GAS Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences (GASJAHSS)

Volume 4 | Issue 4, 2026 Homepage: https://gaspublishers.com/gasjahss/ ISSN: 3048-5002

Practical Explanation and Understanding of the Processes Involved in Weaving: Taking Aso-Oke as a Case Study

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Received: *01.03.2026* | ***Accepted:*** *09.03.2026* | ***Published:*** *14.04.2026*

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DOI: *10.5281/zenodo.19567245*

Abstract **Original Research Article**

For effective studio practice, skills and knowledge are the basic key notes for all studio artists to understand and put into practice. But many artists have neglected the means of acquiring the basic skills and knowledge that are involved in the assigned steps in art practice. This research task simply presents the basic ideas of understanding the practical processes of weaving taking aso-oke into proper assessment. In doing this, available literature was properly reviewed, examined, analyzed, interpreted and meaningfully documented. The method adopted was meaningfully conducted. It was recorded that understanding studio practice processes will enhance the effective and acceptability creation of an art product. Conclusion was drawn with resourceful recommendation that all artists should expand their level of knowledge and skill in aid of their studio practice.

Keywords: studio practice, weaving techniques, aso-oke, artistic skills development, art education.

Introduction

This researched paper explains the procedural steps that are critically expected to be embarked upon in the actualization of art practice in textile putting aso-oke into proper consideration. Steps in art practice are different from one aspect of art practice to another due to the diverse natures of the available aspects in art. Since there are different aspects of art based on the available branches of art: Visual art, (Fine and Applied Art), Performing Art and Liberal Art (Abiodun, 2005). This made it impossible for an artist to possess the knowledge and skills about the steps involved in all aspects of either art or applied art in studio practice. Such aspects are; textile, painting, ceramics, graphics, fashion, sculpture, art history, architectural design to mention but a few.

The textile industry has transformed substantially over the centuries, from primitive hand-weaving techniques to today's industrialized production processes. Based on this, the current textile artists need divergent knowledge and skills to be able to stand updated. Archaically, textiles were made from natural fibers such as cotton, wool, silk, and flax, with production techniques that had a relatively low environmental impact (Akinbileje, 2014). However, the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries marked a turning point, introducing mechanized spinning, weaving, and dyeing processes that drastically increased production capacity but also led to significant resource consumption and pollution. (Fletcher, K., & Tham,

M. 2020). The 20th century saw the rise of synthetic fibers, such as polyester and nylon, which provided durability and affordability but introduced environmental challenges, including non-biodegradability and micro plastic pollution. Mass production and fast fashion further accelerated these issues, leading to excessive waste, water contamination, and high carbon emissions. (Wang, F., et al. 2021).

Concerned sustainability about art processes began gaining traction in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, prompting researchers and industry leaders to explore eco-friendly alternatives. The development of organic cotton, recycled polyester, and plant-based materials, along with innovations in water-saving dyeing techniques and digital manufacturing, has paved the way for a new era in textiles. Karana, E., et al. (2021). Today, sustainability is a key focus in the industry, with efforts directed toward creating closed-loop systems, reducing waste, and integrating green technologies. As the world shifts toward more responsible consumption and production patterns, the textile industry's ongoing transformation holds the promise of a cleaner, more sustainable future. (Liu, X., et al. 2021).

The global textile industry plays a crucial role in modern society, providing clothing, household materials, and industrial fabrics. However, it is also one of the most resource-intensive industries, contributing significantly to pollution, waste, and carbon emissions. Traditional textile production relies heavily on water, energy, and chemicals, leading to environmental degradation and social concerns, including exploitative labour practices (Ademuleya, 2002). In response to these challenges, the industry is undergoing a transformation, embracing sustainable materials, innovative production processes, and cutting-edge technologies to minimize its ecological footprint. Sustainable textiles—made from organic, recycled, and biodegradable fibers are being developed to reduce reliance on non-renewable resources Abiodun, R. (2005).

Advanced manufacturing techniques, such as waterless dyeing, bio fabrication, and circular economy principles, are reshaping how textiles are produced, used and been disposed. This revolution in textiles aims to balance economic growth with environmental responsibility, ensuring a greener future for the industry (Allison, 1982). By adopting sustainable practices, manufacturers, designers, and consumers can work together to create a more ethical and eco-friendly textile ecosystem. Some yarns identified for pattern weave. The purpose of making a detailed illustration and explanation of weave patterns is to establish a practice – led frame work for whoever intends to work on any of the weave patterns now or in the future. The research is a studio based and it adopted studio exploratory method.

