

# **Nigerian Theatre Journal**

# A Journal of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists

Vol. 20 No.2 - 2020

**ISSN 0189-9562** 

# Nigerian Theatre Journal

A Journal of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA)

Vol. 20 No.2

ISSN 0189-9562

Editor Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma

2020

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Subscriptions: Libraries and Institutions:	US \$100
Individuals:	US\$70
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#### THEATRE, OVER-POLITICISATION OF RESTRUCTURING AND THE ALLEGORY OF THE NIGERIAN NATION: ROTIMI'S KURUNMI IN FOCUS

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#### Abstract

Unarguably, vested interest has remained the propelling force behind the national restructuring or reformation initiative as portrayed in Ola Rotimi's Kurunmi. This interest is obviously defined by the expressed motive of Oba Atiba, the proponent of that restructuring initiative. However, accompanying this restructuring proposition is the barrage of oppositions from Are-Ona-Kakanfo's camp, who are rather unsympathetic with the cause of the restructuring agenda, perhaps out of palpable apprehension of the possible outcome of such proposition, and who accordingly dismissed it as an outright anathema; hence, the resulting politicisations/conflicts and their counters that attended it and the ultimate war, therefore. In the light of the foregoing, a plethora of crucial questions need to be considered, which include: what exactly is this vested interest? What is the motive behind the interest? Is there any objectivity in this interest? If yes, does the objectivity of the interest supersede its motive, etcetera? The study critically examines the extremely controversial and tension-soaked milieu in Ijaiye's transitional phase against the backdrop of the rising agitations from sections of Nigeria's federating units and their sympathisers, for the restructuring of the political framework of the nation, to serve as true reflection of our national identity, to interrogate the rationale for the prevalent over-politicisation of critical issues of national concern rather than the objectivity and/or unmitigated commitment with which such issues are supposed to be addressed.

#### Preamble

There is a solemn reality which encapsulates the intensity of aversion that sometimes accompanies change circumstances, irrespective of the sincere motive for such change. This is what sets the thrust for this study:

That morning, the beating of the community's sacred Ikoro had sounded weird, irregular and uncanny notes, and the community square was filled to the brim. Everyone had thronged to the square practically frantic as to what might be the possible cause of the summon. Every ear had tingled at the eventual breaking of the news and its accompanying circumstances by the elders, as it sent the whole gathering into wild frenzy. Shouts of abomination had rent the air. Tradition prescribes the local embalmment for the deceased head of the community, in which his corpse undergoes four days ritual sessions with the chief priest of *Irem – Umuirem*'s supreme deity, as a major part of his rites of passage... While he lived, Eze Ezume had strictly instructed his household that on no account should his corpse undergo the traditional four night's embalmment ritual session... Apparently, he may have been burdened by the weight of his tradition's barbarous bondage that he sought to denounce it... (Chukwu-Okoronkwo, "The Caved Grave" 50-52).

#### Introduction

change, of The concept of as denoting some form alteration. transformation/reformation, or substitution has remained a particularly fascinating but dicey subject matter of discourse. In fact, despite being a permanent life phenomenon, in its multifarious dimensions of manifestation, change has remained one predictable as well as unpredictable experience in life that comes with so much mixed feelings. A sober but critical reflection on the above excerpt would undoubtedly draw our consciousness to the solemn reality of the kind of aversion that sometimes accompanies change circumstances, irrespective of the sincere motive for such change. Ideally, change is supposed to be for good, to bring about an improved condition or state of being as the case may be from what currently obtains; but it is utterly surprising to observe the scale of feeling of aversion that often times greets it.

In Kurunmi, Ola Rotimi presents us with a particular milieu of change situation - that of national restructuring - with regards to the succession policy to the office of the Alafin in Oyo Empire as proposed (or rather decreed) by Alafin Atiba, himself, and of course with the support of Ibadan chiefs. This national restructuring initiative prescribes that on Atiba's death, contrary to tradition, his son, Adelu, the Crown Prince and heir, who is supposed to die with him by ritual suicide, will instead succeed him. Apparently, this proposition or decision did not go down well with Kurunmi, the Are-Ona-Kakanfo of Ijaiye land, and his allies, who vehemently opposed it. Although it may not be farfetched that Alafin Atiba's reformation initiative was propelled by the vested interest to install his son, Adelu, as his successor rather than accede to his dying with him; it is also not out of place that he "may have been burdened by the weight of his tradition's barbarous bondage" of such continued perpetuation of senseless ritual murder in the name of tradition, "that he sought to denounce it" (Chukwu-Okoronkwo, "The Caved Grave" 51); perhaps, out of sheer concern for and preservation of the sanctity of human life. The philosophy of the sanctity of human life, therefore, reflects the belief that, because we are made in God's image, as recorded in Genesis 1: 26-27, human life has an inherently sacred attribute that should be protected and respected at all times. Hence, while God gave humanity the authority to kill and eat other forms of life (Genesis 9: 3), He expressly forbade the murdering of fellow human beings (Gen. 9:6).

#### **Ijaiye: A Nation in Transition**

The fact that the plot of Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi* is structured around the conflict over the succession policy to the office of Alafin in Oyo Empire cannot be overemphasised. The play essentially centres on the conflict that arose as a result of the above development between Kurunmi, the Are-Ona-Kakanfo (Generalissimo) of Ijaiye land, the unflinching supporter of tradition, and the Ibadan chiefs, led by Ibikunle, whose support for the recent wave of change in Oyo is unequivocal. Kurunmi's reaction to this development is that of utter disdain. He insists:

My people... tradition... is what makes us men. This is what makes us ... people, distinct from mud.... The pride of man, my people, is in his tradition – something to learn from for the peace of his present: something to learn from for the advance of his tomorrow. The day the tall iroko tree loses its roots is the day the baby ant shits on its head. The day a people lose their tradition is the day their death begins... they become... Doomed... 'I shall be no party to perversion and disgrace' (*Kurunmi* 15-17).

Kurunmi, therefore, further opted to war, in which he solicited the assistance of the Egbas in fighting against Ibadan and her allies, "in order to protect the sacred tradition of his people under a great threat of dissolution" (Chukwu-Okoronkwo, "Traditions under Siege..." 21). Sunday Ayobade has noted that the play portrays Kurunmi, "as a war general, who fought a war to maintain a dying tradition" (75). Thus, he refused to allow time to change the tradition of his people, despite all entreaties from fellow chiefs to see reason in the mutability of tradition for the development of the society, and went to war with the Crown Prince. He lost the battle anyway, with heavy casualties, including his five sons.

According to Olusola Oso, "the death of his five sons marks the climax of Kurunmi's cataclysmic fall" (45). Therefore, grief-stricken and devastated by such monumental tragedy that befell him, Kurunmi eventually committed suicide by taking poison. What Kurunmi failed to understand, however, from the outset of the scenario was the signal of an evolution of change that was set to engulf the entire empire: an evolution of change that was set to alter the course of history – the *status quo* – in the land. He failed to understand that the empire, and indeed, Ijaiye, was actually undergoing a moment of transition. Little wonder then that the vehemence of his insistence on upholding and defending the tenets of their age-long sacred tradition.

#### Kurunmi: The Politicisation of National Restructuring

A critical consideration of Alafin Atiba's restructuring initiative in *Kurunmi* regarding the existing succession policy to the office of Alafin will no doubt reveal the fact that it was propelled by the vested interest to install his son, Adelu, as his successor. His motive, therefore, may not only be to prevent Adelu from dying along with him in accordance with the demands of their tradition; for it is only in preserving Adelu that

Atiba would be able to actualise his goal of installing him as his successor, but perhaps, to also carve out an empire for his children. Chukwu-Okoronkwo reinforces the foregoing thus:

Alafin Atiba's decision is based, perhaps on his claim to dynamism in leadership: a stance which is claimed to find essence in the mutability of tradition for the development of the society. Under the cloak of this claim of dynamism by Atiba, however, lies a contrived intrigue to carve out an empire for his children. Thus, in order to achieve this intention, he had to ensure the support of Ibadan Chiefs as well as other leading Chiefs in the empire ("Traditions under Siege..." 20).

In the light of the above, the crucial question, however, remains, 'is there any objectivity in Atiba's action?' If yes, 'does the objectivity of his action supersede its motive, perhaps, his far-reaching intent?' Kurunmi, however, sees the entire scenario as a conspiracy against their hallowed tradition as obtains from generations immemorial; thus his vehement opposition and insistence that tradition must prevail over every individual and self-wish. The following dialogue involving Kurunmi, Temi Ede and Bashorun Oluyole of Ibadan encapsulates the resulting politicisations/conflicts and their counters which define the stand of the two groups on Atiba's restructuring agenda:

Temi:	You are the only important chief in the kingdom who opposes the Alafin's wish.
Kurunmi:	We have tradition. Whenever an Alafin dies, his first son, that Alafin's first son, must also die with him. Is that not part of our tradition, or am I sick in the head? That is all. Atiba dies this evening, his first son Adelu dies midnight. We bury them both: everybody is happy There has been no exception to the rule, and wealthy Atiba can't now corrupt us to grant him special favour. Atiba dies, Adelu – wo!
Temi:	You forget that time passes and the ways of man must change with time.

Kurunmi was not swayed by the question posed by Timi, showing his fastidious nature, with regards to the high premium he attached to culture.

Kurunmi:	We have tradition, and tradition is tradition. Time may
	pass but the laws of our fathers, tested and hallowed by
	the ways of men, live on. That is tradition.
Oluyole:	Tradition adapts Tradition must change with man
Kurunmi:	Go give your robes to your slaves

Oluyole:	Very well then. We have sworn to make Adelu king,
	and king he must be.
Kurunmi:	Not over my people (Kurunmi 19-20).

Beyond vested interest and motive regarding Atiba's restructuring agenda, as well as what the involved parties stand to gain or lose out of it, there is also a perceptible merit in that decision – that of sheer concern for and preservation of the sanctity of human life. This is what actually defines the objectivity of Atiba's action. It may not be out of place, therefore, that Alafin Atiba was burdened by the weight of his tradition's barbarous bondage of such continued perpetuation of senseless ritual murder in the name of tradition that he sought to denounce it; in order to preserve the sanctity of human life. Perhaps, this singular action only portrays Alafin Atiba as a dynamic leader who fully appreciates the essence of the mutability of such an obnoxious tradition of his people for the development of his society. Hence, because of the obvious divine import of the objectivity of Atiba's action, it should be unmistakably assumed to be able to supersede every other motive behind it.

#### The Consequence of Kurunmi's Insensitivity

Kurunmi apparently demonstrated gross insensitivity of the moment of transition under which he found himself. He failed to understand the fact that life is sacrosanct and as such needs to be consciously preserved. Therefore, because he failed to see the import of the objectivity in Atiba's decision, Kurunmi himself indisputably fell short of being objective of the prevailing development in the land. Hence, until his tragic death, every step he took in opposition to that decision turned out a step in the wrong direction. For instance, as soon as Kurunmi, the Are-Ona-Kakanfo, made the sombre choice of war in defence of their age-long tradition, Ogunkoroju, the chief warrior of Ijaiye land, raised a voice of caution: "The land is not quite ready for war, my lord." But Kurunmi chose to respond in obstinacy: "So, get it ready, brother. You are chief of my warriors. Ready the men, ready the land" (*Kurunmi* 29).

On their own part, Epo, Akiola and Asegbe, notable warriors of Ijaiye land, responded in consternation to Kurunmi on his choice of war without due consultations.

Epo:	What is all this about the land going to war?
Akiola:	You did not consult with the people Whose war?
Asegbe:	Who decided? (Kurunmi 37).

Also, knowing full well the crass danger in crossing River Ose to fight with Ibadan, it is surprising that Kurunmi allowed the Egbas to threaten him into succumbing to take that suicidal step. This made him to commit the most tactical blunder of the war, as the Egbas even abandoned him at last to his own peril?

Anoba: This night, we move ... to cross the River Ose, so that...

Kurunmi:	To cross where? No! The gods forbid it. Risky,
	that. Too, too risky Cross the river to their side! The
	gods forbid. Let us not even think about it
Somoye:	[Jeering]. Brother Kurunmi has changed his mind about
	a quick attack.
Anoba:	Maybe he has called us to rest on Ijaiye farms as if in
	Abeokuta we have no farms to sleep on.
Kurunmi:	To attack them the way you have just said is death, my
	brother, believe me. As the chief fighter of our peoples,
	trust my thinking.
Somoye:	Now he mocks at our thinking.
Kurunmi:	No, no, I did not mean it like that. What I want to say
	[Noisy cheers and war cries in the background.] What's
	that!
<b>Ogunbona</b> :	Our soldiers. We have trouble calming their desire to
	fight immediately.

Soldiers are trained for war; they are not used to peace times. It was not surprising that they were inkling to go to war, having been mobilised to do that. But then, Kurunmi, as an experience war general, was not ready to be rushed into battle.

Kurunmi:	[After listening to the war cries.] We must be patient		
Somoye:	Why not? Are there two in the land of our fathers worthy of the highest war title: Are-Ona-Kakanfo? The		
	chief fighter of our race has said wait, and we cowards		
	must do his bidding.		
Ogunbona:	Meaning we all sit here and wait?		
Somoye:	Meaning we depart tomorrow morning to where we came from		
Kurunmi:	Now hear me, my brother, you are Let us not act		
	like children, I pray		

The chiefs are further incensed that Kurunmi brands their actions as childish. Somehow, that insult appeared to be the last straw that broke the camel's back:

Somoye:	I thank you. Go on. Insult me. Akegbe! Summon all		
	heads of our army here now. Brothers, we depart		
	forthwith.		
Kurunmi:	You can't do that!		
	[Akegbe enters.]		
Akegbe:	My lord.		
<b>Ogunbona</b> :	Summon all the heads of divisions here, idiot.		
Anoba:	Are you deaf?		

	[Kurunmi intercepts Akegbe, and remains standing with		
	him, confused, unnerved.]		
Kurunmi:	Wait!		
Anoba:	He now commands our own soldiers!		
Kurunmi:	Partners in business should not put obstacles in its way.		
	[Pause.] Let it be so It is well We shall		
	cross. Tomorrow. We shall cross the the [Pulls out		
	his dagger.] River Ose! [Bites the dagger.] Tomorrow		
	(Kurunmi 75-77).		

Eventually, Ijaiye suffered defeat in the battlefield with the Egbas taking to their heels. Kurunmi's tragedy lies in adhering to Egba's advice and pressure to cross River Ose to attack Ibadan and her allies. His alliance with them proved quite a disastrous experience for him (Chukwu-Okoronkwo, "Politics of Performance..." 32). Kurunmi's gross insensitivity about the moment of transition under which he found himself, therefore, and the rashness with which he responded to it, is encapsulated in his painful moment of sober self-reflection on the outcome:

Kurunmi: Am I in the wrong in this war? Am I...? (*Kurunmi* 83).

However, after he had lost thousands of people in the battle, including his five sons, and just before he took his own life by poisoning, Kurunmi came to an ultimate self-realisation:

**Kurunmi**: When a leader of men has led his people to disaster, and what remains of his present life is but a shadow of his proud past, then it is time to be leader no more (*Kurunmi* 93).

He had every opportunity to heed the entreaties from his fellow chiefs to see reasons in the mutability of tradition for the advancement of the society. The expectation of the chiefs as well as notable warriors of Ijaiye that he would comply with Atiba's restructuring agenda in order to avert the raging senseless war; but he frittered everything. So, it took a mindless war and a "cataclysmic fall," for Kurunmi to realise, but too late, that he was, indeed, stubbornly headed for disaster. His action only reinforces the import of the popular proverb which says that, *the stubborn insect that is so hard-of-hearing only rests in the belly of the bird*.

#### The Allegory of the Nigerian Nation

In examining the allegory of the Nigerian nation, it is pertinent to draw for Nasir el-Rufai. According to him, he wrote a widely published article, titled, "A Federation without Federalism," over five years ago. The said article reflected the broad consensus amongst Nigerians, then and even now, that the country's federal system of governance "has been dysfunctional, more unitary than federal and not delivering public goods to the generality of our people" (el-Rufai 3). This position, perhaps, re-echoes and reinforces the whole politics of Nigeria's restructuring narratives that has hitherto dominated the public domain in the nation. There is no doubt that Nigeria is founded on the principle of federalism where power is ideally expected to devolve to the federating units.

However, owing to the perceptible over-concentration of power in a central government that runs contrary to the tenets of true/real federalism, and the engendered imbalances in governance with the associated discontentment from some federating units, the agitation for restructuring the political framework of the Nigerian nation has continued to gain momentum. The contention is that the present federal structure is not functional in the true sense of federalism, which demands devolution of power to the federating units; even though Nuhu Yaqub has argued that there is nothing universally accepted as true federalism ("What is in Restructuring..."). In the mounting calls for Nigeria to be restructured, therefore, there is an imperative need to understand exactly what this restructuring entails? In this regard, Hope Eghagha avers thus:

To restructure Nigeria means that all the states or regions would properly become federating units. A federating unit is a part or section of the Federation that has willingly agreed to be part of a federation. It would generate its resources, contribute to the national coffers through taxes and develop at its own pace. The different constituent parts would decide on how they want to fund education at all levels, the importance of religion, the importance of trade, and generate its own power. In the real sense, power would really be in the States or Regions. The artificiality of a Federal Government which dictates to the States would be gone ("Next Generation Nigeria...").

Eghagha's remarks above undoubtedly reinforce the reality of the improper structure of our present Nigerian federation which makes its restructuring absolutely necessary. However, there has been palpable apprehension in some quarters about the whole idea of restructuring; although it is not comprehensible whether such apprehension is as a result of ignorance of the reality of the issues involved or just outright negation of such reality. Some people, as Steve Bello has noted, believe that there is no guarantee that restructuring will succeed in moving the nation forward, and that it may even be counter-productive or lead to unexpected consequences ("Restructuring Nigeria..."). Critics and opponents of restructuring, therefore, have held on to the sustenance of the *status quo* as what was inherited from successive governments that needs not be tampered with. They seem to argue that there is no need for dynamism about the structure of governance so inherited; that as it was from the beginning, so shall it continue to be, despite the realities of the breakdown in that structure that has rather rendered it dysfunctional and ineffective. Bello has further noted that:

[U]p till 2015, most of the calls for restructuring had been from individuals and groups from the southern part of Nigeria, especially South-South geo-political zone. Others from the North probably think that the agitation is because the south controls the major mineral resources that constitute the bulk of Nigeria's wealth. However, in recent times or since 2016, prominent Northerners are beginning to join their southern counterparts in asking for restructuring ("Restructuring Nigeria...").

Hence, from all the geo-political zones, as Adesoji Farayibi has noted, the subject of restructuring seems to re-echo and dominate public discourse, which perhaps is an indication that people are now conscious of the myriad of problems confronting the country and are determined to find possible ways of tackling them ("The Structure of Nigeria's Restructuring Rhetoric"). Proponents of restructuring have, therefore, held on to the argument that it is only a dynamic and proactive approach to governance that will propel the leadership to jettison a proven dysfunctional structure to embrace a more viable one. Their mindset is reinforced in the words of Ibrahim Babangida, former Head of State of Nigeria, as cited in *Vanguard* news comments of 27 June, 2017:

If we have repeatedly done certain things and not getting the desired results, we need to change tactics and approach, and renew our commitment. It is our collective responsibilities to engender a reform that would be realistic and in sync with modern best practices (www.vanguardngr.com).

