while motif is a theme, subject, an element in a composition, especially a dominant element. It is often symbolic.

Nataf (1994), is of the view that "a symbol is not a simple convention as is the case in mathematics. Symbolism is not a language, but a way of speaking; it is much more than collection of signs. A true symbol always designates the being - in - the world". The Dagi motif is subject to constant concrete adaptation to the ever – changing fields of its application and this has given rise to various stylization, transformation but not beyond recognition.

Today, as people travel long but are increasingly lazy about learning other people's languages, the role of the sign can become an important means of communication. Holmes (1985) stated that a symbol stands for something. It is visually precise; it attempts to get at the essence of an idea and by repeated use can come to equal it.

Frutiger, (1989).*word or speech, written or spoken,*
do not appear to play any part at all in the
mechanism of my thought processes.
The basic psychic elements of thought are certain
signs and more or less clear pictures, which can
be reproduced and combined to order.

Often, motifs have been an integral part of the human society and it is believed that even language and the art of writing are all woven into symbolism. One of the earliest forms of writing (hieroglyphs) is said to have originated from various motif and symbols embedded in the day to day life of man.

Visual Aesthetics

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2000) defines aesthetics as a "Branch of philosophy which tries to make clear laws and principles of beauty" while Wagbonje (1987) sees Aesthetics as "Originating from a Greek root Aesthetikos" pertaining to sense of perception" and that traditionally, aestheticians have inquired into the nature of our experiences of the beauty in art and in nature and into the nature of the objective of these experiences particularly works of art.

Wong (1993) states that "most representational forms capture the basic characteristics of shapes, and avoid subjects with unusual, less familiar details". From this definition, aesthetic structure exist inside the viewer, but only because the potential for visual form already exists outside him, in other word "visual form" is used as an objective term and "aesthetic structure" is used as a subjective term.

Cheatham (1987) made it clear that every idea can be expressed through numerous methods and media – the components of process. Each idea can be executed in any number of visual combinations of these process elements. When considered in this way, it becomes apparent that the visual possibilities for a single idea and the exploration of such possibilities are limitless; and that ultimately these explorations and consideration can only be accomplished visually.

1.2 Background of the Study

There are many languages in northern Nigeria but the common language is Hausa with Islam as the dominant religion and its doctrine of non - representational art; this has been an important catalyst in northern Nigeria artistic development. Heathcote (1979), opines that the earliest history of the Hausa people is obscure, Bayajida, a price of Baghdad, came to Borno. There he married Majira; a daughter of the reigning king. When Bayajida's life was threatened he fled, taking with him his wife and his horses. Eventually he reached Daura, on the way his wife, who was pregnant, was left at Biram. She gave birth to a son and when he grew up he became the ruler there. Having arrived in Daura, Bayajida killed a large snake, called Sarki which lived in the local well and allowed water to be drawn only on Fridays. In return for his service the queen of Daura married Bayajida she bore him a son, Bawo, in his turn had six sons. These became the rulers of Daura, Kano, Katsina, Zazzau (Zaria), Gobir, and Rano. With Biram these formed the original seven Hausa states, the Hausa *Bakwai*.

Origin of the Northern Knot Motif

So far, no certain spot has been marked to be the birth place of the Dagi even though some speculations holds that it is from the oriental world, Jefferson (1974), in quoting Heathcote, states that "The precise origin of many of the motifs used in Hausa embroidery will probably never be known. Variations of some, such as the

Dagi (knot), can be found in various parts of Africa which are far removed from one another". However Heathcote (1979) also wrote that it is certain that there were silk fabrics being woven in southern Spain and northern Africa in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and that some of the patterns on them incorporated motifs such as the eight – pointed star, the motif of two interlaced ovals (known by the Hausas as Dagi), and various geometric – interlace devices. All these motifs eventually turned up in Hausa embroidery or other forms of Hausa decorative art.

The interest of the researcher lies in the artistic rather than the traditional or historical aspect of the Dagi, the motif which is believed to have been inspired by the star is associated with royalty that is embedded in the northern Nigerian aristocratic nature or philosophy. The Dagi if seen as a whole, the experiences are in complete harmony with each other and if viewed evokes a strange visual tension which offers many interesting possibilities for painting. The play of light upon the Motif can be interesting as certain areas reflect or refract light with fascinating results.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Many Nigerian artists research on traditional forms, patterns, symbols and motifs from different or diverse ethnic groups in the country, but few have taken the Northern knot as a single visual subject for artistic exploration.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are:

i. To explore the rich artistic qualities of the Dagi motif

ii. To appreciate the artistic forms peculiar to the Dagi motif.

iii. The study intend to manipulate the Dagi for visual expressions as well as to unfold its aesthetic values and qualities.

iv. To serve as a resource material for further reference in artistic work.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The researcher hopes to promote socio-cultural and aesthetic awareness among the diverse ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria, as well as synthesizing the cultural tradition that surrounds the Dagi motif with contemporary dynamics of art. The study will provide a spring board for further studies in the projection of the traditional motifs in Northern Nigeria, through visual statements as in the case of this research.

1.6 Justification

It is observed that not much has been documented through appropriate visual representation of the Dagi motif in art. This study therefore explores the aesthetic potentials of the motif. In doing this, the study will also provide a painterly understanding of the motif.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This research is on one of the traditional symbolic motifs of the Hausa known as Dagi as found in the Zaria Emirate Council.

1.8 Limitation

There appears to be scanty literature on the history of the Dagi Motif and some of the artisans had no western education, so the researcher had difficulty in communication.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND WORKS

2.1 Introduction

The Dagi motifs is a pivot with which all other motifs like bayan kunkuru, Baka, Shentu, Fitsarin bijimi, Kayar kifi, Ganyen tsamiya, Wuri, Tafiyar tsutsa, sarka, katantawa, sarka zuma, baka, wutsiyar hawainiya, used in northern Nigeria revolves; there may be however variation and transformation of the Dagi motif. The motif has gone through so many transformations due to socio-cultural interaction between the Hausa and other ethnic groups in the region.

Jefferson (1974) states that certain fundamental geometric designs are used all over the world and it is possible by multiplication, subdivision and interlacement, to produce an endless variety of shapes. The Dagi motif has retained its importance throughout the years, some of them changing somewhat through the intermingling of culture or through gradual stylization.

Like all other areas of human endeavour there is no aspect of art ranging from representational to abstraction that man has not done any study on; it is in acknowledging this fact that some related works on the decorative motifs and symbols used by the Hausa provides a good basis on which to begin this review.

This chapter reviews related literature and Post Graduate paintings that possess ideas, which contributed to the development of this study. The chapter is

divided into two sections: the first section deals with the general survey of decorative motifs as well as symbols and the artistic view of some authorities about them. The second section reviews paintings of some artists related to this study.

Though, motifs represents the dominant artistic expression of the Hausa, available records reveal that few artists have attempted isolating the Dagi for painting. Most motifs are symbolic, from the information obtained from the series of unstructured interviews and various research findings. Dagi is believed to have been inspired by the star which is considered by astrologers to be the father figure. Fenton, (1991) states that "the sun is a star, but astrologers tend to call everything in the solar system a planet for the sake of convenience. The sun is regarded as the first of the personal planets, representing the active decision making side of a subjects' nature". The star is associated with strength, personal achievement leadership qualities, power and authority. It denotes adulthood and grown-up attitude to life. It is concerned with creativity of all kinds, whether this be designing and building an object, a home, a business or a family. The star's placement also indicates how a person feels about creative endeavours. The star is intensely personal and is strong pointer to the subject's modus operandi. Each day, the blue sky dominated by sun changes to darkness, from the depths of which the star appears giving a sense of the infinity of the universe.

Frutiger (1989) is of the view that all pictorial representation, with the causes of this heavenly bodies expressed as “paths” and “way”, one can, in fact, say, in a narrow sense, the Dagi, in all its diversity, is loaded with serious emotions pointing to the future by comprising and conserving something of the past.