Egonwa, (2012) submits that:

> You continue to look at the issues, being to explore them until you come to some truth and to some understanding. In reality, an exploratory research does not end. It is when you are tired or arrives at an idea that approximates a result of one's heart desire that you stop". (p.4).

Preparation towards Understanding the Steps of Practical Practice in Weaving

Since there are many areas of practical processes in both Fine and Applied Arts (FAA), such aspects are; textile, painting, ceramics, graphics, fashion, sculpture, art history, architectural design to mention but a few. All these aspects listed above have different or similar methods of approach in handling the procedural steps in art practice (Clarke, 2005). In view of this, the exploration of the designs was done on the research method that involves manipulation of weft yarns to create varied and innovative designs using different yarns or threads in weaving. Innovation and variation of patterns on *aso-oke* was created using different techniques of warping, pattern drafting and weft lifting plans (Clarke, 2005).

The materials used for understanding the basic procedural steps involved in weaving using aso-oke as a ground of study are: Broad loom, creel, warping drum, various yarns, weaving accessories, and

measuring tape. Data was gathered through the existing literatures from libraries involving books, journal articles, internet, exhibition catalogs, published and unpublished academic papers. The works produced were analyzed from the technical conceptual thematic perspective. This research involved innovation and variation of patterns on *Aso-oke* weaves. Using the researcher's creative ingenuity. The peculiarity of this work is that, there are no hard and fast rules for making designs or patterns on *Aso-oke*. It can be done lavishly or minimally, depending on the taste or affluence of the owner. This is why a lot of freedom of expression can be seen in this work. This is true of any practice – led studio experiment as is the case in this study. The development of innovation and creativity would create a sense of inquiry in creating realistic patterns on *Aso-oke (*Chukueggu, 2000). The need to use both hands and cognitive domain to generate creative pattern in weave is the basic root of the methods and materials in this study. The titles of the weave patterns produced for this study are:

1. Human's Span.
2. Home.
3. The Beauty of Civilization.
4. Sky Is the Limit.
5. Success.
6. Unity.
7. Human Stage of Life.
8. Equal Right.
9. Shine Your Eyes.
10. Nigeria Political Era.
11. Draft.
12. 'Erinlakatabu'.
13. Strength of Unity 1
14. Strength of Unity 11
15. Beauty of Equality
16. Two Side Coin 1.
17. Two Side Coin 11.
18. European's Style of Life.
19. 'Ferase' Window.
20. Change.
21. Succession.
22. Beauty of Unity.
23. 'Ife Oti' cup (for drinking Wine.)
24. Nigeria Political Arena.
25. Interrelationship.
26. The Beauty of Blending 1.
27. The Beauty of Blending 11
28. Official Bureaucracy
29. Unity in Diversity 1
30. Individual Destiny
31. 'Fitila / Atupa' Lamp
32. 'Isokan' Unity
33. 'Tawonyo' Beauty of Unity
34. Blessing (Chukueggu, 2000)

In the practical execution of the steps involve in weaving a broad-plain loom was adopted to actualize the up listed pattern during the weaving process. It is the major equipment, used in actualizing all the components of the woven structures of the patterns.

Fig. i: Broad Plain Loom, 73 / 42 / 52 cm, 2016, Photograph – Victoria Ogundipe, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria

Broad plain loom is 65cm length, 57cm width and72cm height. It is four corner floor loom that consists of Cloth roller, Warp roller, Back rest, Harnesses, two shafts, Beater frame, Reed, Front rest stopper, Pedals and Ratchet wheel. Other accessories are Reed hook, Two Shuttles, Creel, warping drum, Bobbins, Bobbin winder, Yarns, Lease and a pair of scissors, two starting sticks, two lease ropes, four shedding sticks and small bobbins for weft yarns (Falaye, 2011).

Media Needed for the Execution of the Steps Involved in Weaving

In the execution and explanation of the basic procedural steps involved in weaving using aso-oke as the studio illustration were 100 Cotton, Polyester Cotton, Crowne Synthetic Yarns, Pencil, Point papers, Eraser, and Black biro, and measuring tape. These media were resourcefully put into used base on the below listed media appearances:

Reed Hook

Reed hook is made of a flat metal. It has a smooth and round edge with a curve. The curve hook is used to pass the warp threads as prearranged in the heralds through the appropriate dent of the reed (Kalu, 2007).

Plate ii. Reed Hook, Photograph – Victoria Ogundipe, Abraka, Delta State

Heddles.