The above expression only encapsulates the anachronism of the *status quo* – the subsisting structure and its perceptible artificiality; and as such, the above citation further stresses that:

[R]estructuring has become a national appeal ... whose time has come. I ... strongly advocate for devolution of powers to the extent that more responsibilities be given to the states while the Federal Government is vested with the responsibility to oversee our foreign policy, defence, and economy (www.vanguardngr.com).

The implication here is that there is urgent need to tinker with our constitution so as to accommodate new thoughts that would strengthen our nationality. The question, however, is: why is it that the mounting call for the restructuring of the political frameworks of the Nigerian nation has not received appropriate attention? Rather, it has been inundated with all kinds of politicisations and debates. While some see the call as a genuine demand for good governance, accountability and transparency, some others see it as a gratuitous gimmick just to attain political relevance.

While the position espoused in this paper is that there may not really be any harm in politicising in the first place, where the problem lies is in over-politicisation. The reason is because when you politicise, there is dialogue, you engage issues, you disagree, perhaps to agree; but when you over-politicise, it suggests aggression, no room to engage issues, and agreement is a far cry; there is no compromise. Unlike the calm and receptive environment of politicisation, the over-politicisation environment is always restive and overcharged, and utterly devoid of any meeting point for dialogue or compromise.

The concept of over-politicisation, therefore, is such that is reinforced by the uncompromising stance of a particular party involved in а particular circumstance/scenario; whose attitude overtly amounts to a cog in the wheel of certain progress. This party is always inflexible, and mostly inflexibly insensitive and utterly blinded to prevailing realities. Such was the exact over-politicised milieu that played out in Kurunmi; and in which Kurunmi, as a prime character, was enmeshed. He held on to his rigid stance despite all the entreaties from his fellow chiefs and the voices of reason of some notable warriors of Ijaiye. He had disdain for 'discussion;' he had disdain for 'dialogue.' In his choice of war, as the only defence channel to uphold their sacred tradition, he forgot or rather demonstrated his blundering insensitivity to the reality of the fact that, "Ijaiye is no match for Ibadan, either in human resources or in war material" (Kurunmi 66). Like the insensitive fly that would always follow the corpse to the grave, ended up leading his people into a senseless war, and certainly, a calamitous defeat.

The position of this paper, therefore, is that there should be a level of introspection to the mounting call for restructuring in our nation. The call should not be shrouded in any form of feigning of ignorance or negation or overt politicisation. The government should do its best to pay heed to certain voices of reason. It should be such kind of introspection that should be able to engender genuine dialogue as to determine:

How much of the debate is propelled by a desire for national progress and how much is mere politics, opportunism and search for sectional entitlement? Is the debate mostly driven by our fractious politics and competing interests, or are there real grievances whose resolution will create a critical juncture and opportunity for national rebirth (El-Rufai 3).

By so doing, we would no doubt be heading for a well-laid propitious pathway to national progress that is devoid of the calamitous tendency of the Ijaiye theatre of war experience.

#### Conclusion

This paper has examined a pervading theme of change. It affirms that, ideally, change is supposed to be for good, to bring about an improved condition or state of being; and reinforces the reality of the overwhelming aversion that oftentimes accompanies change circumstances or situations, irrespective of the good or seeming good motive for such change as seen in Ijaiye. Without doubt, we saw the colossal calamity of the gory aftermath; simply because, Kurunmi failed to demonstrate corresponding sensitivity to the overwhelming moment of transition under which he found himself. He failed to heed the consistent voices of reason. The allegory of the foregoing with respect to the Nigerian nation, therefore, is as it borders on the broad consensus amongst Nigerians that our federation has been dysfunctional and ineffective, having failed to deliver public goods to the generality of our people – a transitional phase that needs to be appropriately responded to (addressed). In the light of the foregoing, the federal government is hereby enjoined to demonstrate corresponding sensitivity to the mounting agitation for the restructuring of the political framework of the Nigerian nation as to avert possible escalation and breakdown of order/public peace and, perhaps, its calamitous aftermath, which are, indeed, all avoidable.

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#### DIALECTICAL FALLACY OR FUSION OF THE AUTHOR'S HORIZON OF EXPECTATIONS: A CRITICAL RESPONSE TO UKALA'S AKPAKALAND

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#### Abstract

Studies in dramatic theory and criticism have sought to minimise the gap between the reader and the author to at least, curtail the proliferation of meanings. This effort has consistently failed because, textual indeterminacy emanating partly from gaps or blanks in the texts create opportunities for the reader to fill them up in order to provide reference to what is 'not said.' Problem is that dialectical fallacy contravenes the theoretical assumption that, any tactical interpretation that yields a dialectical consequence of a text is true in reality. This paper attempts to interrogate whether situating Sam Ukala's Akpakaland within the Nigerian context is a dialectical fallacy or fusion of the author's horizon of expectation. While authors write in a particular milieu, readers and critics tend to thrust them further than their immediate society in different interpretative communities. Akpakaland, like some of Ukala's other plays seem to depict Nigeria in many remarkable ways, although Ukala has denied severally that he chronicled Nigerian history in any of his works. The objective of the study is to assert textual dynamism and Omni-significance by means of further recovery or discovery and entrenchment of immense treasure of potential meanings embedded in literary texts by future readers or critics in different epochs. The paper adopted historical-analytical design and is hinged on Reception Theory. As a branch of Reader Response Criticism which recognises the reader as an active agent who imparts 'real existence' to the work and completes its meaning through interpretative endeavours.

#### Introduction

Cashing on the idea 'to reconstruct the context shared by the author and his original audience' as argued by Friedrich Scheliemacher or to 'involve fusion of horizon' advocated by Hans-Georg Gadamer both in the hermeneutic tradition, the researcher also relies on Barthes' 'authorial disappearance' in order to affect the transformation of Ukala's *Akpakaland* from an autonomous formal unit of 'Ika cultural folklore' to a trace or a representation of an informative intention that precedes them in the creative processes. In other words, the researcher extracts meanings from *Akpakaland* and relates them to Nigerian context, there by bringing out ideas or meanings the author never intended. In this way, the critic extends the author's horizon of expectations in aesthetic field and fused to the realities of Nigerian society. This will explain the fact

that a literary work like drama is completed or at best, continues by the critic when the author has disappeared or died – ended his work. Here the critic doubles as a co-author.

The displacing of meaning from the author's words to the creative consciousness behind the text (applicative reading) is a product of Reception Theorybased activity. It involves, interpreting the text according to its practical values and relating its phenomenal implications to social relationships. In this regard, the horizon of expectation of Sam Ukala in *Akpakaland* is reconstructed and fussed with that of the researcher to depict the realities of the present Nigerian context in order to evolve a real existence of the text. It is as a result of this real existence between literary aesthetics (author's horizon) and the real world (critical response to the text which the author never intended) that brought the notion that Ukala chronicled Nigerian history in his works hence, dialectical fallacy. Crane explains to dialectical fallacy' as:

simply the tacit assumption that what is true in your theory as a dialectical consequence must also be or tend to be true in actuality – that if you can so read a literary work as to reveal in it the particular kind of meaning or structure that is entailed by your definition of literature, poetry, poetic language or the like, or by your own formula for the author or his age, you have sufficiently demonstrated that it has the kind of meaning or structure. The fallacy lies in the circumstance that, with a little interpretative ingenuity, these conditions can always be fulfilled (60).

This is at least, what the theory forces on every literary critic to achieve, that is, to make the text yield a variety of meaning through different interpretations. It is unarguably true that any literary work especially drama that has no connection to material reality with the society is a failure. This implies that, art being closely related to the area of informational signs, its dialectical negation of actual or concrete reality occurs to the writer in abstract form who then informs the reader or critic through the aesthetics of coded signs. The reader or critic is then left to make deductions from the information or sign so received. It is a transformation of literary work from the site of productivity to a catalyst for recovery of meanings that are possibly made in the process of reading.

However, it is emphasised here that no interpretation of any given text actually yields a new meaning or 'significance.' Meaning or significance is already planted in the text by the author. What the critic does is to recover it at one time or the other. Historical research entails sourcing informative evidences from past activities to make comment on the present. According to Emeka Nwabueze:

Historical research therefore deals with evidence. It involves description of past events or fact written in the spirit of critical inquiry. It embraces the whole areas of human past. The data must be viewed

with historical perspective as part of the process of social development rather than as isolated attitudes, events or facts (55).

On the other hand, analytical research deals with variables of mind of attitude, of non-numerical data presented in the work of fixed fact of history. It brings out the ideas, motifs, mores and impulses which influence the characters' general behaviour and emotions in the texts. In analytical design the researcher dissects the available facts and information to make critical evaluation. It involves an in-depth study of the texts to explain complex phenomenon. Historical-analytical design is adopted in this study because the research is dealing with a living fossil, using a cocktail of two interpretative theories which give the researcher ambiance to redraw between varieties of phenomena.

#### Some Critical Views on Reception Theory

As a branch of Reader Response Criticism, it is clad with aesthetics of reception rather than of production. Once the text is released from its author, it becomes semiotic symbols. Reception theory, also classified into pragmatic text theory, focused on Reception history was conceived by Hans Robert Jauss as a challenge to literary studies. It accounts for the revolutionary of art and the circumstances of its creation. Recent Reader-Oriented critics, responding to Fish's emphasis on interpretive communities and also to the historically-oriented perception theory of Jauss, have studied the way a given reading public's 'horizons of expectation' change over time.

Alasdair Fowler recognises that, "every utterance/writing has a variety of possible interpretations that are combinations of explicit content, context and implied meanings, yet, these interpretations are not all equally accessible to the hearer/reader on any particular occasion" (16-17). This is because hearers/readers are equipped with a criterion for evaluating interpretations as they occur to them. Derrida supported this claim saying that all readings are necessarily misreading in that, they fail to exhaust all possibility of the text. He then argues that "since signs can always be lifted from any context and grafted into new contexts which the author could not have anticipated, meaning can never be fixed" (5).

This point is made possible and sustained by what Jacques Derrida terms, *alterity*, which means, the other or otherness. This can also be used to deconstruct his own popular maxim that, 'there is nothing outside the text,' meaning that there cannot be a wide-ranging interpretation unless meaning is sought from outside the text. This is against his own opposing idea that comprehensive interpretation is only possible if meaning is sought from inside the text. Holland opines that, "each person who reads a story, poem or even a single word construes it differently" (204).

On the same note, Samuel Onuigbo, while discussing how a reader can penetrate the author's literary world, summarises it with the theory of *implicature*:

The provision of the theory of *implicature* shows how a reader can penetrate an author's literary world; in order to project what is not said

from what is said. Although what is said may not have direct relationship with the intended message of the author, the ability to impose the socio-cultural and religious imperatives on the linguistic code to project the message makes the pragmatic procedure a reliable interpretive model (vi-vii).

Michael Foucault advances that, "rather than attempt to infer manifestly communicated informative intentions, reader can let meaning proliferate and manipulate, decompose and recompose fiction for as long as the effort brings result" (157-8). Furthermore, Jonathan Culler proposes that, "each work has a meaning and that the critic's quest for knowledge is an attempt to discover that meaning" (173). He argues that if the meaning of a text is what the author means by it, then the critic's work is futile. He, therefore, opposes any theory that will encourage readers or critics to restrict themselves to interpretations of a preferred kind. He maintains that instead of seeing proliferation of interpretations as an obstacle, it should be seen rather as an object of knowledge.

Edward W. Said asserts that, "the countervailing power of criticism is to bring the text to a certain visibility" (166). He thereby agrees with both Derrida and Foucault that the authorial or textual intentions are not visible but are hidden and can be revealed in and shared in other ways. E. D. Hirsch does not concede that verification of authorial meaning is impossible. Agreeing that one could construe authorial meaning without knowing it, he insists that:

An author's statement of intended meaning is not necessarily a reliable means of validation because it is very possible to mean what one is not conscious of meaning. That a reader can easily discover meaning that was not conscious to the author, because an author almost always means more than he is aware of meaning (48).

This position seems to coincide with Ian Mackenzie's assertion that:

It is a critical commonplace, for example, that most canonical poetry is expressly written in vague or richly figurative language, and is consequently endlessly reinterpreted: readers approach poetry in a particular way because it seems to be endlessly reinterpretable (54).

Just as Percy Shelly's postulation in his *Defence of Poetry* that "all high poetry is infinite; it is as the first acorn which contained all oaks potentially" (135), Tilloman Rajan has raised an argument that, "if great poetry contains an infinity of meanings, then there seems little reason to search for that first acorn, or to capture the poet's vision, or to try to reignite the 'fading coal' that is in the poetic mind in creation" (205).

Michail Bakhtin, on the other hand, argues about the impossibility of abandoning one's own horizon (context) but notes that dialogue allows no fusion of

horizon. In order to understand, Bakhtin states that, "it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding in time, in space, in culture..." (6-7). In this, Bakhtin means that without one's own questions, one cannot understand anything, but with questions, new meaning emerges from a foreign culture. Using the concept of 'great time' to buttress the fact that great poem will never be exhausted, and new generations will uncover new meanings, he explains:

Great literary works live on in the future because their roots extend into the distant past. They 'are prepared for by centuries, and in the epoch of their creation it is merely a matter of picking the fruit that is ripe after a lengthy and complex process of maturation,' but even then, the author's original audience will not be able to recognise or reveal that richness of the fruit (4).

Reader Response Criticism is greatly influenced by traditional hermeneutics. As a method of interpretation, it is faced with the problem of how the words of the texts created in the past remained constant while the context that created them no longer exists. These texts should be reconstructed by responsible later interpreters to overcome their temporal distance from the author and project its original context to be understood by present readers without the interest or prejudice of the interpreter. In support of this, Adam Parry opines thus:

The literature of every country and of every time is understood as it ought to be only by the author and his contemporaries. Between him and them there exists a common stock of experience which enables the author to mention an object or express idea with the certainty that his audience will imagine the same object and will grasp the subtleties of his idea. One aspect of the author's genius is his taking into account at every point the ideas and information of those to whom he is addressing his work. The task, therefore, of one who lives in another age and wants to appreciate that work correctly, consists precisely in rediscovering the varied information and the complexes of ideas which the author assumed to be the natural property of his audience (2).

The summary of all these theoretical reviews is that as we interact with *Akpakaland*, and make text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections, comprehension occurs. With that, we shall deliberate on *Akpakaland* to determine whether it depicts Nigerian society, the degree of its depiction and whether such assertion is a dialectical fallacy or a fusion of the author's horizon of expectations.

#### Synopsis of Akpakaland

Akpaka the president of Akpakaland takes five wives; three from the province of the rich and two from the province of the poor. The aim is for equitable distribution of the national cake. However, this hope has since been dashed because there has been mismanagement of the treasury and Akpaka is being confronted with insecurity and financial meltdown. He is trying to proffer solution from his bottle of gin, when suddenly; Fulama his head wife comes to add domestic intrigue – that his favourite wife has a tail. Akpaka takes it as a joke and tries to send her away but, she is resolute and laments.

Fulama: I'm going nowhere. This is also an important state matter. When rubbish is too much in the soup the blind one notices it...Everyone says, the president is good. The president is impartial. The president is straightforward. The president... Let them come into the state house and see. The moment the president married the Beautiful One, I Fulama, the light of his morning ceases to shine... (11).

Fulama's importunate demand makes Akpaka decree death penalty after exposing the tail victim to a public disgrace through strip tease. To avenge Unata for being the president's favourite, Fulama has contracted Enwe the medicine man to inflict a cow tail on her. Ironically, it happens that, on the day of the parade of shame, Fulama turns out to be the one that has the cow tail instead of Unata. Her mother (Iya Fulama) uses every influence at her disposal to pervert justice. Dashing the lingering hope of the citizens is Afianmo (the War Minister) who announces that the state lacks the means for the execution of Fulama since the armoury is empty.

The president seeking a way to prevaricate justice through his already biased ministers capitalises on this statement and sentences Fulama to a three-month house arrest instead of execution. This brazen show of total disregard for the rule of law leads to the final disaster that followed. It triggers off violent protest between the rich and the poor; in which Fulama is killed while Akpaka and others are arrested.

#### **Depiction of Nigerian Society**

It shall be noted that some critics had earlier made similar but general references or compared *Akpakaland* to Nigerian society. However, this paper differs from others in that, it makes its references or comparisons through specific thematic considerations. Ehiemua first opened the floodgate of multiple interpretations and meanings in Ukala's plays when he made the following suggestion:

In fact, we suggest that the two plays of this essay and indeed the entire drama of Sam Ukala be subjected to post-structuralist interpretation. If this is done, we can see how his texts can deconstruct themselves and provide a more valid and uninhibited understanding of culture and farreaching implication of social relationships (61- 62).

Alex Asigbo, on his own part, pictures *Akpakaland* "as hypothetical Nigeria" (233), due to failure of the leaders, to procure basic ammunitions as with Nigeria's inability to fight insurgent because there are no ammunitions. Based on this contextual and historical exegesis, one could concur totally with this view. Ruth Epochi-Olise confirms this fact about Ukala's plays depicting the Nigerian situation:

As a reformer, the collapse of the various strata of the society alarmed Ukala, that is why he is obliged to participate in the reinstating the society's direction and purpose through his socially committed work of art to reach out with affable forms, themes and resolute relevance to stimulate the masses and draw their attention to the socio-political situation in Nigeria (142).

Going further, she removes every veiling that would mar the reader's direct understanding of the very issue, people and place under reference. She asserts of *Akpakaland* thus:

Though written over 15 years ago, Ukala has anticipated that the wealth of Niger Delta which is being forcefully taken from them without compensation of any kind – provision of social amenities, infrastructure, job, etc. – would bring doom because there will be fighting over it. Looking closely at *Akpakaland* one sees that the five geopolitical zones are represented by the wives of Akpaka. While Fulama represents the North-West "the ruling and upper class, who do not have any natural resources", Yeye and Seotu represent the North-East and South-West respectively (145-146).

In this critical response, Epochi-Olise sees timelessness in *Akpakaland* and posits: "Sam Ukala, through the use of folktale is able to make this play a good entertainment to the audience whatever their age, race..." (144), the treatment of human passions in the play like jealousy, corruption, ethnocentrism and so on in the play may be timeless, but it must be argued that the sense in which Epochi-Olise generalised the universal acceptability of Ukala's plays by any age and race is over emphasised in the sense that what is peculiar in Africa may not induce the same appeal in Europe or America. The quality to appeal to any age or race; of timelessness, topicality and relevance at any given epoch is the summary of the notion of dynamism, Omni-significance and universality, hence canonicity of any literary work, yet they are not justifiable in all Ukala's plays.

In his reading of the film, *Akpakaland*, Dan Omatsola adds in "Connotational/ Paradigmatic Analysis": After reading/viewing of the deep structure in the diegetic universe of the film, it is observed that *Akpakaland* is a mirror of the corrupt, decadent oppressive and suppressive military dictatorship of most African leaders in general and in particular the military oligarchy in Nigeria. It is also a satire of double standards of justice in the Nigerian Polity... (212).

