

# Deconstructing the Concept of ‘African Print’ in the Ghanaian Experience

by

Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel

eyensempii@gmail.com

Department of Art Education,  
University of Education, Winneba  
Republic of Ghana

## Abstract

Based on data collected from archival sources, and in the rereading of scholarly information on the concept of *African print*, this article examines what constitutes authentic *African print*. The article argues that authentic *African print* refers to prints of African origin and contemporary prints by African people, other than wax print. The article suggests that President Kwame Nkrumah’s indigenisation and localisation of wax print companies, promoted its overwhelming patronage, which curtailed importation of foreign-based unauthentic African print, and thus, created more jobs and fuelled the nation’s agenda of moving from an import-based economy to an export-led economy, in his era.

**Keywords:** African print, wax print, fancy print, textiles, fabric, deconstruction, batik.

## Introduction

There is a terminological dispute among scholars over the use of the term *African print* in a collective sense in reference to European and Asiatic wax prints and the indigenous fabric prints of Africa (Akinwuni, 2008; Jefferson, 1974). The generalisation of authentic *African prints* with European and Asiatic wax prints forcefully blur the sharp distinction between the prints. This has caused some scholars to contest the appendage of the collective term *African print* to European and Asiatic fabric brands, mostly sold in Central and West Africa. Scholars like Jefferson (1974) and Akinwuni (2008) have expressed academic interest in the deconstruction and reconstruction of the term. Thus, delving briefly into the textiles decorative techniques of Ghana and other African nations and the roots of the so-called *African print* remain paramount in the process of definitional reconstruction.

Wax print fabrics are characterised by a waxy venial effect, and patchy designs because of the varying manner of wax applications such as cracking and splattering of the wax in the printing process of fabrics. As in batiks, the wax prints produce duplex printing effects. In Africa, wax print fabrics bear different brand names in different countries. Some of the names are Uniwax, Woodin, GTP (Young, 2012), Chitenge, Veritable Java Print, Guaranteed Dutch Java Hollandis, Abada, Ankara, Real English Wax and Ukpo (Akinwumi, 2008; Uqalo, 2015). Others are Lappa (Liberia, Sierra Leone), Wrappa, Pagne (Francophone West Africa) and Kanga (East Africa) (International Bicycle Fund, 1995). Other brand labels ascribed to *African print* are as featured in Table 1. Uqalo (2015) classified *wax print* into two: *real wax* and *imi wax*. The real wax is Indonesian inspired machine-made batik cloth with duplex effect, wherein wax, is used as a resisting agent to avoid dye absorption which comes with an interesting linearity due to the cracking effects of the wax. Real wax is expensive than *imi wax*, with China as a leading producer (90%) (Uqalo, 2015). *Imi wax* also referred to as a fancy print, creates the impression of a computer-generated ‘crack’ effect when printed, wherein only one side of the fabric is printed, with the other side of the fabric, left blank.

Table 1

*Some brands and labels ascribed to 'African prints' in different countries.*

Countries	Type of Print	Fabric Label
China	<i>Real Wax:</i>	Sanhe, Hitarget, Prosimex, Hitrack, Qualiwax, Viva Wax, Prestige Wax
		Vasco, NiceWax, Unique Wax, Hit Wax, Top Wax
	<i>Imi wax</i>	
India	<i>Imi wax</i> (local Indian name: Chirag and Raymond Cotton)	Super Wax, Angel Wax
Thailand and Indonesia	-	-
Nigeria	<i>Real Wax:</i> <i>Imi Wax:</i>	Crowntex, Duniya, Queentex, Qualiwax, Classic Wax UNTL, Nichemwax, Sun Flag, Bag Co., Lucky Fiber, Unitex, Haffer, Zamfara, Angel
Tanzania	<i>Imi Wax</i>	
Ghana	<i>Real Wax</i> <i>Imi Wax:</i>	ABC, Woodin GTP, ATL, Printex, Da Viva
Ivory Coast	<i>Real Wax:</i>	Uniwax, Woodin
Holland	<i>Real Wax</i>	Vlisco

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(Source: Uqualo, 2015)

The Asiatic continent (China, India, Thailand and Indonesia) produces 83% by volume and 71% by value of so-called *African print*. Africa produces only 15% by volume and holds 21% value as shown in Table 2. It is evident from the table that the African fabric market has been Asianised with Europe having 1% volume and 8% value.