The heddles are made with fifteen ply of threads. It is tied in a way that it has two wide openings at each end and a small opening at the Centre (heddle's eye). Each of the two shafts passes the opening above and each of the two shafts below passes through the opening below. The warp yarns that have been pre-arranged pass through the small opening at the center of the heralds (Kalu, 2007). This helps the weaver to form a cross. For example, if the weaver passes the first yarn through the eye of the head in shaft 1, the second yarn will pass through the heddle's eye in shaft 2, the third yarn into heddle's eye shaft 1, the fourth yarn into head through shaft 2 respectively. When this is happening, a cross is formed and this makes weaving possible.

Shuttle

The shuttle is like a small canoe or boat made with wood. It is very smooth and pointed at both ends. The weft yarn is normally wound on small bobbin inserted inside it. It carries the weft yarn through the shed or tunnel that is formed by the cross on the war yarns.

Plate iii. Shuttle, Photograph – Victoria Ogundipe, Abraka, Deita State

Lease Rope

These are long and thick ropes. They are of many ply to make it thick. They are used to separate the warp ends into two sections, on the warping drum after the ends originated from the big bobbins on the creel then pass through the separator lease.

Two Starting Sticks

They are made of wood. They are very smooth and flexible. They are used to start the weaving after the warp ends have been tied to the cloth roller (Falaye, 2011).

Warping Drum

It is a wooden framework drum like. Warp ends are wound round it by turning the drum. It is an instrument used for measuring out warp ends for weaving. It is often four meters round and the starting points on the drum have inch nails.

Plate iv. Warping Drum with Creel, 2016, Photograph -Victoria Ogundipe, Delta state.

Creel

It is made of wood; it has spool rack made of tiny rods (Diakhare, 2010). Bobbins of yarn are arranged on the spool racks for easy rotation. The ends of the warp yarns from the spool rack are tied on the inch nails on the warping drum and then pass through the lease to form sheds for lease rope to pass through (Falaye, 2011).

Plate v. Creel, 42cm by 56cm, 2016, Photograph –Victoria Ogundipe, Abraka, Delta State,

Bobbins

A round device which yarn is wound. It can be big or small. It is made of plastic.

Plate vi. Collection of Bobbins, 2017, Photograph – Victoria Ogundipe, Abraka, Delta State.

A Pair of Scissors

A pair of scissors is normally used to trim the warp yarns to equal size before positioning it on the nail of the warping drum. It is also for the cutting off the woven fabric after the weaving process.

Lease

It is made of metal. It is used to create shedding lens so that the warp ends could be able to form two sheds for the two lease ropes.

Plate vii. Victoria Ogundipe, Inserting Yarns through the Lease. 2017. Photograph – Temitope Ojo, Abraka, Delta State.

Methods Adopted in the Execution of the Procedural Steps in Weaving

The calculation of ends, or yarns and pattern drafting to show the technical details of the intending design structure was first done on a point paper. This is a draft to the configuration of how the arrangement of the warping, tying, lifting up/ pegging plan and threading of the yarns of the fabric were achieved. This process was hereby followed by warping, dressing the loom and weaving. The pattern was earlier planned according to the number of different lifting plans and pattern drafting. Innovation and creativity here involved the manipulation of weft yarns to create varied and innovative designs using different yarns or threads.

All the woven clothes have at least two groups of yarns that interlaced with each other. The vertical yarns are known as the warp and the horizontal yarns are known as the weft. The weft yarns interlace the warp yarns one row at a time after weft thread has been drawn through the warp; the yarns were beaten to form cloth. Warp yarns or threads were wound on to a loom, (a loom is the framework across which warp threads are stretched for weaving of cloth). Innovative and variation weave structure was created using Broad plain loom (Diakhare, 2010). Broad plain loom is designed to weave plain and diverse patterned fabric by manipulation / alternation of the warp and weft threads, hand pick manipulation and using extra sticks to form more sheds to achieve the patterns. This loom was specially used to weave wide

and long lengths of fabric. The production of the innovation and variation of patterns on aso-oke weave is divided into stages as follows:

Stage 1: Conception

This stage of step is the act of sketches, configuration innovation and variation of weaves were first drafted on point papers. These drafts are the notation used to represent graphically the appearance and mechanics of the weaves. The weaving process consists of the following steps.

Weave Draft

This is the point paper representation of the weave. It is the weaving draft of the innovation and variation of weaves. This stage reveals the graphical notation of what the weave looked like. The warp ends were represented using the vertical rows and the weft ends with the horizontal rows. Squares were used to represent the point of intersection; shaded squares depicted the sections where the warps were above the weft. The unshaded areas depicted the sections where the wefts were above the warps.