While Omatsola's emphasis above is on the decadence and anomalies, particularly in Nigeria, Alex Asigbo likens Nigerian inclination on trivialities to *Akpakaland* where state matters are exchanged for personal issues. He observes that:

Akpakaland reminds one of the hypothetical Nigeria, wasting time on trivialities while the citizens suffer; where different laws are made for the rich and the poor; where the rich have the poor for their sport and where valuable time is spent on debating irrelevances in a land with decayed and decaying infrastructure.... This frequent making an ass of the law is alas a recurring decimal in today's Nigeria. That is why a confirmed treasury looter like Alamieyeseigha 'plea bargained' and went home in an helicopter to enjoy his ill-gotten wealth; that is why Nigerians are contended with Hon. Patricia Etteh's resignation as Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives instead of demanding for criminal proceedings against her (233).

At this juncture, we shall amplify the above with further illustrations under some thematic subheadings:

**Favouritism**: As in Akpakaland, the reason for Akpaka to take five wives from all the provinces like Nigerian concept of six geo-political zones is to ensure equitable distribution of the national cake, but this aim failed woefully in both states. Enwe the medicine man confirms Akpaka's show of favouritism, as he flattered Idemudia, saying, "You dine in the state house. Doesn't your province receive plenty goodies from the government because your daughter..." (18). Ironically, Enwe's province under reference has been marginalised by the president. This looks somewhat like a show of favouritism by the Northern government to other geopolitical zones except the South-Eastern region of Nigeria, where a loan of \$22.7billion was recently acquired in Year 2020 for the development of the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. It was shared thus:

South-West:	-	\$ 200,000,000.00
South-South:	-	\$4,270,000,000.00
South-East:	-	\$ 0,000,000.00
North-West:	-	\$6,372,000,000.00

North-East:	-	\$ 300,000,000.00
North-Central:	-	\$6,531,000,000.00
General:	-	\$5,853,900,000.00 (Available in national dallies).

From the account below, the total amount shared exceeds loan with about \$556,900million, but in spite of this irregularity, one is bound to ask: if South-East has no developmental needs or if it is no longer part of Nigeria that nothing was allocated to it from the loan? On the contrary, the South-East is still suffering from the devastations of the 1967-1970 Civil War and needs developmental needs more than some of the other zones.

**Prevarication of Justice**: In Akpakaland, we notice a case of prevarication of justice as death penalty is given to any of the queens found with tail. Fulama happens to be the victim but instead of executing her, the president seeks ways to twist the law. He asks from his Chief Ministers for their advice and the conversations go thus:

Umal:	Mr President, it is an intricate matter. No doubt, Fulama is roundly at fault and should be executed. But we plead with the president to exercise his prerogative of mercy in view of Fulama's parentage. Commit her sentence to imprisonment to three months.
Ogunpa:	I support that. In addition, she should bear her tail until after her imprisonment.
Afianmo:	I support all that. Even if we wanted to execute her, we would find no means to do that, since we have no armoury.
Akpaka:	(After a brief pause.) Perede say something.
Perede:	Mr. President, I find it difficult to support what has been said so far. If Fulama cannot be executed in accordance with her own decree on whoever was found with a tail, then she shall be set free. If public execution is not for the great ones, imprisonment shouldn't be for them.
Akpaka:	Well Perede, Fulama does not make decrees for Akpakaland. I do. And you have heard the executioner say that we don't have the wherewithal to execute Fulama. We must make do with what we have. Fulama is hereby sentenced to a three-month house arrest with her tail. Enwe shall be summoned to remove the tail after she would have served the sentence (56).

Perede, the only dissenting voice among the Chief Ministers, is the only voice of truth but it was ignored. Likewise, in Nigeria, this prevarication of justice can be compared to the lone voice of Justice Centus Nweze of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in the case of Imo state governorship election between Mr. Ihedioha vs Mr. Uzodimma, delivered on February, 2020. The judgement was sentimentally passed in favour of Mr. Uzodimma in spite of all the evidences against him. In fact, most of the 2015 electoral cases passed by Nigerian courts, whether or not in favour of the appellant followed this pattern.

**Domestic Intrigues**: While Akpaka, in *Akpakaland* is battling with serious financial problem and insecurity in the land, his first wife out of sheer jealousy brings up another problem of domestic intrigue – her co-wife developing a tail like animal. Surprisingly, Akpaka converted this domestic affair to a national one and started pursuing it, abandoning the former. This is like Nigeria's collapsed economy that has made her 'the poverty capital of the world' due to corruption, the Boko Haram/Fulani Herdsmen insurgent and worsened by the recent crash of crude price in the international market. Rather than find solution on how to fix these problems, the president abandoned them to pursue personal RUGA (Fulani Settlement) project nationwide with national fund. While all these are happening, national news dallies have it that the president's cousin, Mamman Daura, and the wife of the president, Aisha Buhari, were at loggerheads over who controls power from the State House.

*The Strange Occurrence*: The tail controversy in *Akpakaland* is symbolic and symbolic works are often very difficult to translate into a more concrete term especially when it is confronted in different milieu than its original audience. Albert Camus opines that:

Nothing is harder to understand than a symbolic work. For this reason, we are forced to re-reading them again and again for the hidden currents in both the subject matter and form of such works. Because such works are products of philosophical, ideological and psychological thought process, no matter how much the writers of these works would deny this postulation, it has come to be accepted that they are social force (89).

For present readers to understand this is probably for the critics to thrust the work from its original immediate society to a different interpretative community in order to reach the author's horizon of expectations. This makes the author's horizon of expectations limitless. To achieve this, the strange 'tail bearing' saga would be compared to some 'strange' incidents in Nigeria. For example, 'a queen in the palace to grow tail like animal' can attribute to anything that portend sinister atmosphere in the society. It may mean that some 'expected ones' have failed or are failing in their primary responsibilities. For example, three months after it was alleged that (the late) President Yar'Adua was dead but still ruled Nigeria, it was Dora Akunyili (now late) the then Honourable Minister of Information, 'an expected one,' that saved the situation by stating the true position of things and a change was made.

It is also a strange occurrence that a former governor of Imo state and Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was convicted to twelve years' imprisonment for several offences, but receives full salary as serving Senators, while still incarcerated. It is also strange that with over two hundred ethnic groups and a population of over two hundred million people in Nigeria, president Buhari gave all security and strategic ministerial positions to only one ethnic group in Nigeria. Strange is the fact that while every nation of the world is adjusting their laws to meet global standards in order to curtail the increasing regional and global terrorism, Nigeria, under the same president Buhari, enacted a free visa policy authorising that Fulanis in any sub Saharan African region be issued with Nigerian visa on arrival and thus becomes Nigerian citizen automatically. Adding to these strange occurrences is that any 'repentant' member of the Boko Haram terrorist group is granted automatic state pardon and rehabilitated by enlistment into the Nigerian Army, but any person arrested planning or participating in any peaceful protest is arrested, tried as a criminal, detained and denied bail. We can go on and on but for space.

#### Conclusion

That *Akpakaland* was written in 1989 and published in 1990 shows that it antedates all the incidents discussed above; and thus, justifies Reception Theory and its claims in this work. *Akpakaland* seemingly asserts strong relationship of reality to the reader from the events set in Nigeria to the experiences, situations or circumstances in which he (the reader) lives. In focusing critical interest on the gaps in texts, on the blanks which the readers have to fill, the theory redefines the reader as an active maker of meaning or significance. With this redefinition of literature as something that only exists meaningfully in the mind of the reader, and with the redefinition of the literary work as a catalyst of mental events, comes also a redefinition of the reader thereby making the reader an active instead of a passive recipient of those ideas that an author has planted in a text. That is why Jan Mukarvosky stresses again that, "the work of art acquires the ability to refer to reality which is totally different from the one which it depicts, and to systems of values other than the one from which it arose and on which it is founded" (36).

It shows also that the attitude which the individual reader takes towards reality is to a considerable extent determined by the social relationship in which he is involved. That is, the material ties extended into by the work of art as signs set into motion the attitude of the reader towards reality. In other words, as the reader interacts with text in the process of reading for possible interpretation, his experience enables him to animate text as an actual event and then arrive at a meaning or idea that may not have even occurred to the author at the time of writing. In this way, the past can be understood and related to the present readers through the fusion of horizons of expectations of the reader (interpreter) and of the author, but never a dialectical fallacy.

From the foregoing, we appreciate the justification of Response theory in this study that it makes for applicative reading and aids in interpretation of the texts as well as relating the phenomenal implications there from to social relationships. It has also achieved the major objectives of the study through textual dynamism and Omnisignificance by means of further recovery or discovery and entrenchment of immense treasure of potential meanings embedded in literary texts by future readers or critics in different epochs. Is also brings about applicative reading aids in interpreting the texts according to their practical values and relating its phenomenal implications to social relationship. It also demonstrates how a work presented to a different audience in a different epoch has evolved new idea through the fusion of horizon as postulated by Gadmar that, "the past can be understood and related to the present through the fusion of horizons or contexts of the interpreter and of the author;" and that, "the important thing is to be aware of one's own biases so that a work of art may present itself in all its newness, and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's fore-meanings" (35).

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#### THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL RESTRUCTURING IN J. P. CLARK'S THE WIVES' REVOLT

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#### Abstract

Globally, the presence of instability in our society has created negative effects on people and their daily activities. Nigeria, like other nations, experiences numerous forms of unrest. In recent times, issues of unrest have multiplied, due to operations that encourage disparity, ethnocentrism, sectionalism and lots more. This situation negatively influences the political, religious and economic sectors. This worrisome situation is what informs the consideration of the problem of this research. Thus, a play text is examined as a notable model amongst others to unearth these menaces. Deploying the literary approach in the collation and analysis of relevant data, this paper explores J. P. Clark's The Wives' Revolt and its treatment of certain factors of social disintegration caused by a biased sharing formula of a people's wealth, thereby resulting into clamour for restructuring. The paper therefore shows that plays can speak on up-to-date questions to establish sanity in any environment because dramatists in Nigeria have long advocated restructuring, through their works. It exemplifies how dramatists in their plays have portrayed and repudiated erroneous actions in the society, in an attempt to achieve desired changes. The paper recommends that adequate considerations be given to plays in seeking lasting solutions to the several inexcusable disparities. It concludes that plays are vehicles for progressive development and if taken into cognisance will make serious meaning in the quest to restructure our nation.

#### Introduction

Issues of bomb blast, manslaughter, abduction and mass killing have been quite persistent for over two decades in Nigeria. In the past, bomb blasts were only seen on television and heard of from far away countries. Sadly, they are now part of our daily experiences in Nigeria as a country. In the world today, it is happening within and amongst us with many motivations behind it. In Nigeria, the political institution is accused of the many problems in the nation that are fast eating into the fabrics of the society. Nigeria seems to be competing with countries like Iraq and Iran with regards to the spate of insecurity and violence. Safety of lives and property cannot be guaranteed for the citizens, let alone foreigners. This, of course, has reduced tourists' influx into many parts of the country. Thus, it has affected the development of members of the society and the national revenue.

Unfortunately, where we are today is as a result of certain decisions, actions, and inactions of a few selfish, biased, and self-centred leaders that have

metamorphosed into a national crisis dilemma – due to leadership deficit. Nonyelum Mba and Olympus Ejue re-echo this situation when they state that, "the crisis associated with leadership in ... Nigeria would continue to persist as long as the strategies for mobilisation towards political power and economic empowerment of the leaders continue to remain the same" (63). The operational system of conferring leadership position in Nigeria is more like running one's personal business. Owing to the manipulated 'selection' method, leadership qualities and values that could bring positive transformation are undermined. The deciding factor is what has come to be termed, *godfatherism*, which is a major problem in Nigeria's polity.

Hence, the leaders' allegiance is sectionalised and this shortfall informs ignoring the honest demands of the masses. No matter how they lament, public interest becomes secondary. John Alechenu maintains that, "we have so many Nigerians, but there are no many good leaders in Nigeria" (6-7). It is quite unfortunate that the political space in Nigeria is surmounted with many craving for material wealth and not prepared to serve the nation. With such leaders in position, corruption and corrupt practices thrive and there can hardly be meaningful development except there is a deliberate reconsideration. This reflects the view of Joe Ande:

The present democratic dispensation in our great country Nigeria is no doubt characterised by corrupt tendencies manifested in many spheres especially in leadership and followership. This cankerworm has eaten deep into the annual of the entire nation and has unfortunately become the order of the day. Its attributes of bribery, advanced fee fraud popularly known as 419, election manipulation (rigging, kidnapping and insecurity) to mention but a few have now been deeply entrenched in the polity (cited in Aniukwu and Uchumkpa 33).

It is very clear the above that almost everything that could be taken as social vices in the nation are predicated on leadership. This has given rise to unending tension and crisis in the nation. As Chinua Achebe puts it, "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian air or anything else" (1). It is pertinent, from this statement, that one of the ways of restructuring any society is to address issues of leadership and authority; an essential aspect of national restructuring. Our leaders need to understand that they are selected to represent the people and improve their social welfare. In line with this, Barclays Ayakoroma asserts thus:

Transparency and accountability on the part of the leaders are antidotes to the cankerworms of corruption. Our leaders are not answerable to the electorate probably because they believe that whether they are voted for or not, they will still find themselves in power through the back door...once leaders are accountable to their followers at every point in time, then excesses could be checked (4). The mind set of leaders in the Nigerian state requires restructuring to promote unity and oneness. If that is done, with collective efforts by members of the society, we are capable of reuniting the people irrespective of cultural differences and solving the many tribal, ethnic, and neglect related problems in the nation but the unpatriotic behaviours of the leaders make it problematic. The leaders in our nation need to reorganise their thoughts, operations and decisions and be devoted to the service of Nigeria. Nuhu Ribadu avers that,

what the country needs is honest and modern leadership that would be a rallying point for citizens, one that can tame the consuming tides of corruption and evolve creative solutions to our myriad of problems. It is my belief that firm and sincere leadership is the precursor for industrious and patriotic followership (16).

Consequently, it could be posited that the great turnaround needed in the nation is linked to the type of leadership exhibited. It is unrealistic of nations to seek patriotic followership when they are led by unpatriotic leaders, who exploit and oppress the masses at every given opportunity; leaders who go on recruiting assassins and thugs to remain in power whereas aggrieved groups continue to struggle and hate their nationality. It is based on the foregoing that Toni Duruaku opines that, "struggle is hate ... when a people are oppressed long enough, they grow to hate and fight themselves..." (cited in Rotimi 117). Therefore, to end these disruptive events troubling our communal life and normal operations, it is imperative to institute firm and honest leadership. Credible leaders worthy of emulation, with integrity and social values, are needed for Nigeria's restructuring to balance the interest of citizens in the nation.

#### **Restructuring in Nigeria: An Overview**

The British colonial administration brought together people from diverse cultures in 1914 to makeup of a nation known as Nigeria today. They further established the Northern, Western and Eastern Regions in 1950, with written constitutions and leadership appointed to rule, though with limited powers. In 1960, Nigeria got her independence from British colonial rule. Since then, a lot of transformation had taken place in the Nigerian state, positive and negative transformations, respectively.

However, it has become more glaring that Nigeria needs restructuring, especially due to the persistent leadership deficit which has precipitated consistent agitations across the nation. The singsong appears to be: "If there is a word for every season it is restructuring" (Britton et al. 2). Restructuring is borne out of the need for a sense of balance. Change is the most constant and highly recommended phenomenon. It brings togetherness as modification takes away certain occurrences that are problematic.

To achieve national restructuring, some basic policies that have been created with either intended or unintended consequences, need to be redressed. This is why specification of area of restructuring is essential. The Nigerian nation has dwelt so long on the issue of restructuring of its leadership structure, but has scarcely recorded any positive outcome. The masses yearn for a political structure known as, true federalism. Zabadt observes thus:

> Federalism is an act of compromise, seemingly irreconcilable interests and values in a society where the need to coexist as political unit is also imperative. As a result, public policies generally tend to be acts of compromise which sometimes reflects itself in the country concerned not being able to speak clearly with one voice (cited in Bariledum and Okoro 3).

Considering the many challenges in the nation, the peoples' vision for true federalism is worth pursuing. The rate at which internal and external threat and disaster occur in the nation on daily basis is alarming. The growth of the nation is affected; violence, insecurity, oppression, exploitation and other acts of insurgencies are on the increase. The four cardinal regions have all had peculiar experiences that necessitate restructuring.

It is pertinent to take into cognisance the observation of a former presidential candidate of the defunct National Republican Convention (NRC), Alhaji Bashir Tofa. He opines that, "agitation for restructuring of Nigeria centred around three things: marginalisation, dominance of others in their regions and resources and opportunity distribution" (cited in Yauri 4). These three areas, needless to re-emphasise, have led to the death of so many Nigerians agitating for the nation's restructuring. Over the years, some regional divisions have tilted power at the centre and have used it to benefit more from the national resources, as well as decide the fate of others. Thus, it is safe to say that there is urgent need for decentralisation and a paradigm shift of resource allocation. Nigerians seek the nation's emancipation from the strong grip of the political elites. Muhammed Othman, Nazariah Osman, and Isah Mohammed submit that, "all the politics in Nigeria among the elites is about the struggle to access and consolidate the hold of political power and state resources" (17).

Without mincing words, the ideology of national restructuring in Nigeria could be visible, if greed, seclusion and other exploitative strategies to milk the national economy are jettisoned for fairness, justice, and social inclusion. According to Dawood Egbefo "...inter-ethnic rivalry, mutual distrust, bigotry, ethnic cynicism and religious intolerance have invariably and seriously undermined Nigeria's quest for national unity..." (2). Perhaps, it is necessary to mention that these factors are prevalent because they are propelled by the selfishness of leaders. These disparities have lingered because most of the leaders benefit when there is conflict, as rightly put by Burchant that, "the Nigerian state manipulates the ethnic and religious sentiments of the people to remain in power..." (cited by Bariledum and Okoro 4).

As long as faiure to strike a balance between the regions, sections, and majority and minority claims, restructuring would not be visible. Most of the crises in the nation are offshoots of these biased practices that bedevil the society, which explain why the vision of national restructuring in Nigeria has not yielded the desired result. Within the context of national restructuring, Job Dangana states thus:

Due to the deceit that all was well with Nigeria, many Nigerians of various social classes were in a false state of mind that all was well with the country and were oblivious of the great danger hanging on Nigeria like the sword of Damocles. The people continued to feel comfortable thinking that their country was in the best state, totally unaware that the foundation of the nation was already eaten up and the structure of Nigeria's nationhood has become very fragile and weak (2).

Apparently, we cannot say that all is well with the Nigerian state. Nigerians are dissatisfied with its weak political structure for a variety of reasons that negatively influence the various regional units, and have propelled incessant atrocities in the nation. Indeed, there is truly no comfort zone in Nigeria as grievances driven by fractious politics are endemic in the nation. Once a particular predominant issue is resolved, immediately another springs up; cultism, abduction, unemployment, poverty, disintegration, and so on, are over-stretched and are resisting unity in the nation. Thus, there is an urgent need for reform, especially in the political space for unity, stability and national progess in Nigeria. Kia Bariledum and Sunny Abeki Okoro, as proponents of restructuring, maintain that, "the process seeks dialogue, bargains and conpromise" (5).