Table 2

*Global production and factory value of Wax print fabrics.*

Regions	Countries	Global Production by Volume (Millions of Yards)				Global Production by FOB Value (Million US\$)			
		By Country	By Region	Share by Country	Share By Region	By Country	By Region	Share by Country	Share By Region
Asia	China	1281		60%		1 386		53%	
	India	444		21%		395		15%	
	Thailand	30	1785	1%	83%	32	1845	1%	71%
	Indonesia	30		1%		32		1%	
Africa	Nigeria	124		6%		204		8%	
	Tanzania	102		5%		168		6%	
	Ghana	68	332	3%	15%	111	547	4%	21%
	Ivory Coast	25		1%		41		2%	
	Cameroon	9		0%		15		1%	
	Burundi	5		0%		8		0%	
Europe	Holland	24		1%	1%	200	200	8%	8%
Total		2141	2141	100%	100%	2 592	2 592	100%	100%

(Source: Uqalo,2015, p.13).

The collapse of many textile manufacturing and garment industries and decline in production of the few remaining is blamed on smuggled imports of pirated local designs from Asiatic countries including China, India and Pakistan (United States International Trade Commission, 2009; Quartey, 2006; Axelsson, 2012; Uqalo, 2015) sold at cheap prices. In addition, erratic power (electric) supply, high cost of electric power, low production of the few remaining textiles industries, and inadequate financing are some of the problems plaguing this sector.

Irrespective of the technology used, its origin and the designers' background, whether the designers are influenced by certain aspects of the long established African fabric design technology or not, once their target is the African market, they loosely label the fabric as *African Print* just to induce the African buyer. Taking the deconstruction approach, this article delves into the historical and circumstantial issues that have contributed to the gross generalisation of authentic African prints with 'foreign' ones that have overshadowed the former. The article also examines what constitutes authentic African print, the President Kwame Nkrumah's factor of indigenising Eurocentric and Asiatic wax prints in pre and post-independent Ghana.

## **Surface and Structural Textiles Decorative Techniques in Pre-Colonial Africa**

Several studies have documented the *surface* and *structural* textiles decorative techniques of Africa (Sackey, 2002; Clarke 1997; Picton, 1995; Heathcote, 1974). Surface decorative techniques are the decorative effects that are introduced to the fabric after its structural construction. In other words, they are the surface decorative effects done to enhance the surface quality of the fabric. They include dyeing, painting, printing, embroidery and applique. The structural decorative techniques on the other hand are those effects that come with the basic forming of the fabric structure. Structural decoration is the anatomical patterns and arrangement which characterise a textile fabric or article due to its method of construction. Examples are bonding, felting, netting, weaving, knitting and crocheting. Printing, which is one of the surface decorative techniques, is of interest in this article.

The Adinkra stamped cloth printing of Ghana (Rattary, 1927; Glover, 1969, Willis, 1998; Ofori-Ansa, 1999; Fosu, 1994) is an ancient printing art, practised by the Asante. It involves the designing of symbols, which are transferred onto calabash stamps for printing. The block design is dipped into the local dye named *Adinkra Aduro*, and stamped repetitively to form interesting patterns in the fabric. Adinkra printing technology of the Asantes was long established before colonialists invasion (Essel & Opoku-Mensah, 2014). Besides, ancient Egyptian cloth printing technology dating back to 5000BC (African Heritage, 2013), and other printing art traditions of Africa is evident of the existence of the art before the introduction of the 'foreign' wax print wrongly labelled with the generic term *African print*. It is obvious that the wax print culture is not authentically African. Labelling it as *African print* is therefore, deceptive. The ethnic cloth printing technology of Africa such as the Egyptian fabric printing culture, adinkra printing of Ghana, and others in Africa are the authentic African prints. Globalising European and Asiatic wax prints in the African market does not make them *African prints*. *Korhogo Cloth* (Ivory Coast), *Adire* (Nigeria), *Bogolanfini* ('mud cloth' from Mali), *Kente* (Ghana), and *Dogon Cloth* (Mali, Burkina Faso) are examples of woven cloths that are authentically African and desired to be named as such. Young (2012) in his article titled *Africa's Fabric is Dutch*, creates the impression that Africa has no cloth making tradition and usage with the exception of Dutch wax print. To reinforce this point he added that 95% of the customer-base of wax print is African.

