

THE PAISLEY PATTERN...a brief history

“Shaped by a multitude of hands, Paisley belongs to us all”

No-one knows for SURE where it truly originated, but it can be traced back to prehistoric times, representing a plant form.

In Babylon (the ruins of which are now located in modern-day Iraq), the symbol we refer to as the Paisley teardrop is thought to symbolise the date palm, also known as the ‘tree of life’ as it gave food, wood, string, thatch - and therefore shelter.

The motif began as a tightly curled palm frond, and changed form as it passed through different hands...

The Celts added curves and swirls so the European version of the Paisley motifs became more of a ‘cornucopia’ with botanicals and additional floral motifs.

There are many different shapes and sizes - squat and fat like a pine cone, to elongated, and everything in-between, leading to many different names to describe this motif:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buta • Buti cones • Boteh cones • Keri – (raw mango) • Mango pattern/<i>manga-manga</i> • Bracken frond • Beloved Sister • Sleeping Dragon • The lozenge • The pine cone • Ambuta – Asia • Kodi • Buddhas’ footprint • The little onion (Vienna) • The tadpole (France) • The pine 	<p>In India it’s so common it is often referred to as the ‘BELOVED SISTER’ as it’s so familiar and is found everywhere, on all manner of textiles from clothing and furnishings, hankies, shawls, drawn on the ground, and with even a cake shaped in its form!</p> <p>COLOUR</p> <p>The colours were more vibrant in India, with lots of red as the dye was the most readily available. In Europe, the fashions were for more muted colours. The male weavers in India sing a ‘song of colours’ as they work the thread – 400m-1500m per shawl!</p>
<p>STORY TELLING</p> <p>Links with prints from other cultures - depicting palm trees and animals as well as florals and leaves. Also different Paisley shawls for different occasions – ‘Kirk’ shawl for mourning. In Asia, shawls or saris might depict a tiger hunt, flowers, birds, trees – telling the stories of every day lives.</p>	<p>The Paisley motif holds SPIRITUAL and RELIGIOUS significance</p> <p>It has been described as having a YIN/YANG resemblance linking it to fertility with obvious oriental origins (China)</p>

SHAWLS

Kashmiri shawls are a great example of how the Paisley motif was used, beginning as a simple flower, becoming more intricate as weaving techniques advanced. Kashmir was considered the 'paradise of India'

Shawls of Paisley design were in fashion for nearly 100 years, from around 1780 until the 1870's. During this time millions were woven, embroidered and printed in Kashmir, Persia, India, Russia, USA and Europe, in France at Paris and Lyon, Austria in Vienna, in England at Norwich and in Scotland at Edinburgh, Glasgow and Paisley. It was the woven Kashmir shawls which first caught women's imagination, with European manufacturers quick to emulate by weaving or printing. Paisley produced shawls the most economically and for the longest period, so the name becoming synonymous with the place of manufacture.

In the rest of Asia/India, the pattern was reserved for nobles, princes and holy men.

AFRICAN ANKARA PRINTS...a brief history

100% cotton African 'wax' fabric.

Very little drape, quite stiff.

'ASOEBI' – meaning clothes of the family. A signature pattern, colour or motif.

Tribal and storytelling – communicating messages and commanding respect.

Usually vibrant and colourful, featuring simple shapes built up to create a dramatic look.

What makes African fabric, African?

The people who make it, the people who buy it, or the people who wear it?

In Africa, as in anywhere, the clothes you wear communicate to others things about you. Colours and symbols are clues about your status, your beliefs, how rich or how important you are. Meanings have changed through time but the statements remain and these are powerful visual cues.

What saying or piece of advice would you put on a piece of clothing or 'hide' in the pattern? What do you want to communicate to others without having to speak it?

A **KANGA** is a rectangular piece of cotton cloth printed in a bold design with a distinctive border on each side. They are printed and sold in pairs so they can be cut and worn as head and body wrappers. They are most popular in Kenya and Tanzania and the designs are many and varied, dictated by the changing fashions there.

Kangas were produced on the East Coast of Africa in the mid-1800s, and the designs were very simple – spots on a dark background. The pattern looked like the feathers of a guinea fowl – a bird known as ‘KANGA’ in Swahili.

They became very popular in Eastern and Southern Africa, but were not actually produced in Africa until the 1950s, instead they were imported from places like China, India and Europe.

As the patterns and designs evolved, slogans were added. These were sayings in the Swahili language such as the thoughts and feelings of the wearer or messages to society in general. They were worn by women usually, and particularly significant at important occasions but also used as everyday items such as baby slings or tablecloths.

“What happens to the chicken will happen to the guinea fowl” – a bit like a statement on karma or destiny.

When is an African textile, not an African textile?

Maybe when it is made in Europe, imitating Indonesian style, for sale in West Africa?

Much of the vibrant cloth we associate with Africa has this global colonial history.

In the 1800s the Dutch tried to sell their version of a ‘Javanese’ wax-resist cloth called BATIK to their colony in Indonesia.

The production process resulted in a crackled effect that wasn’t desirable, but it did become popular with African men working in the region, who then took it back home.

The Dutch and British realised there was a big market for these wax-resist designs, and so an industry was born!

Other manufacturers across Europe got in on this industry as it grew, and the designs by then were led by the tastes of the African consumers.

As Africa took back its independence, factories were set up all over Africa. Today the producers and exporters of these African ‘Ankara’ prints are spread across Africa, Asia and Europe. Cheap exports are now a real threat to this local industry, and campaigns like BUY GHANA FIRST are supported by the governments, African designers and manufacturers to help local economies.

Techniques covered throughout the workshops:

- Wax resist/Nigerian wax-resist technique (flour + water) on fabric
- Drawing on fabric with pencil, then acrylic painting & mark-making using various tools such as brushes, twigs, potato masher, cotton buds, sponges, dabbers and...our hands! (*curved side of our palms creates Paisley motif!*)
- Creating a repeat pattern square on paper
- Creating a linocut block print & printing using fabric inks + acrylic
- Drawing with fabric pens to add finishing touches to our prints

Video resources used during the project + for further info/research:

Paisley motif origins and designs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlqvV8e7O2U>

The Story of Paisley: Inside Paisley Museum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jAMi82mMtY>

Nigerian 'Adire' Wax Resist:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nELccoG-PcA>

African Prints & Meanings:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lGRp_M9TYvE

Ankara Fabric Shopping in Ghana:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddiaWx8BiCk>

Ankara Meanings:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DN3V5Xm0akc>

African Ankara Prints:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Riwur5yRmLE>

Linocut Print Making:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUW1PIWBmok>

Block Printing with Styrofoam (boat):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cCpfTOGp6w>

Colourful Styrofoam Prints (fish):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BESZ8XUpM0Y>

Linocut Print-making (zebra):

<https://lilliangray.co.za/lino-printing-print-making/>

Making a repeat pattern square on paper:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HhtO0WrLAE>

Prepared and presented by Rebecca Johnstone, textile artist – Dainty Dora Surface Pattern Design + Print. Thank you!