2.2 Related Works

Some artists whose works have been found relevant for the purpose of this study are:-

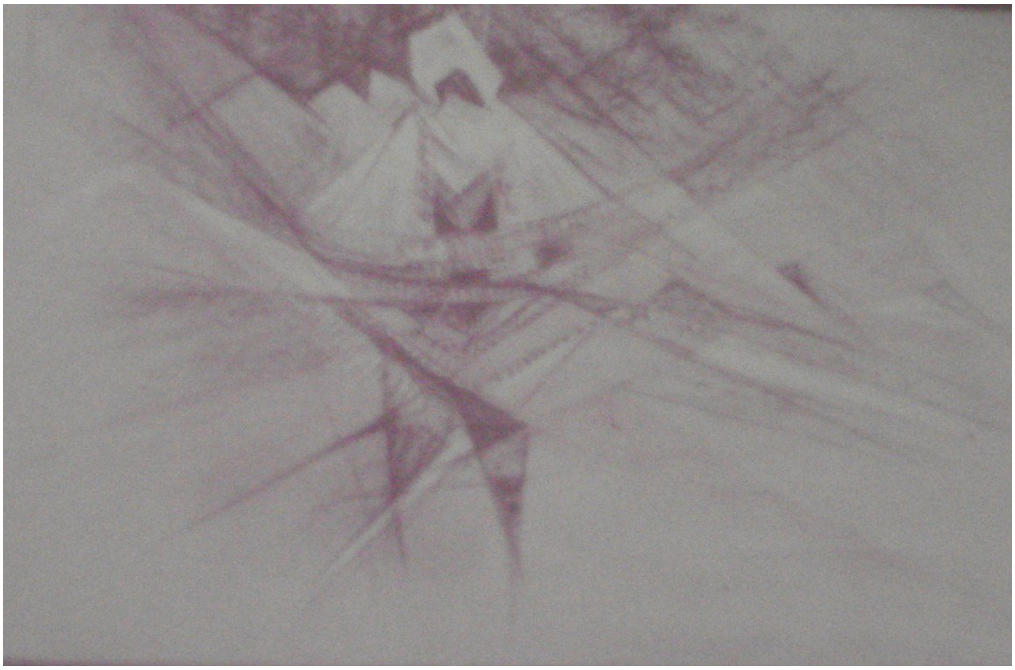


Fig. i
Title: ***"The Emir of the Landscape"***
Year: *1984*
Artist: *Emmanuel Akinwumi Afuwape*
Medium: *Charcoal Conte and Crayon*
Size: *78x105cm*
Source: *Unpublished MFA Thesis ABU, 1984.*

Inspiration for the painting is derived from the rich cultural heritage of the Hausa people as seen in Zaria Emirate. In this work, Afuwape used charcoal, conte and crayon to depict a typical Emir in his regalia. The figure portrayed is suggestive of a festive arena and the technique used in this work is unique with lines suggesting motifs. The motifs in the composed Dagi swallow the figure into the background. The "Dagi" motif comes in handy in this lofty work where the figure, an Emir is wrapped in the symbol of authority; the "Dagi," motif.

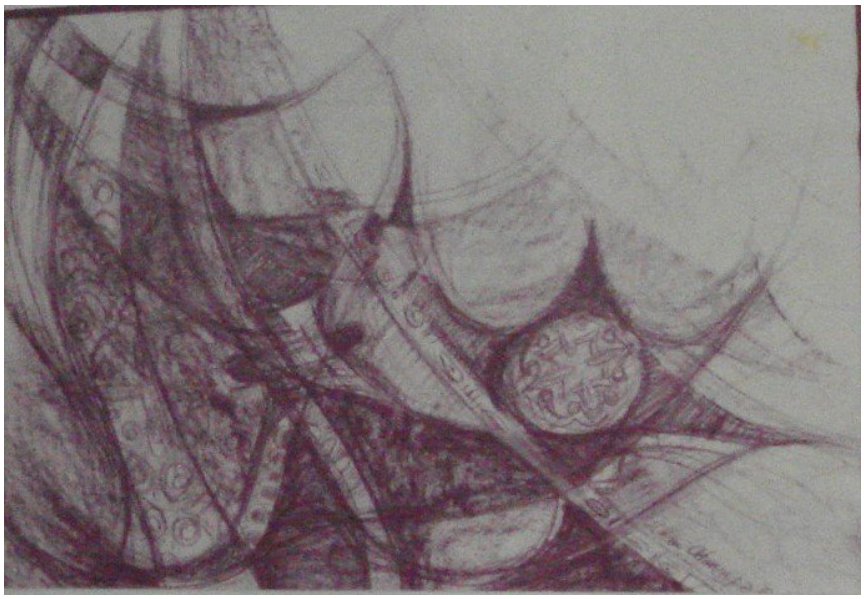


Fig. ii
Title: ***"Wall, Patterns and Motif"***
Year: *1984*
Artist*:* *Emmanuel Akinwumi Afuwape*
Medium: *Charcoal*
Size: *66x83cm*
Source: *Unpublished MFA Thesis*
ABU, 1984

The motifs are rendered as if on an embroidered gown. The work is sublimely rhythmic, the movement of line suggesting the motifs seem like a spider web. The artist seems to have concealed the motifs in a manner that he employed harsh line, blended into each other, creating decorations that are associated with the Emir's gown with the northern knot (Dagi) symbol of power vividly present in the star that inspired it. Suggestively, the "Dagi" is the source of inspiration in this work. The curves and movement of lines is symbolically a twist in the "Dagi" motif. Clearly, the artist has manipulated the "Dagi" to suit the purpose of this work; which is for decoration.



Fig. iii
Title: ***"Rhythm"***
Year: *1989*
Artist: *Robert Ogenyi*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Size: *100x100cm*
Source: *Unpublished MFA Thesis ABU. 1989*

In this work, a synthesis of geometric shapes is a prominent feature. There is an integration of sharp curves which give an impression of human forms. The artist attempted the art of integration deriving inspiration from African traditional motifs. A close examination of this work draws one's mind to the Dagi motif, at the centre, using the curves to depict what seems like the northern knot revolving in a spiral order. This painting inadvertently can be seen as "Dagi: motif in stylized form. The form reflect projected ends that seemed to emanate from the aesthetic qualities of the "Dagi" motif.



Fig. iv

Title:	***"Children of Martyrs"***
Year:	*1992*
Artist:	*Jerry Buhari*
Medium:	*Oil on Canvas*
Size:	*113.5x82.5cm*
Source:	*Catalogue, three from Zaria Goeth Institute (German Cultural Centre Lagos)*

The lower part of the painting suggests a woven motif, the artist used a knot to suggest an idea of bondage, the work portrays captivity, and the helpless and unsafe nature of life especially as it pertains to the child. The knot which ties the subject of the work bear resemblance with the Dagi in the researchers view and the enigma of the knot captures the socio-political circumstance of the northerners and other regions of Nigeria today.



Fig. v

Title:	*"Horse Regalia"*
Year:	*1995*
Artist:	*Chafe Shehu Ismail*
Medium:	*Oil on Canvas*
Size:	*75x90cm*
Source:	*Unpublished MFA Thesis ABU, 1995.*

The painting vividly illustrates the various motifs in a simplified manner, the Dagi motif which symbolizes power and authority is inter-locked with other motifs. In this work, balance and movement is achieved through the representation of motifs closely related to the Dagi in the background with various brush strokes and the contrast of red and green with red spotting through the Dagi motif is an indication of the symbolic power and authority embedded in this Dagi knot. In this piece of painting, Chafe harnessed the Dagi to create a "Horse Regalia which is an asset amongst the nobles like Emirs. Therefore, "Dagi" once again is significant in this context in radiating one of the instruments of authority.



Fig vi
Title: ***"Emir's Regalia II"***
Year: *1995*
Artist: *Chafe Shehu Ismail*
Medium*:* *Oil on Canvas*
Size *90x100cm*
Source: *Unpublished MFA Thesis ABU, 1995.*

In this art piece, the motifs were also used to create a rhythmic balance. The artist emphasized the Dagi prominently at the centre of the painting with yellow suggesting light (star). The Dagi motif which is inspired by the star is seen radiating light at the centre of green background. This work is relevant to the study because it clearly shows the light in the star which Dagi knot represent to the Hausa. Once again, "Dagi" is the source of inspiration in this work. The painter taps into the rich aesthetic value of the "Dagi" motif to create a work psychically inspired by the star as embedded in the Hausa traditional cosmology.