## **Brief History of European Version of ‘African Print’**

The Dutch wax print that has gained popularity in Africa since the nineteenth century was originally inspired by ancient Indian batik tradition. This Indian batik art spread to Indonesian Island (Java, south of Borne) and Japan. The art experienced shades of evolutionary perfections amongst Javanese of Indonesia before the turn of the thirteenth century (Akinwumi, 2008; Young, 2012). Its design and usage amongst the people of Indonesia served as symbol of clan identity, fertility of women, initiation and marriage (Lindholm, 1979; and Newman, 1977 as cited in Akinwumi, 2008). The Javanese later introduced other symbolic and non-symbolic designs inspired by their encounter with their Indians, Chinese and Dutch colonisers. When the Dutch gained full colonial control of the Javanese in the seventeenth century, they imbibed the batik art of the Javanese and began the production of wax prints. Their version was a simplified impression of the batik dyeing effect by reducing to the barest minimum the drudgery involved in original handmade batik production. The designs were done for the Indonesian and European markets, but proved favourable in the West (Sylvanus, 2007) and Central African market (Jennings, 2011) in the nineteenth century. This is what has gained root in Africa until today. The Dutch wax print was brought to Africa as a *cash crop* by European traders and missionaries and, therefore, it is not inherently African, as perceived. According to Akinwuni (2008, p. 188-189) the prints (wax, fancy) is a wholesale copy of Indonesian batik style that use non-African design motifs, but named ‘African Print’ to deceive African buyers. He writes:

There has been widespread use of nature-based design motifs which were styled from non-African traditions right from the inception of Africa prints in Africa. This shows that the term ‘African print’, a misnomer was coined by its producers just to deceive the African buyers. The deception has continued up to the contemporary times.

Hoogenboom, Bannink and Trommel (2010) made a similar observation. They detected that Pieter Fentener van Vlissingen & Co acronymised as Vlisco mass produced wax prints to Africa without any specific cultural, customary and traditional reference to Africa in terms of the design, but later made attempt at that to increase patronage of the African buyer. Vlissingen, a salesman started the company with his friend Peter Sutorius, a textile printer in 1846 (Kauth, 2010). Their attempt to incorporate attributes of Africa’s design cultural nuances caused the company to lose control over the content of its products and it touch with their exclusivity in dictating the taste of African consumers from its Netherlands design headquarters. Later, the colour and motif choice was dictated by the African retailers and consumers.

The terminological deception of *African print* has made inroads and really needs to be deconstructed. Since ‘Vlisco’s conquest of the West African textile market around the turn of the century, ... captured using the imperialist facilities that had been at the disposal of the trading houses under the protection of the colonial European powers (Hoogenboom, Bannink & Trommel, 2010, p.940); it is necessary for African academics in fashion and textiles to join the debate in determining the African origins of the so-called *African prints*. Furthermore, what seem to be giving its credence of African fabric character is its colour psychology and localised cloth names, later introduced by its African retailers’ collaborators. This is because the names given to fabrics could be entertaining, inciting, provocative or cast insinuations, based on naming systems contributed by the retailers who collaborate with the producers.

In the few fashion design and textiles tertiary institutions in Ghana, there is a gradual response to the debate deconstruction and reconstruction of the term *African print*. Many of the student-designers prefer to design and produce their own fabric prints and use them for their collections. Some of the renowned fashion designers based on their collections, prefer to produce their own printed fabrics; use local fabrics or a blend of the local fabrics and foreign fabrics. From the design point of view, creating unique designs in making collections is awesome.

Another critique stemming from the use of the term *African print* only to refer to the Dutch and Asiatic wax print is that it relegates all other local prints to the background, and encages Africa’s fabric technological image to European wax prints. It signals that Africa’s common image in textiles in globalised fashion is European Dutch Wax print. A question of whether or not it is worthy for Ghana and Africa as a whole to patronise for centuries the product of a foreign company whose income does not stay in the economy, but rather saved in their home countries has been raised. African nations seem not to benefit much from the patronage of their people in European Dutch Wax print and Asiatic prints in terms of its contribution to the African economy. With trade liberalisation, African governments must revisit their respective trade policies to ensure that they maximise their benefits and promote their indigenous industries without being protectionists.

## Defining Authentic African Print

Fashion in itself is global, making what constitutes *African Print* complex in the scholarship of African fabric tradition. This is due to factors such as globalisation, glocalisation, globalisation and modernity, which does not wipe the truism. In commercial parlance, Akinwumi (2008, p.179) defines *African print* as a ‘general term employed by the European textile firms in Africa to identify fabrics which are machine-printed using wax resins and dyes in order to achieve batik effect on both sides of the cloth, and a term for those imitating or achieving a resemblance of the wax type effects.’ The term *African Print* has evolved in usage to include wax print fabrics of African-based printing firms, European-owned printing firms and or African-based European-owned printing firms. Initially, the term was deployed in reference to the Dutch wax print of European origin.