It is worth noting that the foregoing provides a premise for the application of Clark's concept of national restructuring, as portrayed in *The Wives' Revolt*. This is with the view to enlighten the society that dialogue, inclusion, bargains and compromise, amongst others, are bedrocks for national restructuring.

#### **Drama and Social Restructuring**

The enormous position drama occupies in its society is undeniably powerful and effective; it mirrors life by telling the story of the society and in turn reshaping the society. Drama texts are written to reconstruct the many dispatities in the society to help society develop. They are vehicle to facilitate peace, and the roles they play in developing a nation cannot be underestimated. Dramatists have treated quite a lot of subjects in their environment to contribute to nation building. As Emile Zola puts it, "art touches on all subjects" (701).

Dramatists of contemporary African theatre have projected themes on disunity, oppression, exploitation, marginalisation, corruption and sexism and alot of others in their works. Emmanuel Danduara asserts that, "theatre must continously champion the development processes of its society and redirect the erring practice of the political actors of its time" (3). The dramatic art seeks a world that is peaceful for its inhabitants. Thus, Chijindu Mgbemere submits that,

the artist as social rebel tends always to see the society from the leftist perspective. However, the artist as a seer can use theatre and media to strengthen government policies by conscientising its citizens.... The work of the artist should always gear towards creating a better society where equity, democracy and good governance is emphasised (cited in Aniukwu and Uchumkpa 113).

Dramatists in the world, right from classical times, have explored the functionality of drama texts in educating and enlightening the citizenry. This is in advocating for peace and tranquility to contribute to a better society, as against what is constantly experienced in the world and Nigeria in particular. The hinderances to our mission of restructuring are the refusal of the ruling class to acknowledge shortfalls and the unwillingness to adopt the change initiatives portrayed in the drama texts and other change agencies.

Despite the above position, dramatists remain resolute to national issues. It is unfortunate that the depth of wisdom embedded in their works that could lead to social reorganisation have not been utilised by society. Femi Osofisan affirms thus:

> In a sick nation, among sick people, such as in Nazi Germany, and such as you have in the contemporary "post-colonial" state, Albert Camus' almost aphoristic statement rings true, that the destiny of the true artist is to rebel. Drama in particular, no doubt because it is the most social of the arts, provides the site in which this inherent menance is most strident (110).

It is clear that, drama being the most interactive genre of literature, uniquely relates to its society. It reasons the cumulative activities of man, from socio-political, cultural, religious, economical and ethnical debates without fear or favour in its treatment of any matter. This reveals the therapeutic nature of the drama text in its society as Fox rightly observes:

Art is a healing medium. Though it may sometimes take its inspiration from disturbances in society or the individual, its final effect is to meld the fissures of consciousness through its affirmation of continuity its testimonial to imaginations procreative powers (cited in Adesi 95).

Drama, being an art form, has become a therapy for the human society, healing the nation of traumatic incidences, as well as identifying and attending to national questions. It could be averred that in the bid to maintain an ideal system of governance, J. P. Clark focuses on national restructuring in *The Wives Revolt*. The play dwells a situation where a male-dominated society, with selfish laws, treat women as being less than men in many ways. The play recognises the need for gender inclusion, transparency and the essence of bargaining as tools for communal living thereby leading to free and fair governance; an inclusive system of leadership and peaceful co-existence.

### Plot of The Wives' Revolt

The play is about oil compensation given to Erhuwaren community by an oil company. Somehow, the men, being at the helm of affairs in the community, devided the money into three parts: the elders of the town, the men in all age-groups, and the women in their age-grades. The women, not satisfied with the sharing formula, condemn the men's decision as being discriminatory and unfair; but the men refuse to come to a compromise with their claims. The men further ban from the town domestic animals raised by these women, labelling them as witches.

The women, under Koko's leadership, stage a walk out on the men in protest. The men, seeing the doggedness of the women and their revolt, revoke their laws and by consensus, the women are given specially fattened cow, hundred tubers of yam, ten barrels of palm oil, and other items as settlement. The remaining funds go for the opening of a school building fund for the benefit of the children, while the men are enjoined to share with their wives whatever comes their way.

#### The Concept of National Restructuring in The Wives' Revolt

In line with the discourse on national restructuring, Clark in *The Wives' Revolt*, portrays a national matter through two of the major characters: Okoro and Koko. They highlight some salient issues core to the agitations for restructuring in Nigeria.

Firstly, leadership deficit that has caused devision in Nigeria due largely to greedy leaders who think just about wealth acquisition. This is reflected in the sharing formula of the oil compensation money given to the community. The proclamation in the opening scene of the play states it:

It is the matter of the money sent by the oil company operating on our land. The amount is known to all. This sum, after due debate in the town hall, has been shared out in three equal parts, one going to the elders of the town, the second to the men in all their age groups, and the third by no means the least, to the women also in all their age-grades. A most fair and equitable settlement you will never find in any other society: near or far. However, our women-folk led by a few reckless ones, fed up with doing simple duties for their husbands and children as befits good housewives, are repudiating this fair distribution of the money, demanding that it should have been devided into two equal parts, one going to them and the other to the men (Clark 1).

The above account in the play gives us a glimpse of the kind of self-centred leadership that is in operation in the community. There are many cunny strategies deployed by the men to cheat the women in the play.

Secondly, the deliberation leading to the final decision on how the money would be shared was done amongst the men. It was not an inclusive bargain; even if the women were there, they have already been denied the right or freedom to speak in public affairs, which amounts to undue marginalisation. Koko speaks about this in her dialogue with her husband, Okoro:

> **Koko**: Oh, yes, so we did. But did your most respected leader recognise our individual rights to speak? Oh old age can really be a currse. Did you see him sliding off into sleep in the middle of the proceedings then, when nudged awake by his young attendant, how he nodded vigorously to everything you men said? (Clark 9).

From the dialogue above, it is seen that transparency in leadership is questionable. The same applies to the numerous supposed transparency briefings done in our nation. Yet, issues of embezzlement, misappropriation of funds, and other fraudulent acts persist.

Thirdly, the children, the future leaders in the community, were also sidelined from what ought to be for the entire community. This typifies majority of the type of leaders in Nigeria that feed fat on national wealth and neglect their future to starve to death. The young ones are the future, but they are ignored due to the craving for wealth and grandeur.

Fourthly, there is a faulty sharing method: one share to the men; another to the elders who are equally men; and then the third part to the women. Little wonder then that Koko, the leader of women retorts: "Oh just repeal that law, and give us our fair share of the money..." (Clark 14). That has been the contention between the oppressors and the oppressed. The dramatist discloses a greedy and oppressive leadership, one that is not fair to the female gender and treat them as being less than men. This is a negativity that women in our society are battling with till date. The women's representative of Erhuwaren protest against it, with vehemence: "The law you have passed is bad, unfair and discriminatory, being directed against women because of our stand. We will not accept it" (Clark 7).

The conflict increases from that point; yet, the men who constitute the leadership maintain their stand, trying to justify their actions as buttressed by Okoro in his dialogue with his wife:

**Okoro**: Men pay all taxes in the land; that's how it's been since the white man dropped his poll tax upon our individual heads, not sparing the penniless. It little mattered to him whether a man held down a job, had a roof that withstood the rains or pot of soup to his name. Just let there be a trace of hair to his lip or chin, and he was counted down for the white man's poll tax. Now that the white man is paying us a little tax in return, you don't want us to pick up the bag (Clark 10).

The true picture of leadership in our nation and how it exploits people is revealed here. The same leaders appointed and voted into office by the people's mandate have suddenly realised that they are there to pick up the bags, not minding the effect it will have on their followers. So many leaders in our nation have picked up bags at the expense of good roads, portable water, good health care facilities, schools and jobs for the masses.

In an attempt to drive home their point, the women staged a walk out on their men; but it was a non-violence protest, like the Warri women's non-violence protest on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> Augest, 2002. In the face of these realities, Clark, in *The Wives' Revolt*, diplomatically moves into the position of a nation builder. He resolves the peoples' differences through the medium of dialogue and bargain between the leading law makers and the aggrieved. National stability and peace are restored, as captured in the reclamation of the play:

Erhuwaren! Erhuwaren! Lisen carefully, all of you! Open your ears wide so that you may hear well. The town has been brought together; all quarters, sections and shades of opinions, as from this moment, are all reconciled and re-united with one voice. The unfortunate incidents of the last few days have shown how an idea, meant for the common good, if not debated in public and adopted by consensus, can give rise to dissension, and create havoc in a community, right down to the family level, even to the nuclear unit of one man and one wife. Whose eyes, whose ears among us have not witnessed the truth of the matter these last few days? To bring peace and harmony back to town, back to the home, it makes my heart sweet all over to be able to announce that with immediate effect, even as I am speaking, the obnoxious law ... is hereby revoked and consigned to tha place where all such unhappy things are better left and forgotten (Clark 59).

J.P. Clark's concept of national restructuring, as epitomised in the drama, projects the power of dialogue, transparency, and right judgement as ingredients of peace and harmony. The dramatist as a catalyst has emphasised the problem of Nigeria in the play and has proffered a non-violent means of negotiation to resolve its turbulences.

### Conclusion

This paper has established the true position of J.P. Clark on the subject of national restructuring, as one that craves for justice and oneness like every other social dramatists that represent life with the vision of changing the cause of things in a troubled society. The paper has established that sentimental practices are harmful to nation building. It has also shown that there is the possibility to restructure our society through the areas highlighted in *The Wives' Revolt*. Therefore, to address the problem

of national restructuring, the various groups and agencies, whether government or nongovernmental agencies, should focus more on human relationship, the leaders and the led, power and dialogue where Clark's vision is domiciled.

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# THE PLAYWRIGHT AND THE POETICS OF SUICIDE: RESTRUCTURING THE SUICIDE LEGISLATION IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Suicide has become a frequent feature in both audio and audio-visual media reportage on the internet, social and print media in our world today. This phenomenon which has become a huge menace affecting individuals of all races and ages alike has begun to attract serious universal acclaim. The World Health Organisation submits that approximately a million people subscribe to it every year, translating to a global mortality of 16 individuals for every 100,000, or one death every 40 seconds. The numbers keep increasing and many researchers have linked it to mental health illnesses, of which depression takes centre stage. Many nations across the world have begun to legislate for some suicide prevention strategies in order to check this menace in their various social climes, but Nigeria seems to have been left aback in the fight against this social evil affecting her wellbeing. She criminalises suicide as is visible in a section of her criminal code and approves a punishment for attempted suicide. The playwright again as the societal watchdog must be drawn into this. This paper adopts the Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicidal Behaviour as it reviews the various dimensions through which the Nigerian playwright has mirrored this menace. It tries also to chart a new trajectory to be explored by the playwright in efforts towards a restructuring of the suicide legislation. This would translate to the evolvement of potent suicide prevention strategies in Nigeria.

### Introduction

Suicide as a phenomenon has become a menace that has yielded a whole lot of negative implications to the human society; a few of these implications being political, social, moral and economic. It is a headache that no human institution in recorded history is immune to. This is to say that it is a reality that affects all human beings in all corners of the world, and this is why it could be categorised as a universal phenomenon. Many governments, institutions, organisations, researchers and individuals have devoted valuable time in attempts to clearly understand and tackle this issue which from various indications and pointers is taking an upward surge numerically. According to Alabi et al., projections suggest that it may contribute a whooping percentage of 2.4 to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) by the year 2020. And this is a conservative projection owing to the fact that suicide cases in the rural areas of the world are grossly underreported (1).

It is important to note that suicide is not a disease even though it constitutes a disease burden and can be classified as one of the items that make up the Global Burden of Disease. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation defines the Global Burden of Disease as, an approach to global descriptive epidemiology. It is a systematic, scientific effort to quantify the comparative magnitude of health loss due to diseases, injuries, and risk factors by age, sex, and geographies for specific points in time (5). The Global Burden of Disease in clearer terms is a programme funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to research into the global impact of major diseases or health issues with regards to mortality, morbidity and other indicators. Therefore, it is not off the hook to situate suicide (a major cause of premature death) within this conceptual umbrella although it is not a disease.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) avers that suicide is the result of an act deliberately initiated and performed by a person in the full knowledge or expectation of its fatal outcome (37). It can be defined as the intentional act of causing harm to oneself to a degree that results in death. In simple terms, it is the intentional act of taking or ending one's own life. Edwin Shneidman defines it as an intentional death a self-inflicted death in which one makes an intentional, direct, and conscious effort to end one's life (7). Shneidman was a renowned professor of thanatology who made great contributions to the body of existing knowledge on suicide. Explicating further on his definition of suicide, Antoon Leenaars states:

This definition implies that committing suicide involves a conceptualisation of death; that it combines an individual's conscious wish to be dead and his action to carry out that wish; that it focuses on his intention (which may be to be inferred by others); that the goal of action relates to death (rather than self-injury or self-mutilation), and that it focuses on the concept of cessation of the individual's conscious, introspective life (8).

Despite the fact that it is an abhorrent behaviour to virtually all cultural, religious and other institutions known to mankind, it still appreciates numerically as research records indicate. Peeter Varnik records that, "suicides in the world amount to 782 thousand in 2008 according to the WHO estimate, which is 1.4% of total mortality and 15% of injury mortality" (760). Just slightly over half a decade later, several thousands more have added to the initial figures. This is visible in Silke Bachmann's report that, "according to the WHO, in 2015, about 800,000 suicides were documented worldwide. The global annual mortality rate has been estimated by WHO to be 10.7 per 100,000 individuals" (1). More recent records suggest that once again, there has been a great change in these figures. Alabi et al. justify this claim with their stance that suicide "is a human tragedy that accounts for an estimated one million deaths annually. This translates to at least one death resulting from suicide every forty seconds" (1). These figures above lay more credence to Varnik's stance that, "the best predictor of the

suicide rate in the short term is the past suicide rate itself in the longer run large changes can happen and indeed have happened" (761).

It is also worthy of note that the available data are tentative and not exactly accurate and reliable. This is because since suicide is a universal tragedy that can occur everywhere human beings exist, the rural dwellers in some underdeveloped and developing regions of the world may not have been captured in this available statistics of suicide globally. Even for the more developed countries of the world, it may still be a difficult task to document suicides as they occur. To this effect, Varnik continues thus:

It is easy for a well-organised country to measure mortality, including injury mortality, but diagnosing suicide also includes determining the component of intent, which makes it more difficult to have unequivocal statistical data. There are not that many publications that attempt to analyse the statistics of completed suicides in the whole world. The main reasons for that are probably the deficiencies in the availability and reliability of data (761).

Using Ahmed Yerima's *An Inspector Calls* and Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* as paradigms, this paper adopts the Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicidal Behaviour as it reviews the various dimensions through which the Nigerian playwright has mirrored this menace.

### Suicide and its Impact

The impact of suicide is grievously enormous. It impacts on the economic, political, psychological and most importantly, social dispositions of the affected party or parties involved as the case may be. Cerel et al. opine that,

little research has examined the consequences of a suicide for social or family networks. Because suicide occurs within families, the focus on the aftermath of suicide within families is an important next step to determine exactly how to help survivors (38).

They also maintain that, "perhaps the most deleterious impact of suicide on social networks is the distortion of communicational processes that may occur after the death, particularly around the issue of blame" (39). On the impact of suicide, Alabi et al. further note that, "the magnitude of the problem is further compounded by the fact that attempted suicide is about twenty-five times more than that of completed suicide. Every act of suicide impacts on at least six other individuals" (1). They also aver that suicide and self-harm can have a significant impact on family members emotional and social functioning (Alabi et al. 2).

#### Suicide in Nigeria

*Pulse Nigeria* reported that on 29 July, 2018, spectator Index published a World Health Organisation research that ranked suicide per 100,000, per country in which "Nigeria placed fifth with 15,000 suicides in every 100,000 suicides" (www.pulse.ng). If this report is anything to go by, then Nigeria faces a huge menace. This is for a country in a continent that condemns the act of suicide. On suicide in Africa, Austin Omomia avers that, "the grave moral implications that suicide connotes in African culture cannot be overemphasised. It is safe to say that, suicide is mostly, generally frowned at and not tolerated in most parts of Africa" (44). The treatment of Okonkwo's remains in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a huge pointer to the treatment of suicide in Africa, and particularly in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria where the Igbos inhabit. Nigeria is a country made up of three major ethnic groups which include Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. Within their cultural, religious and other institutional circumscribes, these three ethnic groups consider suicide as evil and abhorrent except for situations relating to war or traditional ritual practices. Outside these, suicide necessitated by any other reason whatsoever is unforgivable. On suicide in Igboland, Norbert Oparaji notes:

A very significant concept of *ndu* among the Igbos is the idea that *ndu* is from God. This makes the human person a theomorphic being, and the human life, a sacred thing forming a sacred entity. And explains why the Igbos affirms that, *ndu sin a chi* (life is from God). Among the Igbos, suicide is known as *onwu ojoo* (a bad death) and dreaded and regarded as *nso ani* (taboo or grave sin against natural order) (8).

From the above submission, it is clear that the Igbos believe that since *ndu* (life) is from God, no human has the right to tamper with it. This is why an act of suicide is regarded as *onwu ojoo* (bad death) and consequently treated with great disdain, with the remains of the unfortunate fellow thrown into the *ajo ofia* (evil forest). In the Yoruba ontology, Aborisade Olasunkanmi records that, "when a person dies young, for the Yoruba it is a bad death. Thus, they are not given full funeral rites. There is no happiness accompanying the burial. It is worst when a person commits suicide" (31). In this case, he continues that, "cleansing ceremonies are performed by the deceased's family so that such an evil will not happen again" (31).

In the same vein, the Hausa culture also sees suicide in a bad light. This statement finds validation in Omomia Austin's assertion that, "the position of the Hausa culture abhors suicide. According to MaNewman, they are influenced largely by the Islamic religion, thus their condemnation of suicide is greatly influenced by Islamic injunctions" (44). All these go to say that no culture in human history condones suicide, but that notwithstanding, suicide continues to take a negative toll on humanity, increasing by the ticking of the clock. This is why this work is imminently tilted towards this human menace, especially as it concerns the kind of legislation that exists to this effect.

### **Theoretical Framework**

An individual does not just jolt from his or her bed, decide to kill him or herself and carry out the act with such a baffling level of spontaneity. Suicidal thoughts develop from a series of experiences and beliefs of an individual about him or herself and the world which leads to a certain degree of depression and hopelessness. Although these thoughts may come like a spark of intuition, they do not just happen as they come; rather, the individual nurtures the thought for some time, puts it side by side with the realities of his or her existence before finally deciding to take action towards the termination of his or her own life. It is against this backdrop that this research is inclined to adopt Thomas Joiner's interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behaviour.

Joiner et al. posit that, "the interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behaviour proposes that an individual will not die by suicide unless s/he has both the desire to die by suicide as well as the ability to do so" (2). They further submit thus:

When people hold two specific psychological states in their minds simultaneously, and when they do so for long enough, they develop the desire for death. The two psychological states are *perceived burdensomeness and a sense of low belongingness or social alienation* (2).