The Threading Draft

This draft represents graphically the order in which the warp yarns were treaded through the eye of the heddles. It is also called the draw. The heddles of the loom were divided into two sets that is two shafts / harnesses, shaft one and shaft two. It is read as harnesses occur from front to the back that is 1, 2, 1 and 2.

The Tie-Up Draft

This represents graphically the harness which was lifted simultaneously to create each shed. It is read from left to right for the treadles and from bottom to the top for the shafts.

The Treadling Draft

This represents the graphical form of the sequence of sheds that were created for a pattern that is the pedal that is created for a particular shed.

The Treadling Order

I, 2, 1, 2, I, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2,

1120 / 2 = 560 Ends per shaft

Weave Plan

This shows a detailed plan of the pattern indicating which warp and weft yarns were combined to give the weave plan. The arrangement of weft yarn for design changed the appearance of the plain weave structure entirely (Duncan, 2011). At this juncture extra sheds were formed by using shed sticks and hand picking method to execute designs on the fabric while weaving.

Stage 2: Yarn Calculation

This stage critically involves the scientific and simple artistic calculation of the Number of Ends Used for Warp in both literal and logical thinking. The calculations were measured in the following manners:

Width of the Fabric (W) ----------51cm = 20 inches

Number of Reed Count (C) ----------28

Number of Ends per inch (E/1) --------28x2= 56 Epi

Length of the Fabric (L) ----------1 Meter

The following formula was adopted for the simple execution of the above measured calculations: Epi x W = 58 X 20inches/51 cm = 1120 ends + 16 ends for selvedge = 1136 ends for the warp calculation

Stage 3: Winding

Yarns were transferred from cones to bobbins with the aid of winding wheel, for easy count of warp ends from the creel to warping drum.

Plate viii. Victoria Ogundipe, Transferring yarn from Cone to Bobbins with the aid of Winding Wheel, 2018, (Photograph – Abeni Ayoola) Delta State University.

Stage 4: Warping

This exercise was to have every warp ends on the same length and at uniform tension. It also involves establishing the length and width of the cloth, arranging the design, keeping each warp yarn at equal length and tension parallel to each other. To achieve this, the following gadgets were employed: Warping drum, Creel with spool rack, Bobbins and shedding lens.

Procedures Involved in the Practical Execution of the Steps Involved in Weaving

Bobbins were arranged on the spool rack, for every rotation, the ends of the warp yarns from the spool rack were passed through the shedding lens in pairs and then parted into two to form sheds sequentially, through which the lease ropes were passed to effect cross (Duncan, 2011). This is then tie on the inch nail on the warping drum. As the warping drum was rolled normally the warp yarns were wound on the drum. The length and number of ends already calculated was determined with the measuring gadget attached to the warping drum.

Plate ix. Victoria Ogundipe, Tying Yarns on an inch nail on the warping drum 2018, (Photograph – Abeni Ayoola) Abraka, Delta State University.

Plate x. Victoria Ogundipe, passing Lease ropes through sheds to effect cross, 2018, (Photograph – Abeni Ayoola) Abraka, Delta State University.

Plate xi. Victoria Ogundipe, Parted Yarns into two to form sheds sequentially, 2018, (Photograph – Abeni Ayoola) Abraka, Delta State University.

Plate xii. Victoria Ogundipe, Passing Lease Ropes through Shed to Effect Cross, 2018, (Photograph – Abeni Ayoola) Abraka, Delta State University.

Warp ends were transferred from the warping drum to the warping beam/roller. This stage is called BEAMING. After beaming, the warp roller was transferred to the loom ready for weaving.

Plate xiii. Victoria Ogundipe, Beaming the Warp Yarns on the Roller, 2018, (Photograph – Abeni Ayoola.) Delta State University.

Plate xiv. Victoria Ogundipe, Beaming the Warp Yarns on the Roller, 2018, (Photograph Sola Ojo) Delta State University.

Plate xv. Victoria Ogundipe, Securing the Warp Yarns, 2018, (Photograph –Sola Ojo) Delta State University.

Stage 5: Loom Dressing

- **Transferring of Warp Beam to the Loom from Warping Drum after Beaming**

The Warp beam or warp roller was placed on the front of the loom. The breast beam and beater, that is the reed guide was removed to allow easy access to the heddles in the shafts. Seat or stool was placed inside the loom. The knotted warp was draped and spread over the back rest with the loop ends near the cross hanging towards the back of the loom and the other ends towards the front.