Fig. vii

Title:	***"The Northern Knot and Umbrella"***
Year:	*1995*
Artist:	*Chafe Shehu Ismail*
Medium:	*Oil on Canvas*
Size:	*76x79cm*
Source:	*Unpublished MFA Thesis ABU, 1995.*

This painting used the Northern knot as a single element of design. Different shades of red and yellow are used. Here the umbrella is not prominent. Chafe appears to be different in approach in this work by his use of minimal colour and motifs. Although the colour at the background and that of this motif blends the motif still retain it symbolic prominence and dignity in the work. "Dagi" is used here essentially for aesthetic purpose as the singular projection of the Dagi motif in this contest with different lines of yellow, creates a synthesis of deep floral appeal, thereby embellishing the umbrella which serves as a canopy of safety, security and authority in Northern Nigeria.



Fig. viii

Title:	***"Emir's Trumpeter"***
Year:	*2000*
Artist:	*Jummai Ogbe*
Medium:	*Oil on Canvas*
Size:	*57x89cm*
Source:	*Unpublished MFA Thesis ABU, 2000*

The trumpet and the hand of the figure is visible and other motifs used, the Dagi which is the centre of study in this research stands out, this made this work relevant to the research. The northern knot (Dagi) is aimed at representing the rhythm of the music produced, also in this work the dark and bold representation of the knot (Dagi) is used to create the much needed contrast. The work draws our attention to the relationship between the performing and the visual or decorative art of the Hausa. In Northern Nigeria, the trumpet popularly known as "khakaki" is an instrument blown to herald the appearance of the Emir. In this work, the trumpet is superimposed on the "Dagi" motif thereby synthesizing authority and ovation as capture in this work.



Fig ix
Title: ***"Queen Amina of Zaria"***
Year: *2002*
Artist: *Jummai Ogbe*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Size: *78x98cm*
Source: *Unpublished MFA Thesis ABU 2000*

In this painting it is made clear that the northern knot is truly a symbol of royalty, the political leader Queen Amina is expressed in a rhythmic atmosphere through the use of various motifs revolving around the Dagi. The motifs are woven together on a blue background, the Dagi at the far lower left of the work is presented in a manner that the centre of interest is captured at that side of the painting. Again the "Dagi", motif is used to capture the essence and the majesty of power. The inspiration in this regards is not far fetched; the "Dagi" continued to symbolize power, authority, valour which is the hallmark of the Zaria Emirate.

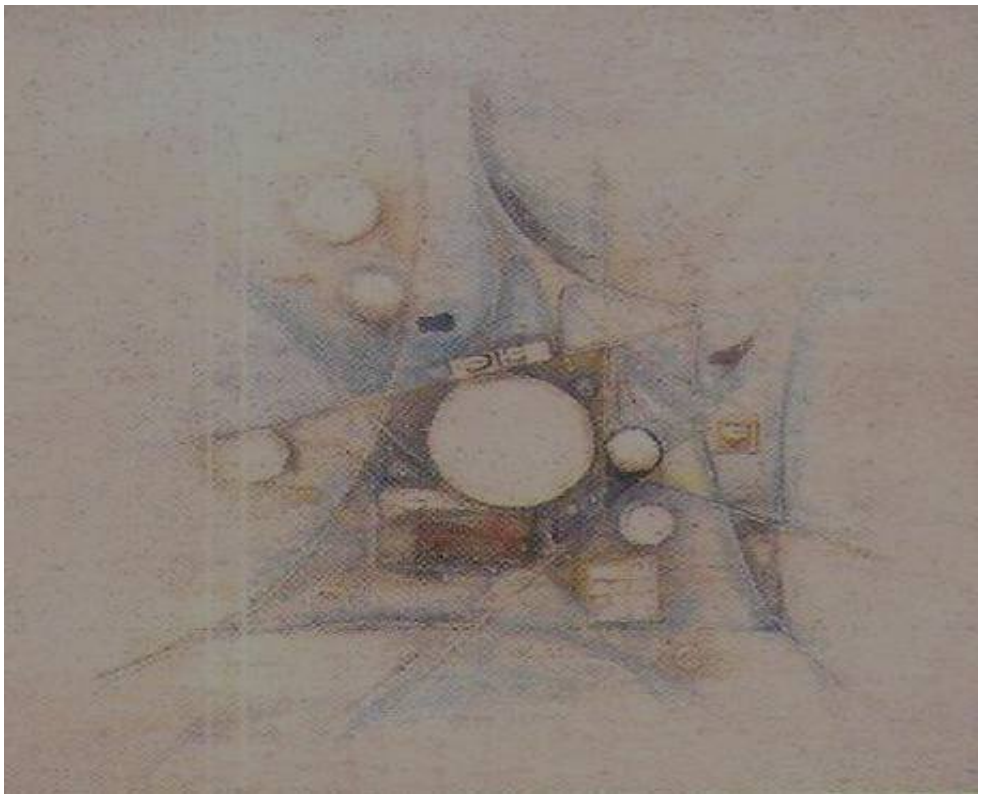


Fig. x

Title:	***"Plus Jamais Ca"***
Year:	*2004*
Artist:	*Donatien Alihonou*
Medium and Size :	*Not given*
Source:	*The Pan-African Circle of Artists Pearls and Gold-Enugu 2004*

The expression of line and colour and the aesthetic splendor and achievement of rhythmic balance with the use of symbols, makes the work significant to this study. There is a harmonious use of colour and the movement of the motifs, these motifs seem to blend into the background and foreground at the middle of the work is an opening, giving the impression of tunnel concealed with motifs, when looked at generally, the work is in no doubt truly African and shares the same source with all other works in this review.



Fig. xi
Title: ***"Gidan Dan Hausa"***
Year: *2008*
Artist: *Kaltume Gana*
Medium*:* *Oil on Canvas*
Size: *83 x 66cm*
Source: *Atmosphere - A publication of National Gallery of Art,Nigeria*

This painting derives inspiration from the artists native tradition, the architectural design bearing conspicuously the famous Dagi motif as used by the Hausa, especially at the main entrance. This work is found to be relevant for the purpose of this study as the explicit use of the famous Dagi can be seen around the door post of the building. Other abstract decorative motifs can also be seen in the work.



Fig. xii
Title: ***"Fulani Milkmaid"***
Year: *2008*
Artist: *Kunle Adeyemi*
Medium and Size: *Not given*
Source: *Catalogue Traditional Och Stanid 2009*

In this work, the artist influenced by the beauty of the Hausa culture, used Vorex skillfully in embellishing various motifs forming an interesting background for the typical Fulani woman (Milkmaid). At a glance the motifs are seen in grid form all over the work, the artist draws attention to the rich heritage of African culture, only tints and shades of brown (earth colour) is used. The motifs are not only used as decoration but also as symbolic elements, the figure stands out solidly as its rendered in subtle colour to suggest life. In this work, the aesthetic potency of the "Dagi" motif is unarguably visible. It is obvious that the artist has tapped into malleability of the motif to vary his idea of beauty in the culture of Northern Nigeria.



Fig. xiii
Title: ***"Erelbeji (Twins Effigy)"***
Year: *2008*
Artist: *Kunle Adeyemi*
Medium and Size: *Not given*
Source: *Catalogue Traditional Och Santied 2009*

In this work, the artist incorporates human figures and motifs to achieve aesthetic (beauty). The artist is a propagator of the Yoruba rich cultural heritage through art. His use of motifs and symbols is poetic in that it has several hidden meanings. The rigid appearance of the figures in the work is suggestive of the traditional African style of art. The sculptural representation of the (twins effigy) is captured in an atmosphere of symbolism while the naturalistic figures are wrapped in a border of motifs. The essence of this work as a relevant literature is in the aesthetic allure, embedded in cultural melee. The artist consciously harmonies the twin Effigy in an atmosphere of varied "Dagi", motif thereby enhancing the cultural relevance of "Dagi" in Northern Arts.



Fig xiv
Title: ***"Fragment of Tradition"***
Year: *2009*
Artist: *Kunle Adeyemi*
Medium and Size: *Not given*
Source: *Catalogue Traditional Och Santid 2009*

The work signifies the unification of Nigeria as the motifs found among the major ethnic groups are seen. At the left upper part, a motif from the northern part of the country appears to dominate the composition while the Ulli motif from the south eastern (Igbo) part of Nigeria is seen at the lower side. Also found in the work are some Yoruba motifs. In this work, "Dagi" is integrated into this painting to create an awesome sense of unity and beauty in variety. The "Dagi" motif comes in handy here as an integral part of the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria as captured in this historical conflagration in this work.

2.3 Conclusion

From the review so far, and a plethora of assessment done in this regards, it is not far fetched that the “Dagi” motif has continued to serve as an unfettered market of ideas for artists (painters) both in Northern Nigeria and the world at large.