They outline three main components of the theory, and they include perceived burdensomeness, a low sense of belonging or social alienation and an acquired ability to enact lethal self-injury (2-3). This means that before suicide occurs, the individual involved must have convinced himself that he has become a burden to "family, friends and/or society" (2); he must have developed an alienated personality and a feeling that his existence is of no importance to "family, circle of friends, or other valued groups" (2); and lastly, the individual must have fought the idea of self-preservation repeatedly to a standstill. This means that the individual must have outgrown the fear of lethal self-injury and death. According to this theory, it is only when these things are in place that suicide can occur.

This theory has become very relevant in understanding the various stages an individual passes before engaging in suicidal behaviour. Many Nigerian playwrights' works bordering on suicide of any form find explanation within this theoretical purview, and this is why the interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behaviour has become relevant to this study. This work makes references to Ahmed Yerima's *An Inspector Calls* and Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, as it reviews the standpoints from which Nigerian playwrights have viewed suicide, while stressing the need for a new perspective that will positively affect the suicide legislation in Nigeria.

#### The Playwright and the Issue of Suicide

There is no gainsaying that the playwright occupies a vital position in the business of societal transformation. All the issues about life find expression in the realm of playwriting one way or the other. The issue of suicide is one of such issues that have also been projected by the playwright in the spirit of edutainment. Suicide has been handled differently by different playwrights. Some have handled it culturally/religiously while others have handled it socio-politically.

Ahmed Yerima looks at it from a Marxist point of view with his play *An Inspector Calls.* In this play, he creates a character who grows frustrated by the harsh socio-political climate where the divide between the haves and have-nots continues to widen by the minute; and these haves stop at nothing to further suppress the have-nots no matter how hard the latter tried. On this note, Bisi Adejumo, a very beautiful and hardworking young lady continues to hop from one job to the other in the quest to survive. However, her efforts are all frustrated by every member of Chief Badejo's family (including Dele, their son in-law to be) who in one way or the other contributes to her frustration. Things move from bad to worse when she becomes pregnant for Segun, Chief Badejo's rascally son. Although he tries to take responsibility, Bisi refuses on the grounds that Segun's lifestyle of alcoholism and rascality will not be good for her. She tries to get some help from Segun's mother (Remi) who is a leader in an NGO, but she turns her down. And this is the last straw that breaks the camel's back. She finally decides to take solace in suicide by swallowing an overdose of *egometrin* tablets that fry her inside out.

On the other hand, Wole Soyinka projects suicide from a cultural/religious point of view with his play *Death and the King's Horseman*. This is a play that narrows on the clash between the religious and cultural realities of Africa and that of their western counterparts in the face of colonialism. Elesin Oba, the king's horseman is required by native custom to travel with the king as his horseman when the king dies. This is a fate he accepts without complaints, as it was necessary to maintain cosmic order. However, being a randy man, he still wants a taste of a beautiful damsel who crosses his path while he prepared to die by ritual suicide, accompanying his late king. The white District Officer in charge of his village did not like this idea of accompanying a dead man to the great beyond; a practice he termed barbaric.

Therefore, in trying everything to stop this ritual suicide from materialising, he arrests and detains Elesin Oba. Olunde his (Elesin's) son, upon returning from London and discovering that his father had not been able to complete this ritual due to his incarceration, kills himself in order to take the place of his father and maintain cosmic balance. Upon the shocking realisation that his son had taken his place in unity with the dead king, Elesin Oba kills himself; an act which in addition to his son's death defeats colonial aims.

These two plays are clear indications that the Nigerian playwright has not left the issue of suicide to go unnoticed. He has been active in the portraiture of a range of societal issues of which suicide features prominently. In the play *An Inspector Calls*, we see all the three components of the interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behaviour come to play in the image of Bisi Adejumo. She gets frustrated by her living realities, and every single attempt she makes to remedy her situation seems to draw her further into misery. She changes her name a couple of times and takes up a new identity when she thinks it could be the reason for her ill luck. The excerpt below reveals this:

**Inspector**: (*Coming down right of the table, sternly*). That is what I asked myself tonight when I was looking at the dead girl. And then I said to myself, Well, we all try to understand why it had to happen. And that is why I am here, and why I am not going until I know what happened. (*He sits right of the table.*) Bisi Adejumo lost her job with Badejo and Son because she led a strike to improve her lot and the lot of the workers. At last she found another job under what name? I don't know in a big fashion shop, and had to leave there because you were annoyed with yourself and passed the annoyance onto her. Now she had to try something else. So first she changed her name to Tokunbo Fadare (133).

Firstly, she begins to see herself as a burden unto her own self and unto the society she finds herself. Secondly, she develops a low sense of belonging or alienated personality upon the realisation that nobody cares for or wants her. This can be seen in the conversation between Inspector Lawal and Chief Mrs. Remi Badejo thus:

And you have nothing further to tell me, eh?
I will tell you what I told her. Go and look for the father of
the child. It is his responsibility.
That doesn't make it any less yours. She came to you for
help, at a time when no woman could have needed it more.
And you not only refused it yourself but saw to it that the
others refused it too (151-152).

Consequently, she sinks into depression and begins to gradually remove herself from others and from the world in entirety. Thirdly, seeing her life as hopeless, she grows to overcome the fear of pain and death. As a result, she swallows an overdose of abortion pills (*Egometrin* tablets); not to abort the baby in her womb, but to abort her life. She therefore submits to death by suicide.

Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* also presents us with character(s) that follow this aforementioned theoretical course. Although the suicide he presents is different from the one that had earlier been evaluated in this work, it is also easy to see the same pattern of progression on the part of the characters before they finally end in death by suicide. Elesin Oba's son Olunde comes back from studies in

London to discover that his father's worldly desires had not allowed him to complete an age long ritual of escorting the late king to the land of the dead. Fearing the repercussion such behaviour would bring to his family; he kills himself in place of his father.

From this action of his, it is clearly seen that he also undergoes these three stages of burdensomeness, low belongingness and ability to enact self-injury (in accordance to Joiner's submissions). He understands that his father's behaviour constitutes a burden to the image of his family which needs to be redeemed. He also develops a low sense of belonging which stems from his believe that his own people will forever leave with contempt for his family because of his father. These feelings culminate to the final component of the theory which is seen in Olunde's development of a spirit that is resistant to the idea of self-preservation which enables him to carry out the act of suicide.

Elesin Oba on the other hand undergoes these stages on the realisation that his son had died in his place; that the "young shoot has poured its sap into the parent stalk" (75). At this point, he realises that it is anomalous for the sap of the young and future generation to be used in servicing the old and fading generation. Iyaloja's statement below reveals all these to Elesin:

**Iyaloja**: (moves forward and removes the covering): Your courier Elesin, cast your eyes on the favoured companion of the king. (Rolled up in the mat, his head and feet showing at either ends is the body of Olunde). There lies the honour of our household and of our race. Because he could not bear to let honour fly out of doors, he stopped it with his life. The son has proved the father Elesin, and there is nothing left in your mouth to gnash but infant gums (75).

Ignoring the pains associated with self-harm, Elesin embraces death; strangling himself as a way of escaping the burdensomeness and low belongingness that his actions had brought to him.

These plays are an indication that the Nigerian playwright has been awake to the realities of present day living. Suicide being one of them has received a fair share in their creative masterpieces. However, the fact that none of these playwrights in Nigeria has looked at it from the legislative perspective as it regards the Nigerian state is still a subject of major concern.

### **Restructuring the Suicide Legislation in Nigeria**

Nigeria has received her fair share as far as the issue of the human menace called suicide is concerned. In these recent times, it has dominated both audio and audio-visual media reportage in Nigeria, especially in the higher institutions of learning. In the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, for instance, *Punch Newspaper* on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2019, reported the death of a student by suicide on 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2019. This particular one had

made four attempts at suicide before eventually succeeding. Barely a month later, the newspaper again on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2019, reported another suicide incident which occurred on 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2019, involving another student (a final year). Instead of legislating for potent methods of checking this menace in the Nigerian space, it is rather surprising to learn that the act of suicide is still considered a criminal offence punishable by one year incarceration in Nigeria.

According to the *Nigerian Criminal Code Act* of 1990 as provided in part 5 chapter 27, section 327, "any person who attempts to kill himself is guilty of a misdemeanour, and is liable to imprisonment for one year." This is a punishment that the *Nigerian Criminal Code Act* approves for a person who tries to commit suicide but fails. This law stems from an obsolete legislation (the *Lunacy Act or Mental Health Act* of 1958) made in the colonial days by the British government when they were still legal colonial occupants of Nigeria. It was put in place to see to the treatment, care and control of mentally ill individuals. Even when a good number of her counterparts had begun to legislate for better ways of handling issues relating to suicide, Nigeria has continued to operate based on this obsolete *Lunacy Code. Adeoye Oyewole* in writing for *Punch Newspaper* refreshes our minds on an incident that occurred in Lagos State, Nigeria thus:

Do you recall that the police in Lagos stopped a 58-year old textile merchant from jumping off the Third Mainland Bridge into the Lagoon over some debts she had incurred? ... Much later, it was gathered that she was being tried under the obsolete Lunacy Code and ordered to pay a fine of about \$500,000 (www.punchng.com).

It is unbelievable to think that a 21<sup>st</sup> century court of law in Nigeria could order a woman who was rescued from the cold hands of death by suicide to pay a fine of half a million naira. Would not this order make her intensify efforts towards killing herself? It most likely will, considering the fact that this woman attempted suicide due to some debts she owed. This fine was probably considered due to the woman's plea for leniency, otherwise the law of Nigeria stipulates that the punishment for such conduct is one year incarceration. But some pertinent questions are; what if the person/woman succeeds? Is suicide not a greater offence than attempted suicide? If yes, therefore the punishment for suicide should be graver than that of attempted suicide. But what type of punishment do we mete out to a corpse that cannot plead, feel, see and touch? What kind of punishment is graver than death? In the earlier days, the remains could probably have been thrown into the evil forest for vultures and wild animals to feast (a practice which is almost extinct today). So, the law can only channel its wrath in the direction of a person that tries to kill himself and fails.

Somebody who tries to kill him or herself according to Thomas Joiner's theory has grown tired of life itself; has grown beyond the thought of the kind of emotions that his or her action might provoke as well as beyond the fear of pain or punishment. No punishment can serve as a deterrent to him in actualising his already made plans. Someone who has become depressed to the extent of contemplating and even attempting to take his or her own life is no longer very sound psychologically. What kind of punishment do we doll out to such individuals who are already emotionally or psychologically drained by their circumstances? Incarceration will even add to their misery and chances are that such individuals may still find a way to take their own lives even in detention. These chances are even higher there because this feeling of isolation from the world is more felt behind bars.

Therefore, incarceration is useless and may not be able to do much if the government of the day is interested in evolving potent means of checking suicide in the nation. This is where the Nigerian playwright comes in. With much efforts channelled towards the restructuring of the suicide legislation in Nigeria in the worlds of a number of plays, consciousness will increase in this area which would translate to better laws as well as strategies for checking the ugly menace within the Nigerian state.

#### Conclusion

Suicide has been proven to be one of the biggest threats to humanity. Man killing himself is not pleasant to the ears, and so, the world needs to rise to the occasion before this huge menace overwhelms it. Many societies around the world seem to have stood up to the problem in their various societal climes, especially as it concerns legislating for suicide. But Nigeria seems to be lagging behind as she still values an out-of-date legislation in these modern times. This legislation has been proven ineffective beyond every reasonable doubt, yet nothing substantial has been done in the area of reviewing it.

However, the researcher is of the opinion that the playwright who has become very useful in every aspect of nation building can still salvage the situation through a constant portraiture of the implications of these obsolete legislations in relation to the suicide problem. This will raise questions and heighten consciousness on this issue. At the long run, the ripple effects due to the activities of the playwright have the capacity to trigger researches towards the evolvement of suicide prevention strategies within the Nigerian space.

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# DYNAMIC SEMIOTICS AND IDENTITY PATTERNS IN THE STAGE PERFORMANCE OF SOYINKA'S DEATH AND THE KING'S HORSEMAN

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## Abstract

Stage performance is a medium that brings together different theatrical elements, such as, directing, acting, props, lighting, scenography and others, which are presented both in verbal and non-verbal forms to communicate, enlighten, educate and entertain the audience. Semiotics is an expressive art form through which non-verbal language deploys dynamic elements such as symbols, signs, icons and images to communicate meaning to the audience. Sometimes, non-verbal messages are confusing in the interpretation of meaning because a code could convey more than one meaning and this can be problematic during interpretation. The stage performance of Wole Sovinka's Death and the King's Horseman as directed by Olagoke Ifatimehin utilised dynamic semiotic elements to discuss the identity patterns of the performance in context in order not to confuse the audience in terms of meaning and interpretation. A qualitative method of investigation was adopted through participatory photographic analysis to diffuse salient aspects to arrive at the findings. The use of semiotic elements aided the revelation of identity patterns which contributed significantly to meaning making and interpretation of the performance. The dynamic use of costumes, make-up, props and backdrop are semiotic elements that communicated identity patterns in the performance. The paper concludes that semiotic elements help to reveal identity patterns in all performances.

# Introduction

Stage performances deploy the use of semiotics to make meaning through icons, signs and symbolic representations in performances. Since people are moved by what they see and how it appeals to them, performances use actions, images, signs, indices with words, to pass across series of messages to the audience. The use of actions in performances has aided and made performances more interesting to watch, which is why people keep finding themselves going back to the theatre always to watch actions being complimented with words. What people see in the theatre mostly forms their judgement and they perceive that what they see contributes to the impression they have about a performance at the end of the day. Audiences love to see an action-packed performance rather than renditions, which is why semiotics is central to this study.

Semiotics is the deployment of non-verbal codes to communicate meaning through actions, images or codes, which are attractive to the extent that they stun the visual sense of the audience for acceptability. Elliot Gaines opines that, "semiotics is the disciplined study of the life of signs that stand for or represent something, which is generally neglected as the background to other objects of attention" (2). Semiotics is all about using non-verbal cues to communicate information to the audience in the theatre. Canice Nwosu further expatiates that, "semiotics is the language of sign with a patterned communication built on codes and images" (57).

Meanings, therefore, are generated and exchanged in our day-to-day activities through these signs and other elements and the elements in question are dynamic in nature; it could be the costumes, props, sets, make-up, and so on, used in a performance. For example, the meanings produced in costuming an actor with 'Iro' and 'Buba,' or 'Fila abe ti aja,' 'Ofi' and 'Kembe' trouser to suit a character, educate and inform the audience that the identity of the character is Yoruba; and as such should have some tendencies or identity patterns found in the Yoruba culture. Semiotics helps to reveal the happenings in different societies.

The identity patterns in the stage performance of *Death and the King's Horseman* were designed and determined through the use of costumes, make-up, props, scenery, backdrop, settings and so on, to communicate the identity of characters and the performance itself as well as the do's and don'ts of the society. Identity patterns are the nuances found within a culture or what constitute a society. The identity of every culture is different because every society has codes, norms and traditions that are peculiar and accepted by that community. Though codes in culture vary, yet, they are similar. These codes in question are exhibited in certain ways that appeal to the culture or the community; and these are what bind every culture together to do their things in certain ways or patterns that might be similar but yet different from other cultures.

The strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is this immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products ... this vision of experience as finished product is habitually projected, not only into the always moving substance but of identity patterns into contemporary life, in which relationships, institutions and formations in which we are still actively involved are converted, by this procedural mode, into formed wholes rather than forming and formative process (Williams 128).

Identity patterns, in other words, are the formations of how things are done in every society. These identity patterns help guard and guide individuals in the societies on what not to do and the expectations of the community from every individual. Thus, every performance has the identity patterns employed to help the audience recognise and identify certain traits of specific cultures used in the performance. This way, audience members can relate with certain dynamic semiotic codes and understand how they play out in the performance.

Scholars, such as, Hans Rudolf Velten, Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nunning discuss performance in relation to Erika Fischer-Lichte's theory that, performance is an aesthetic process, in which meaning is produced through the simultaneity of different elements: the bodily co-presence of actors and audience in the event, their mutual perception, the materiality of space, time, voice and rhythm (249). In fact, they identify four properties of 'performance' thus:

- a) ambivalence (it is active and pathic, creative and destructive at the same time);
- b) no performance is predictable, so it is emergent in character;
- c) perception (of audience and performers) as a process; and
- d) transformative power of every performance has to communicate (Velten, Neumann, and Nunning 249).

### Death and the King's Horseman

The stage performance of Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* was directed by Olagoke Ifatimehin on Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> of November, 2016, at the Ahmadu Bello University Studio Theatre (Drama Village). The play is about a clash of cultural identity between the protagonist, Elesin Oba, and the antagonist, Simon Pilkings. Pilkings is a White man from England, who was the head of security in the then 'Ife' in old Oyo Empire. He denigrates the culture of the Yoruba people and desecrates the right of passage of Elesin Oba into the ancestral world. He is to accompany the late Oba to the land of the Supreme Being, as custom demands. His (Elesin Oba's) inability to open the calabash of death leads to chaos in the land. Olunde, the only son of Elesin Oba, comes back from England to identify with his people by carrying out the traditional rights bestowed upon his lineage. Olunde commits suicide to rescue his father but to no avail, as Elesin Oba strangles himself with his handcuffs in prison, to join his dead son in the land of the dead.

### Semiotics

As noted earlier, semiotics is a form of non-verbal language individuals use to communicate in their daily interaction. This language carries meaning which is interpreted by other people in the society, be it in the market or at home. To be specific, the use of the five fingers could connote the number five during a transaction in the market; and it could also be an insult between siblings at home. Non-verbal messages vary in meaning when used or interpreted in context. These meanings are deciphered through observation and understanding. For instance, human beings are able to communicate with animals and environments to understand the climate, seasons and nature.

Semiotics is the study of signs, their meanings, and how people draw information from them. Umberto Eco posits that, "semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a 'sign,' which involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything which 'stands for' something else" (7). In semiotics, signs take different forms, such as, images, gestures, objects, icons, and so on. Daniel Chandler agrees with Umberto Eco that,

semiotics is the study of signs; but decoding of these signs needs rationality and critical thinking in the sense that one has to read beyond the literal meaning of a sign, an in-depth meaning must be read which means the audience at the receiving end of a message will have to think critically (outside the box) by making enquiries or engaging others to have different views (1).

Signs should be interrogated by questioning responses and observing reactions of other people involved to aid understanding and help realise the embedded meaning to be deduced from the sender's language to prevent false meaning or information about the performance. Without the ability to gain information from language, language is rendered impotent. Chad Bonaker gives an example that,

when you watch a man on stage delivering a monologue but you possess no way to interpret his actions, sounds or gestures into meaning, then he is just another object in the world that adds nothing to human experience (https://www.quora.com).

Performances are staged from different experiences with elements of reality in them; which is why audience members are able to interpret the postures, gestures, tones of the voices, costumes, make-up and props of the actors in performances. When verbal language is taken out of a performance, the non-verbal component used by the performer should fit to communicate the message of the performance.