These fabrics may or may not have affinity to the general African fabric characteristics of fauvistic colour application; irregular and asymmetric use of design elements such as line, texture and shapes/form; symbolisms; conceptual consideration and contextual aesthetic maneuvering and communicativeness. For example, the exploration of these characteristics in fabric design in the African context, makes the fabric print a metaphoric object of narratology. These characteristics of African fabrics have become a commercial idea exploited by many non-African fabric designing and printing firms in order to take advantage of the African fabric consumer market. In the attempt, there is gross imitation and simulation of the authentic African designs for the global market. This seems normal since fashion inspiration is universal. However, such products from these non-African printing firms must be taken as a non-African experience of authentic African print characteristics. By examining critically the simulacra of authentic *African print* characteristics, Akinwuni (2008) observed that the prints have little or no indigenous African fabric design characteristics to be named as such, and thus, proposed that African governments should invest in mass production of authentic *African prints* to the global market. Sylvanus (2007, p.205) opines that ‘what defines authenticity ... lies in the observer’s gaze and not in the object itself.’ Sylvanus’ assertion implies that authenticity may be subjective. If that is the case, then the nature of the observer must be questioned as well. If the actual practitioners and custodians of a particular art have determined imitation of their original fabric design art as in the case of Africa, then, where lies in the subjectivity of their observations? Authentic *African prints* refer to the ethnic fabric prints of African origin and contemporary fabric prints by African people other than wax print. Sylvanus (2007) argued that customers of imitated *African prints* seem to care less about the authenticity of the fabrics. The cold attitude of African governments in protecting their heritage through processes such as patenting and instituting an enforcing punitive laws have accelerated the imitation efforts and piracy activities, especially, from producers in the Asiatic countries. In this event, the imitators and the pirates gain at the expense of the true originators of the art.

## **Local ‘African Print’ Companies in Post-Independence Ghana**

At the eve of Ghana’s independence, and post-independence era, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, chartered a path of reconstructing the identity of the then new nation-state. One of the ways was through dress cultural practice. The *Kente* and *Fugu* (smock) were used as “metaphorical unifier between northern and southern part of Ghana and in other sense to signal the return to self-governance as a result of its usage and appearance in a turning point of Ghana’s independence struggle” (Essel & Amissah, 2015, p.32). The *Kaba* and slit ensemble also became a high fashion amongst Ghanaian female adults, and still remains a classic. To reduce to the barest minimum the nation’s constant import, and change the status quo of the colonial legacy of import-based economy, Nkrumah’s Seven-Year Development Plan focused on establishing industries to put the nation on a comfortable pedestal in overcoming financial difficulties and vicissitude (Nkrumah, 1965). Thus, he set out plans, among other things, to establish local textile companies that helped to industrialise the local textile art.

On September 24, 1962, Ghana and Japan signed a bilateral agreement that sought to the establishment of a Textile Training Centre at Tema to provide Ghanaians with practical and theoretical training in basic industrial weaving, dyeing, wax printing, finishing of cotton fabrics, and production of towels. The training centre was mandated to run full time, 2-year craft courses in weaving, bleaching, dyeing, printing (including wax print) and finishing for Middle School graduates who had successfully completed the 2-year pre-technical course at a Technical Institute; part-time courses for textile workers; and part-time courses for apprentices in the textile industry in accordance with the then National Apprenticeship Act. In addition, it was to run advanced courses for foremen and textile maintenance mechanics (via an arrangement between the government of Japan and the government, 1963). This was a way to Africanise the wax print whose usage in colonial Ghana had become a symbolic status of wealth and elitism. Nkrumah's intention was to build the technical capacity of the youth in industrial textile production to create jobs, build the economy, and be self-sufficient so as to curtail their importation, and rather export to other African nations, thus moving from import-based economy to an export-led economy. Nkrumah explained this in his address to the national assembly of the second parliament of the republic on August 24, 1965, hence:

The House may be aware that we have entered into a number of bilateral agreements under which we are increasing trade, technical exchange and general co-operation with other African States. We intend, in the years ahead, to extend this process. Under these bilateral agreements it will be necessary for us to examine ways and means of promoting our export trade with our sister African States. It is high time for Ghana to set up Economic and Trade Missions to our Embassies in Africa. (p.8)