Thus, in line with the objective of isolating the “Dagi” motif as a source of inspiration and mode of expression for artists, this literature review has shown extensively that “Dagi” motif is indeed a symbolic source of inspiration that will continuously engulf the mind of the artist (painter) in passing, when thinking of a source for his work.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Nwana, (1992) states that "a research design, is a term used to describe a number of decisions which need to be taken regarding the collection of data" in doing this, the researcher employed various research techniques to arrive at a formidable result.

This chapter also provides information on the various sources of data, methods employed in their collection, and analysis in the conduct of this study. Some of the processes involved in the collection of data for this study include careful observation, and studio experimentation.

3.2 Method of Data Collection

This study made a generous use of library material gathered from various sources such as previous projects, magazines and photographs.

Information for this research was gathered through the following methods:

i. Photographic documentation/Books/Journals.

ii. Free hand drawing.

iii. Interviews.

Pictures of various Dagi were taken. Such images served as visual guides made at the scene of the study.

Free hand drawing based on observation and direct visual study of the decorative motifs was done from some of the guides obtained form reference material in the library through sketches and drawings.

Interviews was conducted in Zaria city which is the field of the research where information based on oral source on the motifs was obtained. The origin, socio–cultural significance, meaning and color usage was also ascertained.

3.3 Research Design use for the Study

This research study is design in three (3) stages namely:

i. The representational stage
ii. The exploration stage
iii. The transformed stage.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

Analysis of data involves the researcher interpreting data through studio experiments and interpretation of phenomena, using the research design for the study, namely representational stage, exploration stage and transformed stage respectively.

3.5 Stages of Work

There are three stages of work namely:

i. The representational stage.
ii. The exploration stage.

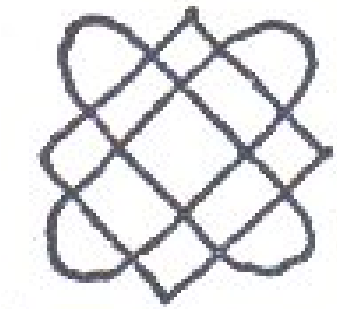
iii. The transformed stage.

The representational stage: At this stage paintings done were realistic; three works were used to depict the northern knot.

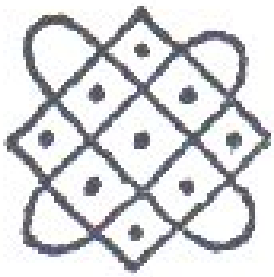
The exploration stage: at this stage the need to develop the motifs becomes necessary. The researcher tried various techniques to achieve balance in the painting, bringing about a gradual movement to stylization.

The transformed stage: color and form became the design element that is inter married for a desirable result at this stage, a sample integration of the broken line is vivid as distortion and transformation through various accidental and action painting technique were employed.

THE DIFFERENT DAGI AND THEIR MEANINGS



i



ii



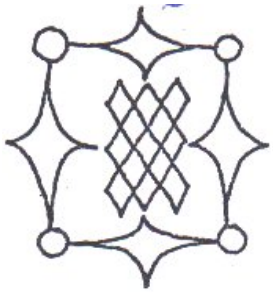
iii



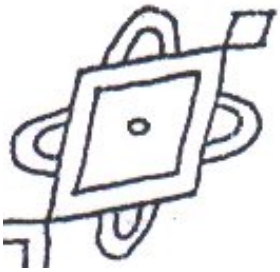
iv



v



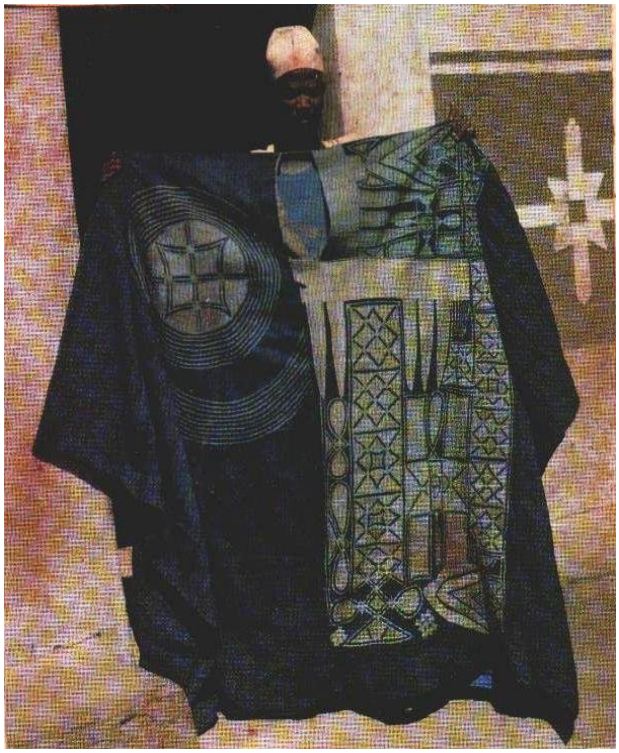
vi



vii

Source: D.H Heathcote PhD dissertation 1979.

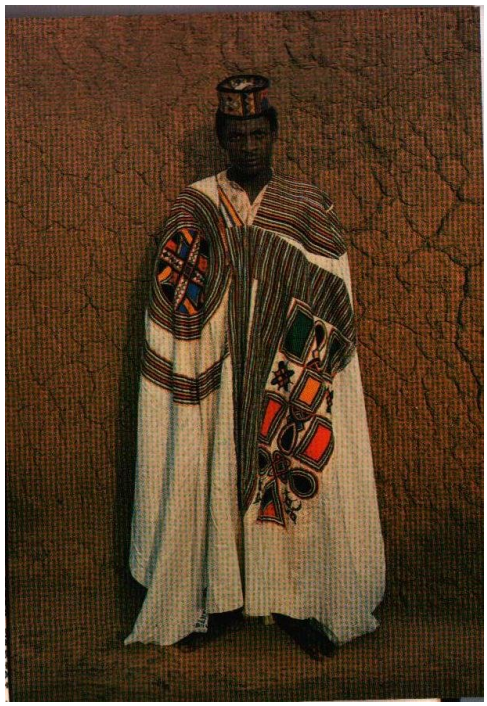
i. *Dagi (Feline paw) Female Dagi*
ii. *Gidan Tara (House of the nine)*
iii. *Dagi Mai Gidan Tara (Feline paw with house of the nine)*
iv. *Dagi Mai Kujen Nufe (Feline paw with Nupe slites)*
v. *Dagi Mai Kusurwa Hu'du (Feline paw with four corners)*
vi. *Barawon Dagi ("Thief" Dagi)*
vii. *Dagi Mai Cibi (Feline paw with umbilical hernia)*



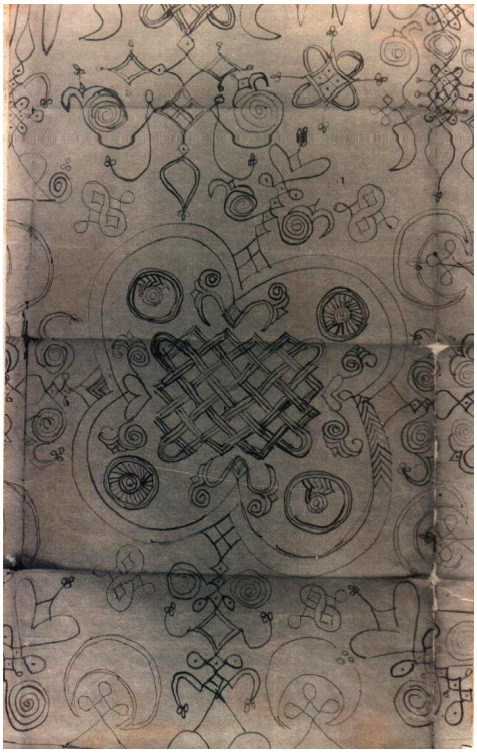
Gown Embroidery
Photo – D.H. Heathcote Phd Dissertation 1979



Gown Embroidery
Photo – D.H. Heathcote Phd Dissertation 1979



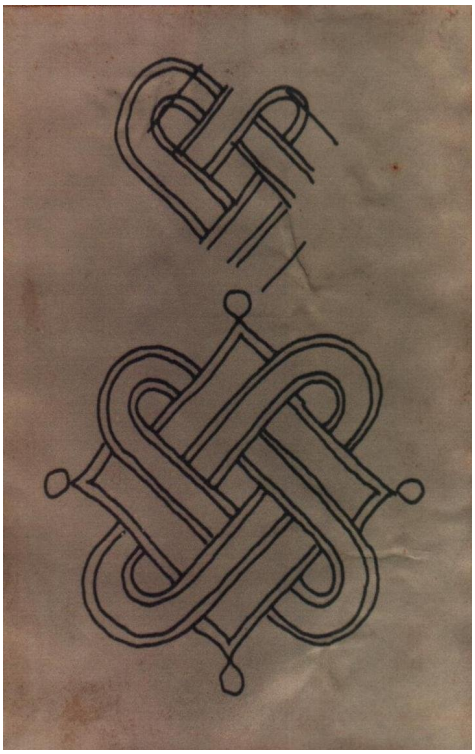
A flamboyantly design gown with the Dagi Symbol-Published as a postcard by the Commnwealth Institute, 1976, from a photograph by D. Heathcote The Embroidery of Hausa Dress, Vol. 2 David Hunter Heathcote, Ph.D. Dissertations 1979.