- **Threading The Heddles**

The breast beam and the beater frame / guide reed were removed to allow the weaver to sit close as possible to the heddles (Duncan, 2011). The warp ends hanging down at the back of the harnesses. The lease sticks remained in position as the yarn was taken in exact sequence with the aid of the threading draft. First end to harness 1, second end to harness 2, third end to harnesses 1, and fourth end to harness 2 respectively

Plate xvi. Victoria Ogundipe, Threading the Heddles = Inserting the ends into heddles eye, 2018. (Photograph – Monwuba Veronica) Delta State University.

Plate xvii. Victoria Ogundipe, Threading the Heddles = Inserting the ends into heddles, 2018. (Photograph - Monwuba Veronica) Delta State University.

- **Inserting The Ends Through The Reed's Dents**

The beater was returned to the loom, and when all the yarns were inserted through the reed dents, the warp was placed in the front of the loom for balance beating, ready for work.

Plate xviii. Victoria Ogundipe, Inserting the Ends through the Reed's Dents, (Photograph - Monwuba Veronica) Delta State University.

Errors I checked at this stage, on the reed were; Missed heddle, missed yarn, crossed threads, too many yarns in one dent, missed dent.

- **Tying of Warp Ends to The Cloth Roller**

At this stage, warp yarns were divided into six or eight equal parts for easy tying to the cloth roller. While tying the yarns the tension of the warp yarns was very high to permit smooth weaving.

- **Inserting The Lease Sticks**

The two lease sticks were inserted into sheds of the cross ties to replace the cross ties that is the lease ropes (Ekwueme, 2009). The sticks were secured not to fall off. One of the sticks was tied to the back of the loom.

- **Stage 6: Filling The Shuttle**

The shuttle which is made of wood, is built like canoe or boat are filled with hand powered bobbin winder. Bobbin quits were collected from sewn streamers (Ekwueme, 2009). The container that the thread is wound on was the bobbin using for the filling of weft yarn into the shuttle. The bobbins were filled with weft yarn before inserted into the shuttle for weaving.

Stage 7: Weaving

Weaving started by pressing the first pedal of the loom in order to create shed, after tying the warp yarns to the cloth roller, Starting stick was introduced into the shed, and weft yarn was used to fix it, hence, weaving continued. While pressing the pedals one after the other shed was formed and enough amount of weft yarn was deposited automatically unwound inside the shed from the bobbin in the shuttle. It was passed by the right hand and collected by the left hand. Beating of the web/fabric fell by the beater that is reed was the next stage. During the weaving process, by the time the shed becomes difficult to accept the shuttle to pass through, the cloth was rolled up unto the cloth beam/cloth roller. The act of taking up woven material onto the cloth beam and letting off additional warp from the warp beam were done simultaneously. Every time the warp was

moved, the overall tension was adjusted (Filani, 2012).

Uniform selvedge was maintained while weaving. This was achieved by not pulling the weft yarn too tightly at the edges to avoid the fabric drawing in and narrowing. At the selvedges all weft yarns were interlocked with the warp yarns when changing or alternating the shuttle (Filani, 2012). The yarn from first shuttle was over the outside warp to form design depending on the pattern drafting and the yarn from the second shuttle was under the outside warp to fix the pattern. As the fabric was woven, an accurate measure of its length was checked. This was achieved by attaching a measuring string of one yard at the selvedge. It was used to know how many yards of fabric have been woven (Igirgi, 2005).

Weaving was completed when the warp yarn can no longer move forward. Sufficient lengths of warp ends were left to prevent the fabric from unraveling. The warp ends near the heddles were cut, the beam roller was rolled back and the fabric was removed. Innovative and variation weaves structure were created by using manipulation/alternation of the warp and weft threads, hand pick manipulation and using extra sticks to form more sheds to achieve the patterns a.

Plate xix: - Victoria Ogundipe, Using more Shedding Sticks to create more Sheds for Designs, 2018, (Photograph – Monwuba Veronica) Delta State University.

Observations

Based on the practical explanation of the procedural steps involved in weaving as carefully stated and explained, the following observations are presented:

- Due to the orthodox approaches in textile design practice many textile designers have personally abandoned the actual steps involved in weaving.

- The basic practical involvement of technology has brought in short-cut into the basic procedural steps involved in weaving.
- Due to lack of proper involvement in in serve training contributed to the in a proper execution of the basic procedural steps in weaving.
- Nonchalant attitude of some textile designers with concentration on weavers.

Conclusion

It is therefore, concluded that, understanding the procedural steps involved in weaving will surely be of great benefit to all textile designers irrespective of thee areas of specialization in textile.

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