## Performance

The unification of costumes, lighting, make-up, sound/music, backdrop into a piece has made theatre more interesting and appealing to audiences. Theatre is seen as a location where performances take place for an audience to get educated and entertained. This aligns with the opinion of Tirtha Prasad that,

performance must be construed as a "broad spectrum" or "continuum" of human actions ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and on to healing (from shamanism to surgery), the media, and the internet (2).

The above implies that anything that is involved with actions, movements, gestures and words could be regarded as performance and these performances do not just happen in a void. They are continuous processes of practice and strategies to suit a purpose which is unravelled in a defined space regarded as a theatre.

Performance, in the context of this paper, refers to theatre which is a series of acting and movements by an individual or a group of people onstage; in some cases, accompanied with dialogue to communicate to or entertain and enlighten people. The essence of every performance is to make an impact which could be positive or negative. Some performances in Africa, like storytelling, riddles, parables, jokes, and eulogies, among others, are symbolic because of their use of indigenous art forms to instruct, praise, caution or command an individual or a group towards their positivity and development.

In the context of stage performances, acting, songs, dances, folktales, chants and other indigenous forms are used to educate the public and pass information, especially to the youth or younger generation of the society. Gloria Emeagwali is of the view that performances generally come to play in stage productions basically to prompt culture, norms or philosophy guiding a people and the existence of man in a place (124). Some performances in Africa are ritualistic in nature, in the sense that they do not only involve chants; they also have some elements of sacred sacrifices attributed to belief systems. These types of performances usually occur on special occasions, either to celebrate the gods or appeal to some deities to cleanse the lands of ravaging plagues. These types of performances use cult songs, chants, parables or dances usually associated to specific deities, as a form of obeisance and loyalty. However, this paper is not concerned about ritual performances; rather, it dwells on dramatic performances in African societies.

African performances mostly employ chants, masquerade dances and music, as elements of entertainment because of the nexus between the people and their art forms. Accomplished literary scholar, Ruth Finnegan, avers that African traditional drama (performance), unlike the more verbalised types of European performances, emphasises music, chants and mime, which are essential elements of dramatic performances (20). African performances use chants, songs and dances as indigenous expressions because they are what the people can identify and actively participate in. This explains why the messages in these African art forms are essential for any performance in Africa because of the significance and how the masquerades and chants appeal to the people.

## Communication

Communication is part of man's day-to-day activities, which takes place in form of verbal and non-verbal interaction. Communication takes place between two or more persons or objects. It could be between man and man, man and animals, or man and his environment. Communication can also take place within one's self (*intra*) or between two or more people (*inter*). The non-verbal aspect of communication takes place in form of codes; and these codes are found in different societies. Every society has codes

that appeal to them in meaning because the codes bear information; and they vary in meanings. Thus, every society has codes they can relate to, depending on their view of the codes and how such codes communicate to them.

People communicate in context based on perception and understanding of what they want to say with codes; and it is received based on the context of the message communicated and the interpretation of the receiver of such codes. To be specific, what a code means in one society could be different from what it means in another society. If an individual encounters a code in a society different from his own, that individual questions and finds out the origin of such codes and what they communicate in that society.

The essence of codes is to communicate non-verbally in every sphere of human life; and this communication can be in different forms. Donna Berry emphasises that codes communicate information in stage performances in different ways and it is influenced by some cultural or societal background in a non-verbal form (2). While Berry sees communication as the transfer of information existing overtime with some cultural backgrounds, the position tends to attribute meaning to human communication alone. On the other hand, Elliot Gains asserts thus:

> Communication requires the representation of human experience, knowledge and understanding that are already mediated in the mind of a communicator. Perception is the capacity to apprehend and interpret the meanings of things both internal and especially external to the self, whereas communication involves a capacity to interpret and represent ideas and information to be shared among other conscious beings (1).

Human experiences and understanding are needed to communicate messages through images, symbols and signs. A small child has a way of communicating to his/her parent through signs, such as, facial expressions, crying or uncomfortable signs. The parent tries to understand what the child needs and provides such to either make the child to stop crying or feel relaxed.

### Identity

Identity is a way to identify with certain things and what they mean to the society. Every society has symbols and objects that are peculiar to them and the peculiarities are in terms of language, custom and way of life. These languages and customs define the people, their behaviours, what they do and how they do them. The ability of an individual or a group of people who believes and does something in a particular way could be seen as their identity.

Identity is a mode of representation and for every generation that has been and is yet to come; there is a form of identity which could be as a result of social class, cultural diversification, economic status or societal influence. Within the context of this paper, there is a question of self and the rediscovery of one's true nature and identity which is why we find some individuals in various societies who believe that their identity is better than others; and so, there is hierarchy or cadre in the identity of individuals in different societies. Zygmunt Bauman and Patrick Kelly are of the opinion that,

everyone has to ask himself the question 'who am I,' 'how should I live', 'who do I want to become and at the end of the day,' be prepared to accept responsibility for the answer. In this sense freedom, is for the modern individual the fate he cannot escape, except by retreating into the fantasy world or through mental disorders. Freedom is therefore a mixed blessing. One needs identity to be oneself; yet being oneself solely on the strength of one's free choice means a life full of doubts and fears of error.... Self-construction of the self is, so to speak a necessity. Self-confirmation of the self is impossibility (62).

The above statement helps us to understand that identity is forged in the societal sphere of life, which is located within temporal relations; a sense of the past, present and future haunts identity-work and identity practices. Identity is peculiar to the style of living for different generations because of the several notions which individuals grow up to meet in their various societies; and this can be bad for the betterment of all because of superiority and the need for one to conquer and dominate the other. Identity is like an offspring which needs nurturing from childhood; to preach love, togetherness, friendship and the need to help and not look down on others to survive. Identity should not be seen as a way to jettison people but a way to care for one another.

In some instances, we find that some individuals are rejected in some cultures because they are unable to identify their roots; or others are not being favoured because they do not have an identity which is bad for every community. Identity should be all inclusive (and even all derogatory) like some believe and this will aid the development of any society if there is no identity discrimination. Identity should not favour some and neglect others as we all are human beings created to live in peace and harmony for the growth of society at the end of the day.

## Semiotic Identities in Death and the King's Horseman

The performance opened in the market square with the women selling in their stalls and young girls hawking beads and clothes. Elesin Oba comes in to meet Iyaloja (leader of the market women) and complains that the women have no honoured him as the one to lead the late king to the land of the ancestors.



Fig 1.1: The market scene before Elesin Oba dances into the market with Olohun Iyo.

As seen in Fig. 1.1, the appearance onstage shows "ofi" wrappers hanging on stalls and beads are displayed in front of the market women as semiotic identities of the Yoruba people. Hawking can be seen as an African way of buying and selling, which in a way has communicated the African identity to the world. Fig. 1.2 shows when Elesin Oba dances into the market in a red costume and an "abeti aja" dog ear-shaped cap with his praise singer which is dressed in ankara fabric and "kembe" trouser. The dog ear-shaped cap and the bogus *kembe* trouser is deep rooted in the Yoruba culture of South-West Nigeria; it is an identity symbol for all Yoruba sons around the globe. Though, there are replicas of similar caps around the world today, but it is rooted among the Yoruba as a cultural identity representing the appearances of the elders of Ife in the old Oyo Empire. This has communicated the Yoruba identity in the performance understudy.



Fig1.2: Elesin Oba dancing in the market square with his court jester.

Before Elesin Oba started dancing into the market square, he says thus:

**Olohun Iyo**: And the cockerel must not be seen without its feathers **Elesin Oba**: Neither the Not-I-bird without its nest. Dance with me.

From the conversation of Elesin Oba and Olohun Iyo, with images on Fig.1.2, we can see that the action of dancing compliments the dialogue above, which helps the audience to understand the message through words and actions. Also, in Fig. 1.3, Elesin Oba says that, "the farmer had a rapid dialogue with his legs;" and the action on Fig. 1.3 shows Elesin Oba running to the other side of the stage as an indication of

having a rapid dialogue with legs. In this scene, Elesin Oba plays the role of a farmer by performing the action words in the dialogue.



Fig. 1.3: Elesin Oba having a rapid dialogue with his legs onstage and using his hand to cover his mouth.

Also, in Fig. 1.3, the second picture shows Elesin Oba covering his mouth when he renders the line, "foolish mouth, bringing on a curse upon your head," which means the mouth needs to be sealed in order to avoid uttering fowl words. Words and actions go simultaneously in performances for effective message delivery. Elesin Oba wearing red is significant in the culture of the Yoruba because it is a sign of the great sacrifice he wants to carry out for his people. Red is a colour that symbolises blood, war or danger; bad things are mostly attributed to red and for the Yoruba culture, Elesin Oba is expected to sacrifice his blood in order for him to lead the late king to the land of the supreme being. This act is supposed to secure the future of the land. If the king is not led by Elesin Oba, it is believed in the Yoruba culture that calamity will befall the land; and this is portrayed in the performance.

Identity is a way things are usually done, and for the stage performance of Death and the kings horseman, Elesin was identified by his use of red as a symbol that communicates culture and identity and his praise-singers use of ankara and three strokes of tribal marks on the face as viewed in the performance. Gay McAuley supports this position that performance is a field that also covers the inter-medial, intergeneric and inter-cultural relations of performance, and is thus able to grasp the interplay between different elements in many contemporary cultural performances. This further explains the performativity between words and actions in performances, as indicated in Fig. 1.2 and 1.3 above. Elesin Oba boastfully calls himself "okurin meta," a man stronger than three men, beating his chest as seen in Fig. 1.4. This could be said to be a form of being manly and an assurance of how he tricked the Not-I-Bird, when he visited him.

Elesin Oba, in the performance, usually showers praises on himself as the father of multitude. One of such semiotic actions is seen in Fig. 1.4, where he uses his hand to beat his chest as a proud leader; and to re-assure the market women of the confidence they have placed in him to deliver their late king to the land of the dead.



Fig. 1.4: Elesin Oba beating his chest to reassure the market women of his nobility to play his role in the society diligently and also indicating how the Not-I bird flew away from his house.

The word, "okunrin meta," is in line with the action of beating one's chest, signifying confidence and to prove to the market women that he is a man. In most African societies, when a man beats his chest three times, he is regarded as a courageous man who will surely deliver on his promise. Also, the action of flying on the second image in Fig. 1.4 supports the line of Elesin Oba that, "the bird flew away and never to be heard again." The dialogue clearly indicates how words and actions go hand in hand to send the intended message to the audience. These actions are the signs and identity traits one perceives when watching the performance.



Fig. 1.5: Iyaloja and the mothers of the land decorating Elesin Oba at the market square.

The image in Fig. 1.5 is a clear indication of how words stimulate actions. After Elesin Oba complains in the market that words are cheap, the market women quickly ask for forgiveness and start decorating him with a new, expensive regalia as Iyaloja hails him and calls him the father of multitudes. The second image shows how the maidens react to Iyaloja's call when she says, "eyin omo mi, ewa" (my children come closer). The second image on Fig. 1.5 shows Iyaloja telling the maidens to sing and dance in honour of Elesin Oba for his sacrifice in the land. Most Yoruba dances have to do with twisting of the waist and shaking of buttocks, which is what Yoruba people can identify with as seen in Fig. 1.5. The dance steps that go in tune with the rhythm of the song are semiotic steps affiliated to Yoruba culture to further reveal the identity of the

performance. Action and dialogue go hand in hand to further make the performance interesting and captivate the minds of the audiences as they hope to see the next action that will unfold.

Performances are meant for the deaf and the blind; those who cannot see, can listen to the dialogue of the characters; and those who are deaf can see the characters' actions and still understand the performance. Performances deal with the artistic behaviour of everyday life, which could be attained through ritual and traditional approaches. Elesin Oba further goes diabolical by carrying a calabash that will aid the rite of passage in Fig. 1.6



Fig. 1.6 Elesin Oba's encounter with the market women when giving Iyaloja the virgin stain in a calabash while all the women go on their knees as a sign of respect, which is a cultural identity of the Yoruba people in South-Western Nigeria.

In Fig. 1.6, as indicated in the first picture, Elesin Oba tells Iyaloja, "Take it, it is no mere virgin stain but the union of life my vital flow." The language corresponds with the action of giving and receiving. While Eleshin Oba gives Iyaloja a calabash with a white cloth in it, Iyaloja's just stretches forth her hands to receive what is being given to her without saying a word.



Fig. 1.7: Elesin Oba kneeling down for his son; and when he is locked up by Simon Pilkings.

In Fig. 1.7, Elesin Oba is seen kneeling down before his own son when he says, "Son, forgive me." Elesin Oba's action shows how remorseful he was and how he deemed it fit to ask for forgiveness from his own son. The second image in Fig. 1.7 shows Elesin Oba in his prison cell and looking up to the sky while arguing with Pilkings. Pilkings then comes in to say to him: "You seem fascinated by the moon." Pilkings' dialogue qualifies Elesin Oba's action of looking up to the sky as seen in the third image on Fig. 1.7. Elesin Oba then responds, saying: "Yes, ghostly one; your twin brother up there engages my thought." The dialogue rendered by these two characters shows the differences in their cultural identity. While Elesin Oba talks in proverbs, riddles and parables, Simon Pilkings speaks direct English without parables.

Victor Turner puts it that performances enhance audience participation and full attention because they are mostly intrigued by the actions and other cultural and ritual activities they see and can identify with in the performances; which is why sometimes audience members sing along and suggest actions or reactions for characters onstage. It shows their level of attachment and involvement in the performance. These attachments can be in the form of semiotic elements used in the performances, such as, the hair styles, tribal marks, beads, props and settings, among others (89-90). Tirtha Rupkatha further clarifies that performances infuse embodiments, actions and behaviours to patronise the conscience of the audience in order for the performance to be widely accepted (3).

In today's world, cultures are related and are always interacting with semiotic elements (costumes, make-up, props, and so on), which are also used in performances to raise familiar issues. A performance cannot portray all cultures through semiotic elements but can as well infuse two or more cultural elements together to interact in a performance to make meaning and promote unity among other cultures. The dynamic use of tribal marks, hair styles, "iro," "ofi," "buba," "kembe," and "abeti aja" costumes, beads, earrings, and backdrop designs, are semiotic elements which portray the cultural identity of the Yoruba people to promote tolerance, peace and cultural values through the stage performance under study. The use of semiotic elements as mentioned above aid the revelation of identity patterns, which contribute significantly to meaning making and interpretation of *Death and the King's Horseman* 

#### Conclusion

This paper concludes that, historically, performances deploy semiotic elements in dynamic ways through actions, props, costumes and make-up to communicate and engage audiences on cultural identity and responsibility. The dialogue of the characters, as cited in this paper, corroborates the actions to drive home the message of the performance. The use of non-verbal language (actions, movements, reactions, gestures and postures) shows the dynamic impact of semiotics and how such communicates the identity patterns of the Yoruba people in *Death and the King's Horseman*.

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# **REORGANISATION AND REVITALISATION OF NOLLYWOOD: A PANACEA FOR EXCELLENCE**

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### Abstract

Nigeria's burgeoning film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, has grown despite daunting challenges to become the world's second largest producer of film titles next to Bollywood of India with Hollywood of America in third position. Over the years, Nollywood has continued to exude profound influence on its diverse viewership throughout Africa and the Diaspora. Despite these accolades, Nollywood is given a serious bash because of its low quality productions plagued by technical glitches as well as themes of the supernatural, sorcery, idol worship and blood sacrifice which are believed to transport people from poverty to wealth. With its pedestrian beginning, Nollywood film makers are immersed in a myriad of challenges ranging from lack of professionalism, production infrastructure, funding, training and capacity building, film distribution, exhibition and piracy. This study examines the professional structure of film production obtainable among developed film cultures of the world with a strong and effective legislation of their film industries geared for profit, cultural promotion in line with their national ethos, identity and ideology. Major film production countries of the world have set up effective legislative bodies, film grants and commissions including several funding opportunities for productions in different film genres. We are able to establish that film financing and professionalism is paramount to generating visual images that penetrate our psychic activity just below the level of awareness which reinforce the viewer to accept and believe what is shown on the movie screen. Thus, this study advocates for the establishment of Motion Picture Practitioners Council of Nigeria (MOPICON) to legislate and provide guidance to the industry as well as the set-up of film grants to facilitate productions in line with professional best practices obtained in advanced film cultures of the world. The study establishes that since Nollywood is a part of Nigeria's cultural heritage, it justifies the need for the industry to be properly developed, preserved and protected for posterity. This can be achieved when the MOPICON Bill is passed to empower the Council reposition Nollywood as a virile film industry that would brand and shape Nigeria's socio-cultural values and worldview.

## Introduction

Since creation, man's challenges to pass information, preserve history and culture has weighed heavily on the ambit of the verbal mode. The oral tradition therefore, is basic to human species and the primal basis for organising human societies through the transmission of messages. Stories from oral traditions, of life encounters and experiences stored in human memories provide us with wisdom of our past generations. With the technological breakthroughs of the mid-nineteenth century, the advent of the press, film, radio and television, man shifted from the situated culture to a culture of mediation due to the introduction of these specialised social agencies. Today, technology plays a key role in changing our lives, including our thought process, data collections as well as their preservation in both the written and visual forms. It is therefore, possible now for us to live in a media-immersed environment where the availability of information, education and entertainment are easily accessible. In Africa, and indeed Nigeria, communication has always been with an intention to teach morals. Culture as a communicative tool manifests itself in our belief patterns, ceremonies, traditions and attitudes which we seek to preserve as cherished values.

As a communication medium, film is used for the dissemination of cultural and artistic products for the preservation of a people's tangible and intangible heritage; a chronicle of the past; the development of cultural values by widening horizons; awakening imaginations as well as stimulating a people's creative and aesthetic needs. Films can meet our personal, collective and recreational needs through entertainment by diffusion, using symbolic signs, visual and aural as well as through dance, drama, sports and various other forms. When utilised effectively, film can infiltrate communities, societies, nations and make people take positive action to remedy a situation. According to James Carey, "movies like other forms of communication are necessary for persuasion, attitude change, behaviour modification, socialisation, through the transmission of information, influence or conditioning" (i). As an agent of socialisation, the content of film can create awareness, foster social cohesion and stimulate participation in public life which is an essential societal tool for participatory, integration and social recognition. It therefore implies that people's images of the world could also be shaped by media content. Strom opines that:

> everything we know or think we know about events outside our neighbourhood, or circle of acquaintances comes to us via our daily newspaper, or our weekly news media, radio or television. They affect not only the way we interpret what we see or hear, they shape our attitude to the events and our environment (www.freepdf.info>whorules-Ame---).

The above simply means that the new technologies have the capacity to connect the myriad of situated cultures in one ideal face-to-face interaction worldwide. So, film, as a cultural mirror, presents a valuable reflection of contemporary attitudes, philosophies, values and lifestyles. This qualifies film as a cultural product.

## Nigerian Cinema

Cinema was introduced in Nigeria during the British Colonial era, at the commencement of World War II, when the British Crown directed that the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) be established. Hyginus Ekwuazi notes that:

The Unit was charged with making films for the colonies; and the objectives of the films were:

- i. To show/convince the colonies that they and the English had a common enemy in the Germans; to this end, about one quarter of all the films made by the CFU were war-related.
- ii. To encourage communal development in the colonies (Village development is representative of this group); and
- iii. To show the outside world the excellent work being done in heathen parts under the aegis of the Union Jack (*Daybreak in Udi*) (2).