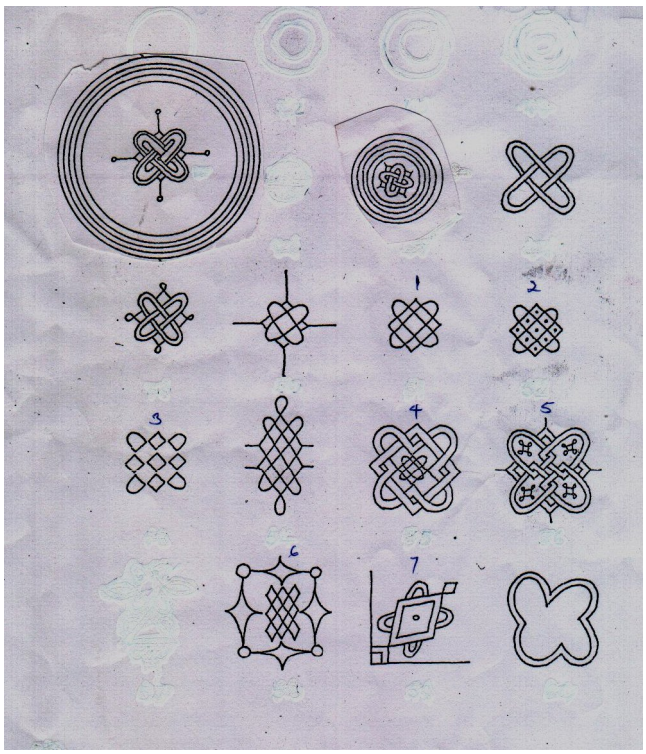
Study of the Dagi Symbol
D.H Heatcote Ph.D Dissertation 1979



Study of the Dagi Symbol
D.H Heatcote Ph.D Dissertation 1979



Drawing of and unusual version of the Dagi Motif by Alhaji Sani of Kano Collection D.H Heatcote Ph.D Dissertation 1972



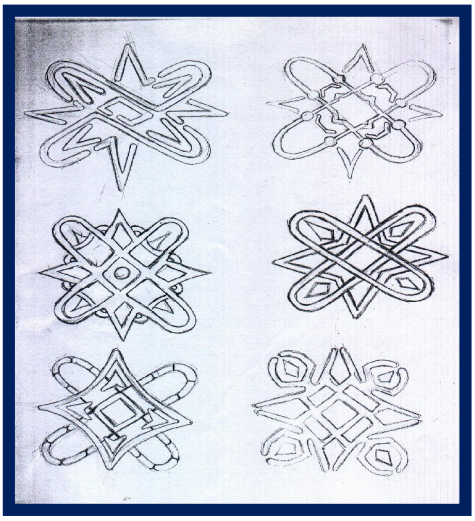
Drawing of Dagi by Alhaji Sani of Kano D.H Heatcote Phd Dissertation 1979

ILLUSTARTION OF THE DAGI MOTIF AS STUDIED BY THE RESEARCHER

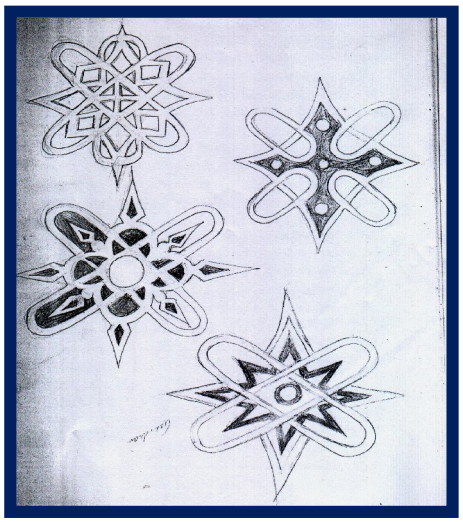
Introd uction

The pencil sketches below present the various dynamics of the motif as used by artisans within Zaria Emirate.

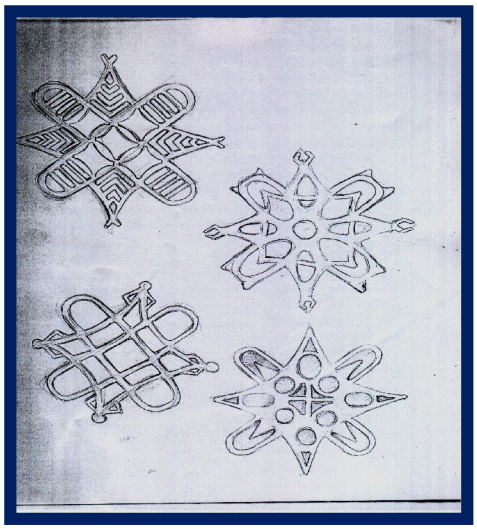
Study of the Dagi Motif



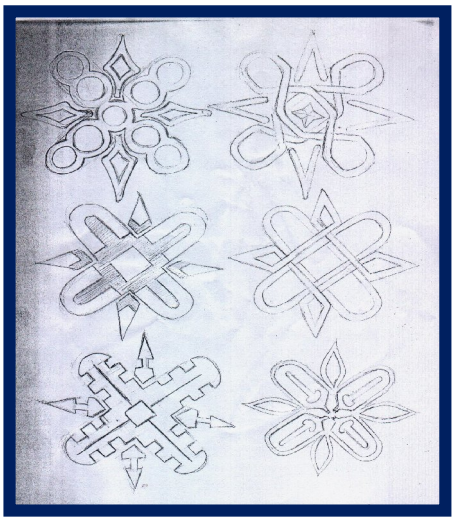
Study of the dagi motif fig i



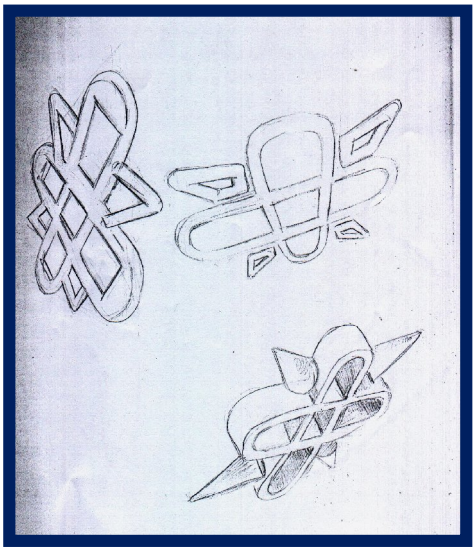
Study of the dagi motif fig ii



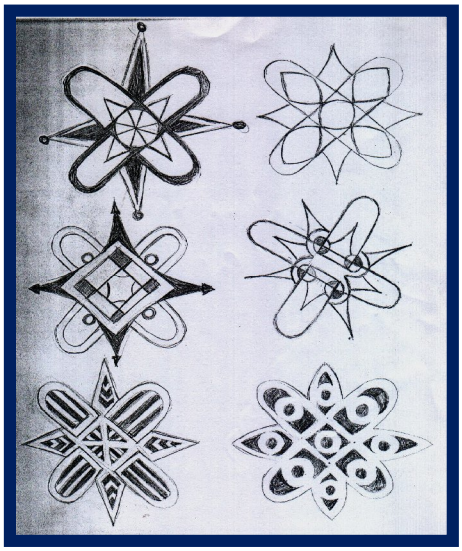
Study of the Dagi Motif fig iii



Study of the Dagi Motif fig iv



study of the Dagi Motif fig v



study of the Dagi Motif fig vi

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF WORKS

4.0 Introduction

In choosing works for analysis, the researchers' primary aim is to group the finest representative examples of each stage; therefore, the approach adopted in presenting these creative works is a systematic analysis of the researchers handling of varied area in expression.