Some of the measures put in place were a high increase in tariffs of imported printed textiles and restriction on the quantity of goods to import without being protectionist; and surely have Africanised wax print firms established in Ghana. With this trade policy, United Africa Company (UAC), the leading European importer of printed cotton fabrics on the West African market; Unilever, which was dealing with Dutch producers of wax prints; and the Calico Printers Association Ltd moved to establish companies in Ghana to avoid the imposed high tariffs, high cost of doing business and to capitalise on the *African print* market (van Koert, 2007 as cited in Axelsson, 2012, p.39). Nkrumah's government signed an agreement with UAC (representing the Anglo-Dutch-African Textile Investigation Group) and Unilever on July 16, 1964 to establish Ghana Textile Printing Company Limited (GTP) to produce African wax prints, fancy and java prints; and the Cha Textiles Group which took charge of Akosombo Textiles Ltd (ATL) from a Swiss firm (Axelsson, 2012). Gradually about 16 large and medium textiles companies and 138 medium and large-scale garment manufacturing companies were established by the mid-1970s in Ghana (Quartey, 2006). These companies contributed 15% to Ghana's GDP, and provided employment to many and increased socio-economic development in the 1970s (National Tripartite Committee Report, 2005).

Many of these companies were borne out of public-private partnership (joint private and state owned) while there were few private owned ones. ATL was one of the privately owned textiles companies (ATL, 2015). ATL's association with the Manchester based ABC Wax print company was in 2001. Nugent (1995) reveals that the government of Ghana had shares in GTP, but sold it in 1993 to Vlisco.

Many scholars wonder why Vlisco is produced in the Netherlands, but people in Africa have accepted the brand as an indigenous product of their own (Jennings, 2011; Akinwumi, 2008; Hoogenboom, Bannink & Trommel, 2010; Young, 2012; Beyondvictoriana.com, 2011). Vlisco wax print fabrics got to the West and Central African markets through pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial trade. Various sources believed to be the true early entry points of wax print onto the African market have been given. Some say the Euro-Dutch freighters who were carrying machine-made wax print on their way to Europe made stops at various African ports and traded while others say the Black Dutchmen military who served in the 1800s returned to their families with Indonesian batik as souvenirs (Kauth, 2010). Another ascribed reason was that the machine-made batiks produced for the Indonesian and European markets were considered as inferior to the handmade one, and were therefore pushed onto the African market (Sylvanus, 2013; Kauth, 2010; Beyondvictoriana.com, 2011; Uqalo, 2015), hence causing the growth of the product in the African market. It is already known that the English-colonisers were also trading in wax print to Gold Coast and their other colonies. With this historical hint, it is clear that wax print trade on the African continent was a by-product of colonial hegemony, imperialism and globalisation.

Though Ghanaians patronised the wax print in precolonial and colonial times, they did not consider it as their national heritage or tradition. It was the Nkrumah factor of Africanising the wax print through his local and foreign trade policies that attempted an inculcation of the wax print technology. His policies eventually got GTP and other textiles companies established in Ghana which in turn contributed to the economy at the time. Again, his *anti-nudity* campaign through Hannah Cudjoe (Allman, 2004, who was a staunch leader of the women's wing of the Conventions Peoples Party) and other government officials imparted on the establishment of the Africanised trans-nationally that borrowed wax print technology, giving the product a national importance. The location and localisation of the Dutch wax print in Ghana (dubbed GTP) in 1964 and in other African nations, the nation's share in the companies and its contribution to the economy, ignited a certain sense of ownership of GTP to the Ghanaian. For instance, in the process of the localisation of wax prints, the newly independent African nations increasingly incorporated images of their heroes/heroines including traditional leaders and presidents in the cloth design in commemorating them (Picton 1995; Akinwumi, 2008; Jennings, 2011; Axelsson, 2012; Beyondvictoriana.com, 2011). Other traditional symbols were also featured.

The wax prints became almost a national treasure that was highly patronised in addition to Kente, Adinkra prints and smocks. As a result, there was astronomical increase in its usage in *Kaba* fashion designs. Kente was highly valued as an expensive and prestigious cloth and was usually used in wrap-around clothing style with restrictive cuts, and worn on prestigious occasions. When Nkrumah Africanised wax print by ensuring the local production in Ghana, people embraced it as something Ghanaian, because it was locally produced.