The films produced by the Colonial film Unit were propagandistic documentary styled films with an ideological slant to promote the image of the coloniser and to a lesser extent the colonised. The evolution of Nigerian cinema started at Nigeria's Independence as the structure of the colonialists was dismantled with the restructuring of the industry at post-independence. The Federal Government of Nigeria now established its own Film Unit for the production of Public enlightenment documentary films, while independent film producers were making waves shooting their stories on celluloid. This period witnessed an influx of feature films from foreign lands like the United States of America, China, India and Britain, all of which competitively became entertainment menu in Nigerian film theatres throughout the country.

# The Emergence of Nollywood

Today, the technological developments in research, upgrading and manufacture of film production equipment have liberated Nigerian film makers from the high cost implication of shooting films on celluloid. The digital revolution may rightly indeed be acknowledged as the driving force of Nollywood film industry. Whereas, films earlier shot on celluloid would require the rushes processed – negative into a work print, with post-production carried out overseas, the digital video technology is user friendly at affordable cost, and ushered in a complete dramatic change in approach to production. What is known today, as the Nollywood phenomenon, signifies the pedestrian, humble but successful production experiments carried out jointly by motor spare parts dealers and electronic vendors who had a common belief that Nollywood was a get-rich-quick venture got attracted to the industry; most of whom did not have any experience in cinema (Nzeh 38).

Kenneth Nnebue's debut film, *Living in Bondage*, is today a reference point in the history of the Nigerian film industry. When the industry started, the players neither had professional knowledge of film making nor money; hence, their productions were low budgeted (Ugor 15). As novices, there was this desire to use film to make money as well as satisfy the burning desire and passion to tell tales, this time not by moonlight but by using klieg lights and a simple low quality video camera, a technological feat of the period. This has not only altered visual arts entertainment throughout Africa and the Diaspora but has also contributed tremendously to economic empowerment of Nigerians in employment generation, in areas such as productions, marketing, distribution and exhibition of films.

### **Cultural Representation in Nollywood Films**

Many nations of the world use film to promote their cultures and ideologies at times of peace and war by using propaganda films to mobilise, influence and change people's opinions on diverse issues of national interest. America, China, India, Great Britain and others use film a great deal to advance their cultures. Besides cultural promotion, these nations use film to promote their political system as well as their science and technological development thereby popularising and stamping their superiority over underdeveloped and developing nations. John Odey states that:

Part of the greatness the United States of America has attained today is as a result of its movies which have become a veritable platform for exporting American values. It is important that Nigerian movies remind Nigerians of their rich history as well as the beauty of our country and the goodness of our people (3).

Consequent to the growth and development of Nollywood, one stands to believe that Nigeria too can use film to define her identity, character, image and influence across the globe. However, there are some complaints against Nollywood, as tabulated below:

- The movies are branding Nigerians as cultists and ritualists
- Poor quality production values
- Trite plots on Nigerian stories that engage the audience with rituals, magic, gender stereotype, etc.
- Lack of thematic base
- Promotion of cultural alienation and inferiority complex among Nigerians
- Amplification of community wrongs or they invent non-existing ills in the name of fiction. Why not positive fiction?
- Celebrating witchcraft (https://affiwhitecontentproject.weeby.com).

Similarly, Femi Shaka submits thus:

These films evidently portray us as superstitious people trapped in the web of traditional African believe systems in the age of modernity when the instrumental power of rational reasoning should prevail. They no doubt make us uncomfortable like the proverbial psychoanalytic return of the repressed which continue to torment us however hard we try to banish them to the subconscious realm (17).

In the same vein, Chika Asogwa et al. collaborate thus:

Despite the fact that Nollywood ranks and competes with Hollywood and Bollywood in terms of quantity, locally outsells foreign ones, and are also appreciated all over the world; Nigeria continues to suffer negative image in the comity of nations and the critics kept crying foul over the erosion of indigenous cultures...Nollywood dwells too much on the negative aspect of the nation's cultural practices to the detriment of the nation's image (97).

With regards to why people consume commercial fiction films, Moradewum Adejunmobi reckons that, "video film directors understand that they can misrepresent the culture as long as the story is considered sufficiently entertaining and relevant" (110). Jyoti Mistry and Jordache Ellapen question the ideological framework in which content is produced and consumed in Nollywood films. They express the view that Nollywood films have an agenda and an ideology; however, their themes emphasise the *commodity* fetishism over any social, political transformation in the post colony (Mistry & Ellapen 67). These observations make it imperative for the Nigerian Government to put some demands on the movie industry to do some stocktaking in line with the industry's global best practices.

### **Potentials of Nollywood**

Nollywood filmic representation of Nigerian culture is an authentic voice that speaks loud and clear about Nigeria, her people and culture. Despite daunting challenges, Nollywood is recognised today on the African continent and globally as a dynamic and promising film industry. It therefore, behoves the government and the private sector to re-examine the role of the motion picture industry with its attendant benefits to the nation and give Nollywood the necessary support to meet the entertainment, promotional and economic needs for national development.

As at today, Nollywood has the largest motion picture market in Africa. It is the second largest film producing country in the world and is emerging as one of the largest employer of labour in Nigeria. Besides being a potent tool for wealth creation and diversification of the nation's revenue base, Nollywood has the capacity to generate huge investments and export opportunities for the country if properly explored and developed. No doubt, Nollywood is indeed, Nigeria's fastest growing cultural export.

To some observers, Nollywood films provide the people who have long expected this opportunity of self-portrayal and representation to see themselves on the small or big screen, with stories that reflect their everyday conditions, beliefs, fears and hopes in the world's largest Black Nation. According to Alhaji Mohammed Sa'ad Abubakar III, the Sultan of Sokoto:

It is worthy of commendation that Nigeria has found a voice in this exclusive list of motion picture and filmmaking countries- a voice which now represents a greater portion of Africa, providing common identity and cultural expression and influences which stimulate great interest in the themes and subjects of their content. This responsibility demands a strong knowledge base, knowledge of Nigeria, its people, its norms, values, cultures and tradition; history and antecedents, progression and evolution, sensitiveness, conducts and visions (11-12).

Similarly, speaking on the subject, "Emerging Talents: Nollywood and the Future of African Cinema," Victor Okhai asserts thus:

Nollywood has taught the rest of Africa that the man with the word processor and the man with the pencil are both writers and that if you tell a compelling enough story with your pencil, people will ultimately reckon with you. Before now on the rest of the continent, in many countries, not more than two films were shot averagely in a year, and usually by the same people who would wait in some cases for up to two years for a grant to be approved by gate-keepers who determine the kinds of stories emerging from the film makers. Nollywood has come to shatter the myth that one must have a multi-million dollar budget to shoot a film. It has demonstrated creativity in its production and distribution strategies (3).

It is ironic that the success Nollywood has recorded since existence was initially laughed at with contempt and derision for its poor aesthetics and themes of the underworld. Some people cheer Nollywood for its independent and creative homegrown strategy of developing its industry without support from financial houses or any form of assistance from the public or private sector. It is also evident today that the preponderance of American, Chinese, Indian and British films have lost their dominance.

In most Nigerian and African homes, street side viewing centres, beer parlours, hotels and televisions broadcast stations, Nollywood content is competitively visible. Even on the Trans-African movie channel – Africa Magic, Africa's most popular digital satellite channel transmits Nollywood films. In Europe, Sky Television Channel

329 Nollywood Channel, while 330 AIT Movie Star Channel and 333 Nigeria Movies Channel also schedule Nollywood movies for transmission. In his contribution to the success story of Nollywood films, Pierre Barrot confirms thus:

Aside from the music industry, there has never been any aspect of African culture that has resonated in such a way, achieved such a high profile and above all, made such a high profile, and made such a high impact on the population (xi).

Consequently, one can posit that there is cultural neo-colonialism of the African continent by Nollywood films. It is common to be identified by one's traditional dress as a Nigerian in any part of Africa; so also people who speak Igbo words and Pidgin English in faraway South Africa as they shout, "Igwe," to a Nigerian. Just like Nigeria gained prominence in football at Atlanta 96 when Nigeria ruled the world, so has Africa and indeed the entire world experienced opulence never before imagined in a third world country.

Interestingly, there is now a paradigm shift from the stereotype perception of Africa as a derelict jungle, with monkeys and malnourished children to a destination both for tourism and business. After all, Africans live in beautiful homes and not on trees. According to Farinde Opeyemi:

The Nigerian motion picture industry has helped to change the perception of the rest of the world about Nigeria and indeed the whole of Africa through the films produced. Many people outside the continent and especially those who have not visited it have come to understand that Nigerians and Africans do not live on trees or walk about naked as has been speculated previously, nor are we bloodthirsty and cruel, but are just like other people of the world who could be bad, good, greedy or nice because people are people regardless of their nationality and location (284).

### Challenges

Nollywood has indeed become popular around the world however there are challenges the industry is yet to overcome. In order to improve upon the technical, aesthetics and narratives in Nollywood films, there is utmost need to vigorously improve upon the training needs of all personnel involved in the production process. Film makers must know how to professionally operate their film production equipment, understand the aims and objectives and the basic philosophy behind each production. Oliver Barlet opines:

> If professionals were given access to the training they asked for, they could considerably improve the quality of their productions. The sector's development has facilitated the democratisation of image

production and the emergence of young filmmakers and film technicians... It is thus vital to meet the very clear need for training which is lacking at all levels from technical to directing (127-128).

Even in the areas of film distribution and marketing, no distributor will be interested in a film that lacks technical quality with poor production values; neither would iRokotv, Netflix or Silverbird Cinemas accept to screen films of poor quality standards in the cinema halls. This makes it necessary for Nollywood film makers to acquire professional training, the requisite knowledge and be equipped to compete favourably in the art of film production, marketing and distribution. This training is very essential for film marketers since they are the predominant financiers and distributors of films in Nigeria. According to Paul Ugor:

> These marketers are mostly untrained in film production or in any branch of its creative or distributive aspects. They are urban based traders who by sheer hard work and in some cases, dubious means have leapt from the lower working class into the enviable status of petty urban bourgeoisie (15).

Nollywood narratives are unprecedented in scope as they explore issues in our daily lives that cut across African boundaries promoting Nigerian cultures across the globe. The stories not only shape how Nigerians and Africans generally view themselves but also paint a picture to others about Africans. According to Ephraim Shimsenge and El-Nguhar Agav, Nollywood films are faced with serious technical, language and acting challenges. In their view, quality questions bothering on storylines and directorial vision or concepts are some of the other most bugging experiences affecting the image of Nollywood (105).

### **Film Financing**

The number of film stakeholders in Nigeria that have access to finance is infinitesimal as there is total absence of funding opportunities for the industry. Many scholars believe that one of the key factors that accelerate the production of film in any country is finance. A nation may have a harvest of good script writers, directors, producers, directors of photography, best stunts and special effect creators; however, without money, no film could be made. Thanks to the creative ingenuity of Nollywood producers who result to family and friends to raise money for their productions. The Nigerians experience is quite unique:

Funding has always been a bane to the development of the film industry. Hitherto, financing films was ad hoc, based on bottom line profit margins, with a very limited access to corporate and institutional finance, due to a dearth of statistics and figures to generate projections or structured growth potentials that could lead a multi-lateral, but diversified revenue streams (http://www.nigeriafilms.com/news).

Lack of funding for the Nigerian film industry is one of the problems militating against the development and success of Nollywood. Chowdhury Mridul opines thus:

Currently, the Nollywood industry has almost no access to formal financing mechanisms. The independent self-employed producers generally re-invest the revenues earned from one film for the next one. Due to the unpredictable nature of the profitability of a film, the banks and other financial institutions do not have procedures for assessing the credit worthiness of film projects. This simply hampers the growth of the industry and discourages producers from innovating and pushing the boundary in terms of quality (27).

The above confirms the nature of Nollywood productions where marketers take advantage of this unregulated business to lord themselves on film producers as one who pays the piper, dictates the tune, they call the shots on content, distribution and marketing of such films; and by virtue of this fact, they dictate what goes on in the industry. Femi Shaka notes that:

the majority of films produced in Nigeria are sponsored by Igbo traders selling electronics or motor parts in Idumota Street, Lagos or Upper Iweka road/Main Market Onitsha. These merchant/executive producers also constitute the marketers; and by virtue of this fact, they dictate what goes on in the industry (184).

Elsewhere in the world, there are development agencies charged with the responsibility of developing the film industry in various countries;

# South Africa – National Film and Video Foundation of South Africa

The sources of funding are:

- Lotteries (A proportion of money raised from the sale of lottery tickets is given to good causes like social services, e.g., film agencies).
- Film exports
- Tariffs on film imports
- Film Marketing, Distribution and Exhibition Fund
- Legislative provision for provincial and local government funding
- International productions and Investments
- Percentage of with-holding tax paid by foreign companies and local agencies
- Direct government funding (www.thecallsheet.co.za.finance-film...)

# **United Kingdom – British Film Institute**

The sources of funding are:

- Public money allocated by the department of culture, media and sport
- Income from ticket sales from theatres/DVDs
- Grants and sponsorships obtained from various sources including private sponsors and donations
- Takings from exhibitions
- Tax incentives and shelters
- Private equity and hedge funds
- Debt finance
- Equity finance (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film\_finance)

# India – Film Division in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

The sources of funding are:

- The Global Film Initiative
- The National Film Development Corporation Limited (NFDC)
- World Cinema Fund
- Bals Fund
- Jan Vrijman Fund (for Documentaries)
- Sundance Documentary Fund
- Skoll Foundation Sundance and Skoll Foundation Documentary Fund and many

 $(wikipedia.org/wiki/National\_Film\_Development\_Corporation\_of\_India).$ 

# Australia – Australia Film Commission

The sources of funding are:

- Funding in part from the Australian Government
- Interest collected from loans taken for film activities
- Australia Film Institute (Australian Film Commission)

# France – National Centre for Cinematography

The sources of funding are:

- World Cinema Fund (WCF)
- Eurimages
- Creative Europe Media
- Centre Nationale du Cinema et de l'image animee (CNC)
- Pays de la Loire Regional Council
- Agence Film Reunion

• Britany Regional Council

# Canada – TeleFilm Canada

The sources of funding are:

- Direct Government funding
- Co-production of films and TV programmes
- Commission from censorship
- Interest on loans given to producers
- Equity investment programmes Tele Film Fund
- Canada Council for the Arts
- Bravo fact (www.lightsfilmschool.com)

# Kenya – Kenya Film Commission

The source of funding:

• Funded solely by Government (www.kenyaforum.net).

All of the above agencies are the equivalent of the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC); yet, their financing come from some of these sources:

- Direct government funding
- Lotteries
- Commissions from censorship
- Donations
- Gate takings from theatres
- Acquisition and distribution of films (https://en.m.wikipedia.org>wiki)

In India, for example, the Government has set up several film development funding schemes to service the industry. The Indian cinema today has emerged as a powerful agent of social and cultural change as it continues to play a pivotal role in promoting tourism, scenic beauty and the uniqueness and variety of local Indian cultures across nations of the globe. As the world's largest film producing nation, India has a lot of film production companies and numerous sources for funding productions. These companies are located in the major film production cities like: New Delhi, Agra, Mumbai, Gurgaon, Lucknow, Pune, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and many others. The *Uttar Pradesh Film Policy (Amended) 2001* has laudable objectives among which is to 'develop Uttar Pradesh as an important centre for film making in the country. The Uttar Pradesh Bandhu Film Development Fund is used for the following purposes:

• Development of infrastructure for production of films/video films, documentaries and regional films

- To encourage making of Hindi films/documentaries
- To set up and manage film studios
- To institute film awards
- Scholarship to film students
- Organise film festivals (*Uttar Pradesh Film Policy (Amended) 2001*. Information and Public Relations Department. Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow. Printed at United Block Printers, Lucknow) or *Uttar Pradesh Film Policy (2001)*) (http://m.times of india.com).

Private film production companies in India include: Yash Raj Films, Mumbai, Dharma Productions Mumbai, Phantom Films, Rajshri Productions, Anurag Kshyap Films Pvt/Phantom film productions and several others spread across the country. The Indian cinema industry produces more films watched by more people than any other country. (https://en.m.wikipedia.org). Such is the success story of Indian film makers as the industry is professionally regulated with financial support from the government and the private sector to project the rich tourism potentials, exotic natural beauty, history and the culture of India through the film medium within and outside the country.

In Nigeria, however, it appears that efforts by the Federal Government to improve the lot of the film industry have always met with bottlenecks. For example, the sum of N420.2 million grants from the Government over three years ago in support of Nollywood is yet to be disbursed (https://leadership.ng). Similarly, in 2010, the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan launched the N30billion (US \$200million) Creative and Entertainment Industry Intervention Fund financed by the Bank of Industry (BOI), in conjunction with the Nigerian Export and Import Bank (NEXIM). In 2013, a grant of N3billion was given for Nollywood Project Act, specifically for the production of high quality films, and to sponsor filmmakers for formal training in film schools (https://www.pulse.ng).

The production and distribution of films in the United States of America is dominated by the major studios namely: Universal, Fox, Sony, Paramount, Time Warner, Walt Disney and Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM). There are also several independent film production companies in the USA. The following are just but a few of such companies found in Los Angeles: Vitascope, Alex Gans, Stellar Head, Beverly Boy Productions, Indigenous Productions, LA, Underdog, Black Street Entertainment and many others. Besides, USA banks and other financial institutions including insurance companies play active roles in financing films. They also offer financial guarantees should the production encounter financial difficulties such as budget over runs.

Consequently, it could be averred that funding is a crucial key factor that determines the competitive spirit of Nollywood film makers. Bank loans are very rare considering the risk involved in such an unregulated industry which is at crossroads with distribution and piracy if at all the production gets completed and ready for exhibition. Piracy is also a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the gains of film industry in Nigeria. Tunji Olaopa of *ThisDay Newspaper* expresses concern about the scourge of piracy in Nigeria:

Nollywood films are produced within a month and an average one costs between \$25,000 and \$75,000. In recent times, some of these movies have been taken through the rounds of cinemas in the country before they are eventually released on DVD for the larger market. Yet producers only have a very short period within which to recoup their profits before the product is pirated; and the profit dynamics damaged. Piracy undercuts the profit margin of film producers and either drives them into indebtedness or runs them out of the industry. The commercialism that was undeniably present when Nollywood made its appearance in the early  $90^{\text{s}}$  is still in Achilles' heel (https://www.pressreader.com).

There are various ways pirates have devised to perfect this malevolence act as explained by Alessandro Jedlowski:

The informal and pirate circulation of Nigerian videos exclude original producers from enjoying the benefits of Nollywood's transnational success. Each stage of the circulation process implies a partial reinvention or rebranding of the project, cutting the connection with its original producer (33).

To curb film piracy requires government intervention at the National Assembly who has the mandate to pass a bill against piracy and ensure its enforcement. This bill will go a long way to empower the Nigerian Copyright Commission, a government agency responsible for all copyright matters which include administration, regulation and prosecution under the Copyright Act. This is one of such innovations that would ensure protection of the filmmaker's creative property and guarantee him return on investment.