4.0.1 Discussion of Works Produced

For the purpose of this research analysis, twenty-one paintings were selected and the works were categorized into three groups.

The first category isolates and highlights the Dagi (Feline paw) paintings at this stage dwell on the motif as a unit for expression, and attention is focused on the motifs form. Four works were produced.

In the second stage, there is a gradual disintegration of this motif thereby bringing about exploration; six works were produced while the third category dissolves the motive entirely. In this category, line colour and brush strokes play prominent role. Eleven works were executed in this stage.

4.1.0 Category One

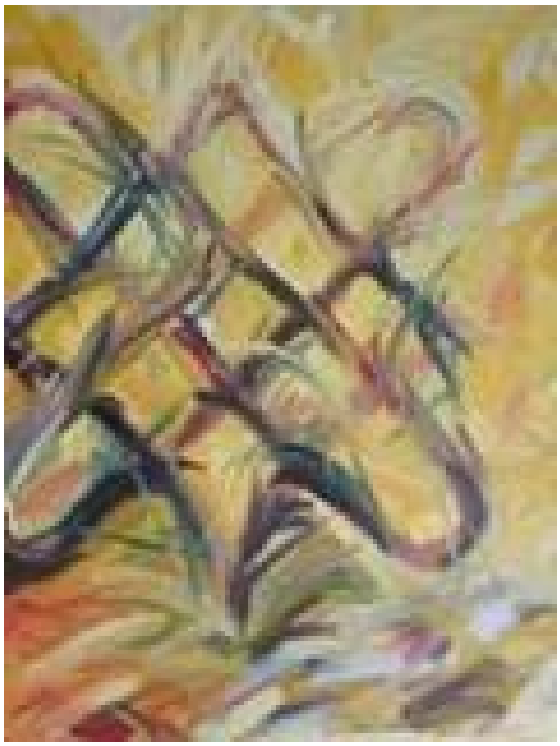


Plate i
Title: *Northern Knot I*
Size: *112 x 104cm*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.1.1 This painting is a representational work, yellow is the dominant colour. However, red, green and blue are seen on the main Dagi motif, while purple compliments the yellow. The rhythm and movement of the brush strokes emphasize the strength of the symbolic meaning of the Dagi, (Power and Authority). The painting depict only the Dagi motif on a busy background, the knot in the painting is partially tilted toward the left hand side of the canvas.



Plate ii
Title: *From the Sea*
Size: *91x69cm*
Medium: *Oil and Enamel on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.1.2 In this approach the Dagi motif is in a solid state, with thick lump of enamel paint, the painting is in yellow scheme. Suffused with the blue sea water, this work is charactersed with the use of minimal colour, to create a holistic atmosphere of royalty the outline of the Dagi knot is built out vividly, demonstrating how the motif could be used as a subject of a composition (theme) to add vigour and balance to the painting, the motif is sifted to the right side with some part out of the composition while the blue surf (water wave) at the lower left create rhythmic movement.



Plate iii

Title: *Mother Earth*
Size: *52x64cm*
Medium: *Gouache on Paper*
Year: *2008*

4.1.3 Only tints and shades of brown and yellow are used, the knot is prominent in this painting as it appear to be muddy with the use of earth colour though the outline is faint. This type of representation of the knot is seen on buildings as design, the circular movement and centralisation of the knot is suggestive of the motif as a medium of communication. In this approach, the motif is concealed within the motif.



Plate iv

Title: *Northern Knot II*
Size: *86x82cm*
Medium: *Oil and Enamel on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.1.4 The Dagi appears to carry more weight on a blue flat background and to avoid monotony and create rhythm, the motif is reduced to mere lines of Prussian blue and red. This painting is an attempt to represent the various ways of expression and possibilities that abide in the unique knot as it is not only used as decoration but also as symbolic motif. A close examination of the spiral line in the painting is suggestive of speed or flow. The illusion of movement revolving around the entire work creates contrast between the negative and positive space.

4.2.0 Category Two

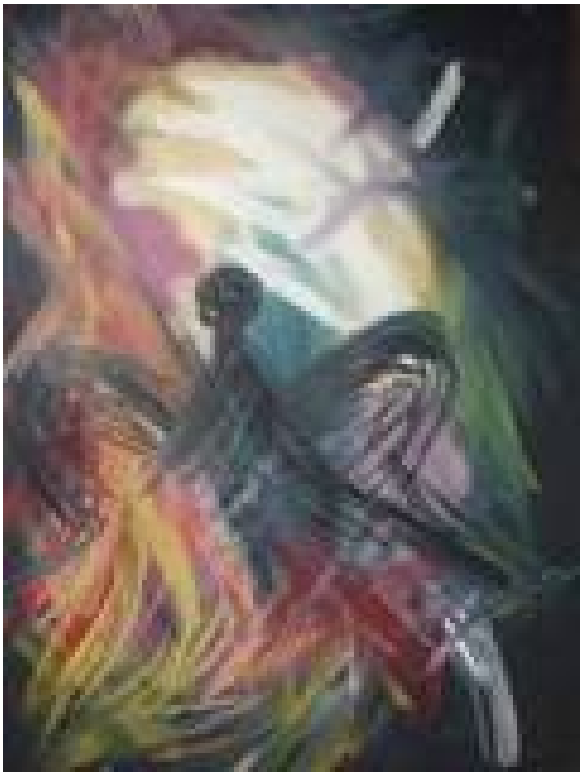


Plate v
Title: *Edge II*
Size: *78x52cm*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.2.1 In this work, sharp strokes were stretched and blended together with the motif to create harmony. This painting combines the harsh and free flowing technique in its execution, at the upper part of the picture plane. The brilliant colours are used to symbolise hope even in the sinking world (Global warmp) the entire composition is in the shade of Prussian blue to denote doom. The Dagi seems to be sinking into the wave of Zigzags heavy brush strokes of yellow and red, this intermingling of line, blends together the motifs form and the background.



Plate vi
Title: *Organ*
Size: *106x49cm*
Medium: *Oil and Enamel on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.2.2 The work is on a slim canvas, the grid technique used, enabled the painter to convey in each of the areas a message of dignity and royalty associated with the Northern Knot. A close examination of this work tends to draw one's attention to the cool and calm nature of the source of the knot. The colour of the work symbolises serenity, as various shades of blue can be seen, red stands for royalty while the spiral technique used in rendering the knot, suggests rhythm and movement, the work signifies growth and wealth.



Plate vii
Title: *City at Night*
Size: *67x89cm*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.2.3 The character of the Knot in the way the elements of design are interlaced in an embodiment of interwoven strips either of rope like or strands. “City at Night” adequately appropriates the night sky with its vividly dark colour of the cloak of the night. The under lying reddish earth structure being illuminated by the radiant glowing colours of an incomplete or sectional part of a knot is expressed in a rather simplified form. The overlapping knot which appears to be drifting like a midnight moon is essentially a configuration of vivid sweepy brush strokes in subdued purple, red and white. The background features, being of one brush stroke each with an overlapping three stripes of white, red and purple which rose from the top

right hand side and fall leftwards. The incompleteness in the way the overlaying strokes are rendered brings forth a harmonious affixation of the knot with the background. The natural phenomenon of moon phases, some parts of which have been consumed by the sky are what remains in a crest.

In terms of setting up a process of illumination, there is a strong connection between “City Night”, “Going Home” and “Edge”. The three are compositions of the night time which reveal some inherent features of the landscape peculiar to the northern part of Nigeria where the knot has a communal significance.



Plate viii
Title: *Edge I*
Size: *76x46cm*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.2.4 The bulk of the yellow entity suspended like a cloud is reminiscent of an age-long cultural festival immediately after the harvest when bonfires are made from husks and stalks to entertain the populace. “Edge” though in its total abstraction, the story connected with the ‘carefree’ sweepy use of the brush which tends to blow out the shape of the motive. Unlike “Going Home”, the intensity of the glow is enhanced by the array of strokes which highlight the basic characteristics of the reddish earth colour of the northern landscape. That the technique applied interplays the features of the north and obvious physical structure.