The textiles companies and garment manufacturing industries later experienced turbulent times and economic shocks in the late 1970s which caused a gradual collapse of many, leaving few. Due to weak government policies and inefficient measures, only four major textiles manufacturing companies namely Ghana Textile Manufacturing Company (GTMC), Akosombo Textile Limited (ATL), Ghana Textile Printing Company Limited (GTP), and Printex remained as of 2002 (Quartey, 2006). PAMSCAD (Programme of Actions to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment) was one of the economic reform programmes in Ghana designed to mitigate poor socioeconomic conditions (Sowa, 2002). The trade liberalisation system which was part of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) could not mitigate the problem of shortage of foreign exchange in importing raw materials to feed the industries in the 1980s and beyond which led to the collapse of many of the industries, retrenchment and the loss of jobs (Quartey, 2006). As a way of reviving the industry, the then military regime resorted to preaching the patronage of locally produced products. In an interview with Christopher Richards in 2012, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, former first lady of Ghana whose reign lasted for 19 years (1981-2000) explained why she became a beacon of *Kaba* dress styles:

I decided that I would start wearing traditional clothes using the wax prints from our factories for two reasons: first of all, wax print wasn't available and we were trying to improve the economy, so I thought it would be good if I promoted the cloth to encourage Ghanaians to wear it when the factories began producing again. I also didn't want to be a role model for anyone while wearing Western clothes. (Richards, 2015, p.13)

Judging from her pronouncement, the location of the industry and its contribution to the national economy was the main focus. The question of origin of the wax print was irrelevant. Once again, the doings of President Nkrumah had imprinted on her mind that wax print was a traditional heritage. With her position as a First Lady, the intention was to invigorate the wearing of Kabas and wax prints. To her, parading in clothes of the West would not inspire others to wear locally produced wax print fabrics.

## Conclusions

The term *African print* was coined in reference to the Dutch wax print of European origin and later evolved to include wax print fabrics of African-based printing firms. Thus, European-owned printing firms and or African-based European-owned printing firms used machines to create batik effects. Using the term in this context relegates to the background of the authentic local prints of Africa that predates the emergence of the wax print fabric to the continent, and encages Africa's fabric technological image to European wax prints. This also signalled that Africa's common image in textiles in the globalised fashion is actually Asiatic and European Dutch wax print. *Adinkra* printing of the Asante established before colonialists' invasion, ancient Egyptian cloth printing technology dating back to 5000BC and other printing art traditions of Africa is evident of the existence of authentic *African prints*.

Authentic *African prints* refer to the ethnic fabric prints of African origin and contemporary fabric prints designed by African people, other than wax print. Towards a deconstruction of the term, I argue that the geographical location of the wax print fabric company must feature in its naming of the product rather than attaching the name to Africa to generalise the product for deceptive purposes. In this context, wax print from China would be named Chinese wax print while that from Ghana would be named Ghanaian wax print or better still, African inspired-wax and Asian inspired wax print respectively. The general African fabric characteristics of fauvistic colour application, irregular and asymmetric use of design elements such as line and shapes/form, symbolisms, conceptual and contextual aesthetic maneuvering and communicativeness have become a commercial idea exploited by many non-African fabric designing and printing firms that take advantage of the African fabric consumer market. Fashion inspiration is universal, however, such products from these non-African printing firms must be taken as a non-African experience of authentic *African print* characteristics, and must desist from using the name of Africa, just for marketing reasons.

Globalising European and Asiatic wax prints in the African market does not make it *authentic African print*. The Dutch wax print that has gained popularity in the West and Central African markets through pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial trade since the nineteenth century was brought to Africa as a *cash crop* and, therefore, not inherently African as perceived, whether or not it is inspired by African fabric characteristics. It was initially designed without any specific cultural, customary and traditional reference to Africa in terms of the design content, but later made an attempt at that through the African retailers and consumers who dictated the motif, and the naming system of the fabrics.

Though Ghanaians patronised the wax print in precolonial and colonial times, they did not consider it as their national heritage or tradition. It was the Nkrumah factor of Africanising the wax print through his local and foreign trade policies that attempted an inculcation of the wax print technology with the aim of building the technical capacity of the youth in its production for exportation to other African nations, thus moving from import-based economy to an export-led economy.

His policies eventually brought in the establishment textiles companies in Ghana to contribute to the economy. The location and localisation of the Dutch wax print in Ghana (dubbed GTP) in 1964, and in other African countries, and the nation's share in the companies and its contribution to the economy, ignited a certain sense of ownership of GTP and other locally produced wax prints to Ghanaians. It is, therefore, erroneous for Ghana to label its wax print as European wax print, and do the same via any other non-European country.

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