Plate ix
Title: *The Mat*
Size: *80.5.58cm*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.2.5 This work simply edifies three main colours strongly related to the natural setting in which the knot is found. First, the dominant yellow, orange and red signify the savannah grass land which forms the essential landscape of the North, second the grass thus accruing from the landscape is used within the context of a multiplicity of functionality for thatched roofs, fences, hats, mats and so on. The physical character of the net with its numerous interlaced warp and weft reveals a direct references to the manner in which the feature of the knot are intertwined that there appears to be an overlaying of a number of transparent features of knots.

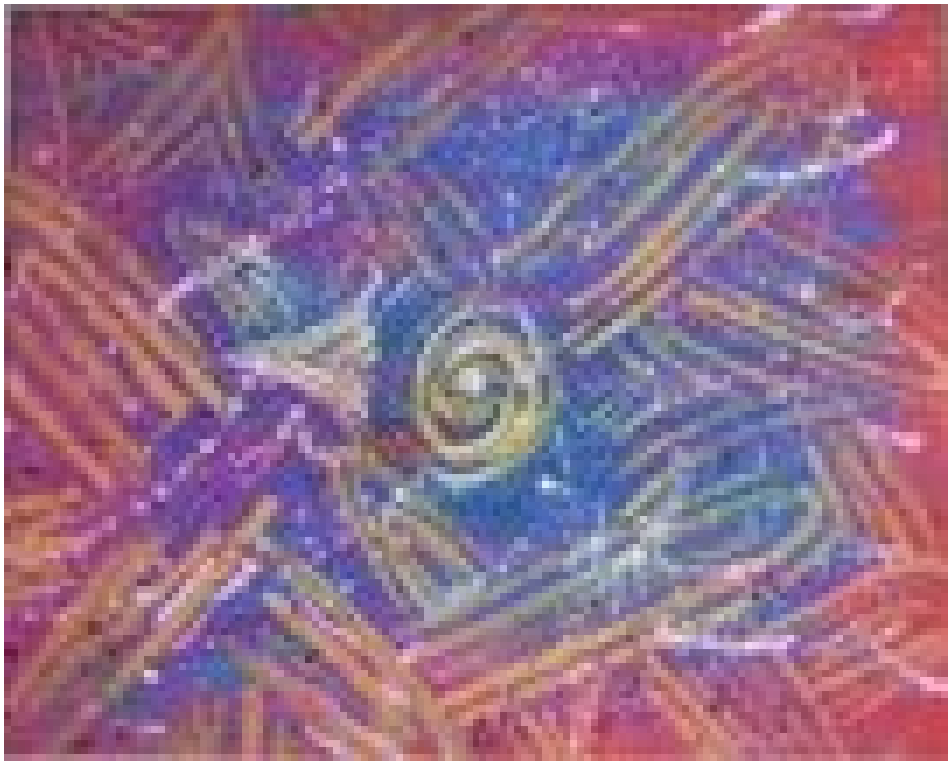


Plate x
Title: *Purple Rain*
Size: *72x59cm*
Medium: *Gouache on Paper*
Year: *2008*

4.2.6 This work is a wild exploration which suggests an explosive brush work with the constituent parts of the Knot appearing to have been blown open from the middle with a strong alluration to "pre-rain" lightening. That the features are essentially linear is, perhaps, an attempt to make such features as if there are lightweight materials carried and being blown in the gale of the wild winds which normally precede the early raining season of Northern Nigeria.

4.3.0 Category Three

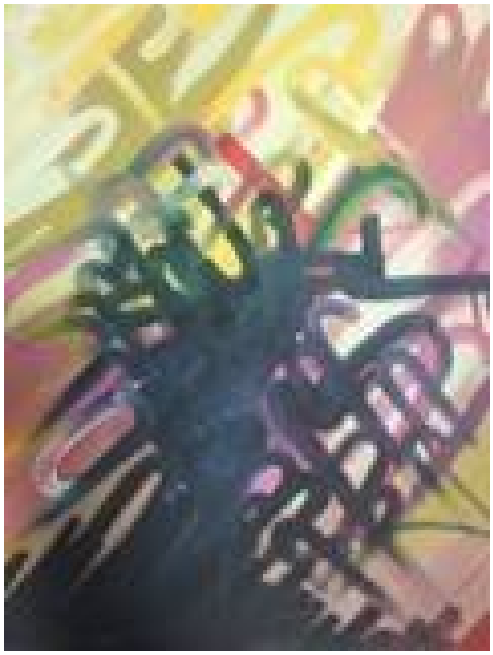


Plate xi
Title: *Fragment*
Size: *97x72cm*
Medium*:* *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.3.1 In this work there is an attempt to displace the symmetrical composites of the conventional Northern Knot by employing deep Prussian blue purple shades, umber and orange, the dominant motif seems to spring forth from the earth where it is solidly routed to grow into a sort of aura of life. At the instance of its emergence it resembles a spinning spool slowly emitting its inner energies. This can be perceived in the manner the artist is able to convey the illusion of fading of the edges of the motif where they merge into the background colours. The motif is replicated in this colourful manner to convey a story of change as an inevitable condition characterised with human life.



Plate xii

Title: *The Big Bang*
Size: *70x80cm*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.3.2 This work simulates the beginning of life as narrated by the scientific theory of how life originated. A cerulean blue sky with smudges of orange dominates the canvas. The bang itself is expressed with sharp strokes of deep blue and crimsom red spread outwards much like a tuff of grass in the middle of sparse landscape. This landscape is located in the depth of the sky, in the vastness of the universe where mysteries abound, where ideas are born and dreams are woven and imagination spring forth. This work examines also the bond that exists between science and art, that point of convergence between theory and reality. As the outward spray of the bang splashes into the vast void small shooting stars much like sparring fall off the sky and merge with the composition.

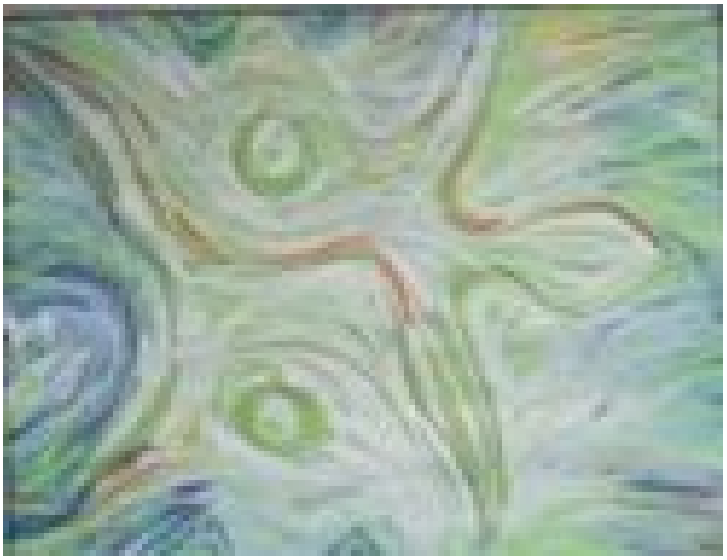


Plate xiii
Title: *Lizard on the Wall*
Size: *59x72cm*
Medium: *Mixed Media*
Year: *2008*

4.3.3 This painting is an organic composition which resembles a painting done on animal hide. One can see the lizard-like image on the wall with a head pointing to the right side of the picture plane. Its legs are spread out to touch the upper and lower planes of the composition. Two circles appear on the two sides of its trunk. Swimming on the wall that narrates a story life/line an old reel of film spooling on an old cinema hall where bored people go to feast their eyes on the wonders of actors from distant lands. Is it a tattoo on the belly of a beautiful village maiden who is ripe for marriage. Waiting for her spouse to devour her hunger and make her life complete with a bound, the orals that have ears may as well be that lizard on the wall. It says be careful do not spill too much for others may know what you said in secret.



Plate xiv
Title: *Re Integration*
Size: *111x76cm*
Medium: *Oil and Enamel on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.3.4 This work is a fusion, an interplay, and interlocation of several female figures who are entranced in a whirling dance that takes place inside a tornado. The female figures are adorned in ochres and umbers with white flaming hair, whirling hands that are moving so fast that it difficult to see them except as flashes of colour. This is expressed clearly in the central figure, which occupies the upper half of the canvas. All the action takes place in the very centre of the canvas, where organic worms spring forth and metamorphose into vigorous female dancers gyrating to the sound of African rhythms. The colour which surrounds the dancers is blue of different lines. The central figure wears a fleming headgear, the base of the picture is dark as if there are cascading waters though made of purples and umbers and the deep blue sea falling off cliffs into an abyss below that melts the sorrows of life and brews up effervescent life, renewed, refreshed and reborn.

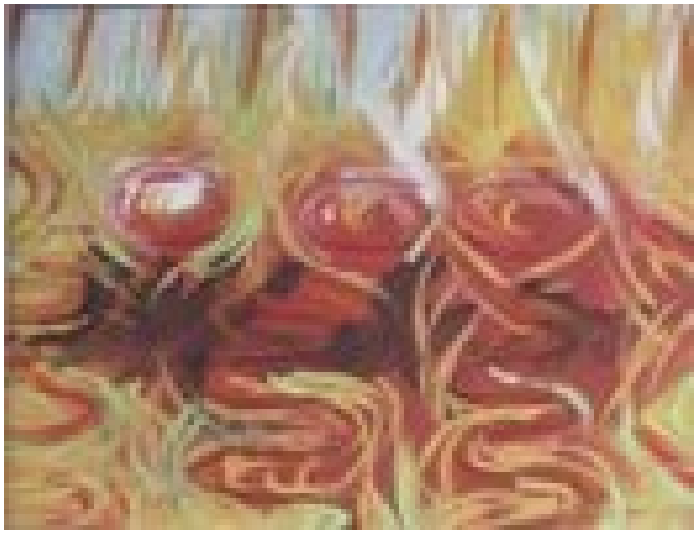


Plate xv
Title: *The Profile*
Size: *59x72cm*
Medium: *Mixed Media*
Year: *2008*

4.3.5 This work is a depiction that is inspired by the disintegration of the knot. At this stage, there is a total breakaway from the representational to non-representational. The painter dwells completely in the rhyme of idea inspired by the physical structure of the soil, the spiral or wormlike strokes emanating from the dark portion of umber coloured area is representative of the pool of the rich historical past and symbolic Dagi knot. This painting reminds one of the soil profile (layers of the soil) life is in layers, dark or troubled moment is depicted at the central path of the work with dark colours while its surrounded with lighter colours which shows a moment where one overcomes the challenges of life, indeed the profile of life is represented in a spiral upward movement of rhythmic brush strokes.



Plate xvi
Title: *Eyo*
Size: *63x100cm*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2008*

4.3.6 In this painting a representational technique was employed to create balance in design. The symphony of cultural depiction in the Western part of Nigeria (Lagos) influenced the researcher to produce this work. Consideration was given to the subject which bears resemblance with the famous Eyo masquerade. Like other paintings in this research, this work has a unique rendition with the bold stroke of brilliant colours woven together. Basically, the use of minimal colour enables the artist to breakaway from complexity and trendy approach.



Plate xvii
Title: *Inikpi*
Size: *62x64cm*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2009*

4.3.7 The surface is dominated by about three shades of green with interjections of yellow ochre and white almost at the central part of the composition. This negates the rule of the third but has managed to create balance within its context. The spatial use of yellow ochre and blue in the background gives a certain feeling of movement with vertical lines which gradually fades out of the surface of the composition. The circular movement by the left hand side of the composition and the waving lines on both sides creates an illusion of some sort. The artist here, tells a story within the context of the northern culture that is interlaced with Islam. Noteworthy is the fact that the printing incidentally is titled "Inikpi", a derivation from the historical icon from the north central tribe in Kogi State; the Igalas. What

this represents is that there is a point of convergence between the Dagi which is as much a historical icon as Inikpi, an Igala martyr daughter of the Attah of Igala.

It is therefore not farfetched that the artist who is very conscious of the historical relevance of the Dagi motif titled this work “Inikpi” to further the artistic ethos of this inspirational icon for his work.



Plate xviii

Title: *Landscape at Dawn*
Size: *68x104cm*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2009*

4.3.8 In this work, figures are seen vanishing into the background of brilliant colours, while the use of harsh strokes connotes the unfriendly extreme weather condition in the North (Harmattan). The work which is rendered predominantly in different shades of green is relatively rhythmic as the brush strokes tend to flow across each other blending into the background. The figures are not vivid but a close examination reveals movement of three people. The foreground is rendered with dark shade of green superimposed on light blue.



Plate xix
Title: *Falling Heaven*
Size: *87x105cm*
Medium: *Mixed Media*
Year: *2009*

4.3.9 The painting presents a horizontal overview and a flow of variations of green. This painting belongs to the last category of works where the painter has totally broken from representation of the Northern Knot to total abstraction. The work rhythmically flows with lines taking ones eye away from the canvas. The lower part of the work depicts a terrestrial plain while the progression continues to the celestial plain upward, a flow that gives a fluid sensation and movement. Yellow could be seen in the work with some tint of green.



Plate xx

Title: *Nucleus*
Size: *92x75cm*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2009*

4.3.10 The abstract rendition marks the origin and the very unit of life. The rhythmic movement of lines and brush strokes driven from side to side with different hues of green gives the work a touch of woven nests. This is the interwoven nature of every creature in the universe, the work is heavier at the top and the left lower side gives the illusion of movement (visual illusion).



Plate xxi
***Title**:* *Going Home*
Size: *83x130cm*
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*
Year: *2009*

4.3.11 Going home is an abstract painting achieved through depiction of some figures in an infused manner. An attempt is made to capture a scene of people going home after a day's work. This work seeks to suggest people heading to their destination.

A close observation reveals vibrant strokes. The vibrancy of colours shows the level of tonal values exhibited. The brighter areas of the painting on the left shows how yellow, blue, and red are used in different forms to enhance the richness of colours in the composition. The strokes are categorized into two. There are thin strokes that suggest movement, and the bold strokes indicate some characteristics in the dark part of the painting. It also forms human figures in an

abstract manner. The strokes have a remarkable reminiscence of the works of Gani Odutokun, Lasisi Lamidi, and Kefas Danjuma.

The use of complimentary colours is achieved along with sitter elements of art. The brush strokes on the foreground are achieved with horizontal lines of different sizes, while the background of the painting is executed in vertical lines and the sky with slanting and cross-hatching techniques.

4.4 Conclusion

The researcher tries to express himself sincerely in the course of producing these works for the purpose of contributing to knowledge. All the works try to convey an idea. An attempt is made at various ways of experimentation from the representational to abstraction. Steps are taken to carry out a systematic and logical study that could lead to ideas worthy of passing a message.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

This research made an analytical study of the "Dagi" motif. The paintings display free flow of brush strokes, flexibility, rhythm and easy manipulation of motif to suit the purpose of this research up to the point of stylization which eventually culminated in abstraction.

5.2 Findings

Without a consensus artist incorporates the dagi as mere design concept later it became an object of socio-stratification and now it's a liberal icon among the populace.

A few modern artist have incorporated the dagi into their composition merely as a form of African motif to locate the composition within that setting.

5.3 Conclusion

The act of painting in itself, involves technique variants of one form of expression or the other. The outcome of this research work is a new effect which shows that it is possible to marry the Dagi motif with other forms in painting without restriction.

5.4 Recommendations

Drawing from the varied research analysis, and literature review in this project, it is pertinent to say by way, of recommendation that:

- The artistic potentials of the “Dagi” is vast and inexhaustic.
- Contemporary painters both within and outside the academia should further explore the “Dagi” for painting.
- It is hoped that this research will succeed in making artist to pay more attention to their environment in search for inspiration for creativity.
- Those who use traditional motif are custodians of culture as to this; guild of such professionals should be encouraged as this will foster national unity
- Contemporary painters both within and outside the academia should further explore the Dagi for painting as this underscores the relevance of Dagi which has continued to inspire painters who are in constant need for iconic inspirational materials.

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APPENDIX I



Mallam Sani Nuhu's House, Zaria City with Northern Knot Motif Wall Decoration (2008).



Mallam Mohammed's House, Zaria City with Northern Knot Motif Wall Decoration (2008).

APPENDIX II



Emir of Zazzua Palace Entrance (2009)



The Main Entrance Zaria City , Kofan Doka (2009).

APPENDIX III



Iyan Muchia Palace with Northern Knot Motif Wall Decoration (2009)



Interior of the Palace of Emir of Zazzau with Northern Knot Motif Wall Decoration(2010)