As a point of fact, some film makers in an attempt to evade censorship and classification of their films duplicate their films on DVD for street marketing at the public domain in different parts of Nigeria. With proper regulation of the industry, appropriate sanctions and penalties could be applied to thwart the growth of this underground business which is detrimental to the interest of genuine film producers who sweat to earn a living and advance their profession in film making. These examples from other known world film cultures show that the benefits of a regulated and organised film industry are enormous. The absence of a Council owned and operated by stakeholders themselves has continued to rob Nigeria of the opportunity to maximise the potentials which the film industry holds as a promise for the realisation of both individual and corporate goals.

### Motion Picture Practitioners Council of Nigeria (MOPPICON)

The success story of the Nigerian motion picture industry from obscurity to second position on the world film production statistics is made possible by the unwavering commitment of private entrepreneurs who took the plunge with the home video technology and ingeniously turned it into a thriving industry. This phenomenon has grown into a visible and remarkable element of popular culture, projecting the abundance of untapped human resources in the arts and business and has made the prospect for growth more viable today than ever before. Nollywood stands as a truly home grown film industry, a clear testimony to the ingenuity, resilience and enterprise of the Nigerian spirit.

Nigerian films have become the most important conveyors of Nigeria's rich cinematic and tourism potentials. The vision statement of Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) is to drive the development of a vibrant motion picture industry that promotes Nigerian rich cinema heritage globally. The Corporation is also responsible for creating an enabling environment for the sustainable development of a professionalised, profit oriented and socially responsible motion picture industry through focused support programmes, skills development, funding and preservation of audio-visual heritage.

Despite these activities and investments, the industry has remained unstructured and unregulated over time. It is towards the realisation of its vision and mission statement that NFC sent the MOPPICON Bill to the National Assembly, Abuja; which is a step in the right direction towards the reorganisation and revitalisation of Nollywood film industry. It has been observed over time that lack of integration and cohesion within the Nigerian film industry has created distortions and dysfunction, giving rise to varying levels of concerns expressed by stakeholders. The Nigerian Film Corporation is of the opinion that; with a changing economy, technology and policy environment, the prevalence of poor production quality, dearth of requisite skills for enhanced capacity building, near absence of efficient, proactive and profitoriented distribution and marketing structure; have led to the film industry's limited contribution to national re-orientation and international image building. Towards the repositioning of Nollywood, the Nigerian Film Corporation has made a presentation to the Federal Executive Council through the Minister of Information and Communication on the Establishment of a Motion Picture Council of Nigeria to perform the following functions:

The Council will act as the umbrella body of all guilds and Association practicing in the motion picture industry and it shall:

- Determine who is a motion picture practitioner
- Determine the standards of knowledge and skills to be attained by persons seeking to be registered as motion picture practitioner.
- Maintain a register of persons entitled to practice as professionals in the motion picture industry and publish from time to time the list of such persons.

- Maintain a register of National Guilds and Associations of practitioners of the trades and specialisations within the profession, such as motion picture producers, distributors, exhibitors and marketers.
- Regulate professional practice in the motion picture industry
- Ensure that practitioners maintain the ethics of the profession contained in the Code of Ethics.
- Foster the achievement and maintenance of the highest professional standards in the motion picture industry.
- Ensure the protection of rights and privileges of motion picture practitioners in the practice of their profession.
- Inquire into complaints about the conduct of any motion picture practitioner and the conduct of any person or organisation towards the practitioner and
- Perform such other functions as are incidental to its functions under this Act (Draft Bill and Code of Ethics Motion Picture Council of Nigeria (MOPICON).

The viability of any business venture such as film lies in effective regulation with provision for a conducive, enabling environment to carryout operations successfully. The industry must partner with the private sector and woo government agencies to actively participate logistically to benefit from the attendant exposure guaranteed in the image film creates.

## Recommendations

Nollywood has been severally described as an instrument for cultural diplomacy which makes it a veritable tool for the propagation of culture, to showcase Nigeria's tangible and intangible heritage as well as promote Nigeria's image abroad. The challenges Nollywood film industry is facing as addressed in this paper make it imperative for government and the private sector to key into the various activities of the industry and nurture its growth considering the immense contributions the industry can make towards national development. The absence of a Council owned and operated by stakeholders themselves has thus robbed Nigeria of the opportunity to maximise the potentials which the film industry holds as a promise for the realisation of both the individual and corporate goals. It is therefore imperative for the Federal Government, public and private sectors and philanthropists to see to the successful take off and effective operation of MOPICON when the Bill is finally passed at the National Assembly. The following recommendations are a panacea for the exemplary performance all Nigerians expect from Nollywood.

# Funding

• Establishment of the Nigerian Film Commission/National Film Development Fund/Nollywood Fund for film practitioners.

- Part of the income from commercial activities like ticket sales from theatres to support production.
- The National Film Video Censors Board to make available a specified percentage of their earning to support the industry.

## **Production and Training**

The need to conflate all identical guilds currently in various associations into one national guild with state chapters and local government offices cannot be overemphasised. There is this belief that MOPICON will give the guilds and associations the capacity to address the problems of technical and content quality, professionalism, aesthetical appeal and of course address the financial challenges of the industry.

## **Training and Capacity Building**

- Training of practitioners to possess professional qualification to meet up with the dearth of requisite skills in the industry.
- Motion picture practitioners should possess a certain basic qualification that is recognised and acceptable by all stakeholders nationwide to bridge the yawning gap created by dearth of requisite skills in the industry.

With the establishment of the Motion Picture Council of Nigeria in place to regulate professional practice in the motion picture industry in line with the above recommendations which are not exhaustive, Nollywood film industry will excel from its present second position and overtake Bollywood both in quantity, content and quality of films produced.

## Conclusion

This paper brings to the fore the distinctive state of Nigeria's popular film industry, Nollywood. Despite the prevalence of poor production quality, dearth of requisite skills, lack of funding and the challenges of piracy, distribution and exhibition, Nollywood has placed Nigeria high on the scale of film producing nations of the world. The Motion Picture Council of Nigeria (MOPICON) Bill when passed into law by the Federal Executive Council will place the industry firmly on a sound footing of focused growth and development. It will empower MOPICON to regulate professional practice in the entire gamut of the motion picture industry. With the right orientation, planning and a strong dose of commitment, the public and private sector partnership can bring up Nollywood to partake tangibly in the enterprise of Nigeria's socio-economic cultural development. Indeed with the establishment of MOPICON, there will be proper reorganisation and revitalisation of Nollywood through effective regulation, backed up with adequate financing, and professionalism, the industry will now be set to attain global best practices. In this way, the Nigerian filmmakers would be in a good stead to shape our narratives positively through the power of cinema how the world perceives Nigerians and the country as a nation with enormous investment opportunities.

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## EXPLORING THE POTENTIALS OF STREET THEATRE IN SENSITISING THE PUBLIC ON RESTRUCTURING: THE AWKA EXPERIMENT

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#### Abstract

The use of Street Theatre as an agent of mass mobilisation has been greatly neglected. This work is on exploring the potentials of street theatre in sensitising the public on the need to restructure the country to maximise the potentials of the regions for optimum development. Three performances were held at different locations within Awka municipality. The work is predicated on Peter Brook's Empty Space which transforms any space used for performance as stage and supported by theory of theatre of the oppressed as propagated by Augusto Boal which emphasises the use of dramatic performances as a means of transformation through the enactment and re-enactment of human conflicts. The research adopted the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) which is collaborative and participatory oriented. The post-performance dialogue with the audience focused on the theme of the performances. The analysis of the performances and the dialogue with the audience show that street theatre is an effective tool for mass mobilisation of the public. Street theatre encourages the spectators and participants to reflect on the prevalent issues raised as well as empower them intellectually and properly position street theatre as a sensitisation and mass mobilisation tool of the government and for the masses. The work recommends that theatre in general and street theatre in particular should be adopted as a major tool for mass mobilisation and sensitisation of the public.

#### Introduction

Since the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates by Lord Lugard in 1914 which gave birth to Nigeria, a multi-cultural and multi ethnic nation, the citizens have tried to coexist amid tensions and cries of marginalisation, injustice, threats of secession and many other agitations. At the beginning, the country was divided into three regions: the Northern, Western and Eastern regions. Each region was allowed to build on its strengths to support her weakness as they developed according to their pace while the central government acted supervisory role. Thus the regional governments only contributed funds for the smooth running of the central government as the regions remained semi-autonomous.

Each region strived to maximise all natural resources to develop their areas. Thus, the North was known for her groundnut pyramid, the West for cocoa and the East for her palm products which were fully exploited and used for the development and daily running of their regions. There was healthy competition among the regions. For instance, in 1959 when the western regional government established the first television station, the Eastern regional government quickly established her own television station on the eve of Nigeria's independence in 1960. Two years later, precisely in 1962, the northern regional government established the radio/television Kaduna (RTV). They had similar objective which was to assist in the promotion and advancement of education.

However, all these changed after the military forcefully took over the administration of the country, and centralising the government by dissolving the regions and creating twelve states which they later expanded to thirty six plus the Federal Capital Territory. The military from the onset favoured one region-the north to the detriment of other regions as they got more states and local government areas than the other regions. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Kano, Katsina and Jigawa States have a total of 105 local government areas, more than the five Eastern states of Abia, Anambra, Imo, Enugu and Ebonyi State's 95 local government areas. What the above invariably translates is that the three northern states will have more revenue allocated to them, more federal legislators and more appointments to Federal positions as well as other government developmental initiatives than the whole South East. This favouritism gave rise to the cry of marginalisation and the demand for restructuring of the country. Again, the creation of local governments in Nigeria was deliberately skewed to favour the north as more local governments areas were created in the north than in the south. For instance, Kano, and Katsina states have 44 and 34 Local Governments, respectively, while Abia has 17, Imo 27, totalling 44, the same as Kano state.

Data from National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows a breakdown of the February 2019 allocation from the Federal Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) for four states as follows:

Kano State	₩7,437,499,748.40
Katsina State	₦5,623,571,386.80
Imo State	₩5,558,659,910.61
Abia State	<del>N</del> 4,920,545,222.01

From the above, the total allocation to Kano and Katsina States, non-oil producing States is \$13,061,071,135.20; while Imo and Abia States, oil producing states received \$10,479,205,132.60. The amount is \$2,581,866,002.60 more than that of two oil producing states from the south that got that amount because of additional revenue oil derivation. Kano and Katsina allocation was only made possible because of their number of local government Areas which is almost double than the two oil producing states.

Theatre is a representation of life on stage and each theatrical enactment educates, informs and entertains. This is also known as educationment. Educationment is coined from two principal words education and entertainment. Theatre and indeed street theatre is an embodiment of edutainment. The beauty of street theatre is that it takes performance to the people, creates intimacy and without any pressure passes the information while educating. This educative role of the theatre is accentuated by Alex Asigbo thus:

> Theatre is people oriented, goal oriented activity that seeks to pragmatically address the people's problems via the dramatic medium and in this process awaken the capacity for mass action. It is essentially interactive in that there is no strict dichotomy between the people (audience) and the players (191).

Milly Barringer observes that Africa's earliest performance spaces were used for rituals dealing with life and death, located in open circle, a hut or an enclosure. According to him, traditional performances like storytelling, music and dance serve to educate the local population as well as help "preserve history and religious and social customs" (n.p). Other performance spaces include village square, family playground or any available space in the community. Street theatre is popular theatre which aims at taking theatre to the people and involving them in the process of reshaping their collective destiny. Explaining further on the methodology of popular theatre, Norbert Abah asserts that popular theatre provides

> an alternative medium and approach through which the marginalised rural and urban poor can address their own problems. Popular theatre does this by making the theatrical medium a forum for democratic struggle. In so far as people are discussing their problems and working out strategies to change through collective action, they are engaging in a democratic exercise (in Asigbo 191).

Theatrical activities permeate all human activities and have existed from the primitive to the present day. According to Oscar Brockett, these elements are "evident in our political campaigns, holiday celebrations, sports events, religious ceremonies and children's make believe, just as they are in dances, rituals of the primitive people" (1). Most of the activities described above by Brockett take place in the open air which is the performance space of street theatre. Neil Doshi submits that street theatre genres are "open air performances that take place in public areas, (street corners, market places, city plazas). The theatre uses few props, making for a spectacle that is easily transported... generally; spectators surround the small circular area that is the site of performance" (www.deepblue.lib.umich.edu). Also expatiating on the concept of Street Theatre, Anjali Capila and Pragtic Bhalla stress that it is

a participatory approach which deals with fictional narratives and thus used for communicating important societal issues. It allows individuals to express themselves in their own unique way. The freedom to participate is always there. The influence of theatre activities on development can be seen as it stimulates life skills and challenges the attention of the participants and audience (n.p.)

Furthermore, Datoo and Chagani submit that Street Theatre form aims to

join entertainment with an exploration of attitudes and to share knowledge in order to stimulate positive social changes...This they do by first presenting socio-cultural political problems (via problemposing approach) in the performance and inducing the audience through various performative devices to reflect. (np, alkarim.datoo@aku.edu)

Street Theatre in particular and theatre in general has been used as an agent of conscientisation in the Benue River Valley of Nigeria in creating awareness on health issues like HIV/Aids and other STIs, water related diseases, unsafe childbirth, child at risk, gender issues poverty and other health threatening matters. According to James Alachi, this strategy was to use theatre to:

- i. have a fruitful dialogue with community members on relevant health issues.
- ii. influence policy makers to make appropriate laws and promulgate favourable policies on health issues touching on the poor and vulnerable people
- iii. ensure that the public gives support to government and development agencies' health promotion policies and programmes
- iv. develop community action on health issues (13).

It is important to note that these performances were taken to the people in their communities and performed in any available space. This is in line with Peter Brook's Empty Space Theory and the submission of Abah who opines that, "...a play can take place almost anywhere provided it is convenient for the performers and the audience" (in Nwosu 238). In addition, Chiduo Obadiegwu sees such theatrical mode as popular theatre which is responsive to the politics of the moment. He calls it political theatre because it "explores the inadequacy of a system within a given society... to educate and conscientise the disadvantaged poor and therefore create a change in the structure that does not favour the populaces" (xiii). Obadiegwu has also taken many performances out of the conventional theatre setting to the people in and around Anambra State to educate, conscientise, and empower them. Two of such experiments is worthy of mention. The Amansea Experiment, which treated the issue of "Low Male Enrolment in Schools in Nigeria" (85); the production dwelt on mass exodus of our youths from school into the business world" (86), particularly in the South East; while the Ifitte First Market performance treated the "Poor Sanitary Condition of the Market." It is in the light of the above expositions that the choice of street theatre as a tool for sensitising the public on restructuring and national identity becomes very appropriate.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This work is based on Peter Brook's theory of the *empty space*. According to Brook, any space can be converted to a stage and used for performance provided there are actors walking across such stage and spectators watching them. He submits that:

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. Yet when we talk about theatre this is not quite what we mean. Red curtains, spotlights, blank verse, laughter, darkness, these are all confusedly superimposed in a messy image covered by one all-purpose word (www.theatreofthe oppressed.pdf)

Based on the above postulation by Brook, empty spaces along the street were converted as stage for performance. It is however supported by the theory of the Theatre of the Oppressed as propagated and championed by Augusto Boal, a social worker from Peru. The theory sought to empower the spectator from a passive audience who ordinarily would have just watched a performance to an active audience in play creation and performance. To achieve this, Boal introduced the joker system and simultaneous dramaturgy which entails the mixture of fact and fiction; the shifting of roles during the play process. The joker system allowed the audience participant in deciding the movement of the scene being acted out. Boal explains that, "theatre of the oppressed is a non-theatrical theatre style used to promote dialogue and community-centred problem solving. It is designed to promote awareness of one's social situation..." (https://orccamericorps.weebly.com). This is more succinctly amplified by Clark Vicki, as he explains that,

the audience voiced new directions in which the play could move. In other words, at the moment when the scene reached a crisis, the spectators verbally offered alternative solutions which the actors enacted on the spot. Thus the audience wrote and the actors performed "simultaneously." Boal named this theatre Simultaneous Dramaturgy (https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd)

The above, no doubt, empowers the audience as co-writers and some instances, co-actors, thus converting them to "spect-actors." This gave the audience the opportunity to contribute meaningful ideas for societal change.

Theatre of the Oppressed is an arsenal of theatre techniques and games that seek to motivate people, restore true dialogue, and create space for participants to rehearse taking action. It begins with the idea that everyone has the capacity to act in the "theatre" of their own lives; everybody is at once an actor and a spectator. We are "spect-actors!" (www.collabchange.org).

This is in line with the choice of street theatre as our choice of performance space because it affords the audience the opportunity to participate in the production and contributed in the production and post-performance dialogue which was analysed.

## **Historical Perspectives of Restructuring**

Restructuring is as old as man. In Greece, before 146 BC, city states in Greece were restructured and became "free to govern themselves so long as they did what Rome wanted" (Martin, n.p.). Again, during the time of Augustus and his predecessor, Julius Caesar, more restructuring were carried out where some outstanding Greeks were chosen for Roman Senate as well as the uplifting of Greece as a tourist centre that attracted scholars and tourists from around the world. Martin further submits that Greek literature, which began as stories told aloud, were remodelled through 'alphabet' from Phoenicia adopted in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC to record the exciting poetry of Homer. Homer's epics, the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* later became very famous literature in Greece.

To restructure is to change the way in which something is organised or arranged. It is to reorder, reorganise, reshape, redistribute, reform or reshuffle. What needs reshuffling is faulty or may not be working as planned or structured so it needs to be looked into a second time hence the prefix, re-structure. Many reasons may warrant restructuring of a system, corporation or a country. These reasons, according to *Encarta Encyclopaedia*, may be political, economic, agricultural or social.

However, in each of the above cases, the overriding interest is to better the system/ governance and enhance the welfare of the citizenry as well as adequate utilisation of human and material resources. For example, France now has a well-developed financial system which accounted to over 33% of her GDP. According to Adams, "in the late 1990's, a wave of mergers, corporate restructuring, foreign investment and continued revitalisation encouraged unprecedented consolidation in the banking and insurance sectors" (n.p.). The foundation of the above result was laid in 1945, when the French Government took strong hand in regulating the nation's financial system culminating in the nationalisation of four of her largest commercial banks, thus giving a strong base to the sector. Today, the banking industry in France is stable and strong.

Similarly, in China, the government in an effort to increase agricultural production restructured the agricultural sector. The system of communes and production brigades was largely dismantled and house hold became the principal unit of agricultural production. This new arrangement allows each household to sell the excess products after satisfying the need of their household. This further led some households to organise themselves into groups of product processing, marketing and regional cooperatives thereby There was agricultural revolution in China empowering her citizens with more economic power, efficient utilisation of agricultural products.

In 1987, the European community took a bold decision which restructured her budgetary system. This was rapidly followed in 1988 and 1989 with the establishment of two intergovernmental conferences, which considered economic, monetary union and political integration. The outcome of the conferences gave rise to the treaty on European Union also called the Maastricht Treaty. "The treaty also called for cooperation among member nations on foreign and security policies; created the cohesion fund to help the poorer members meet the requirements for monetary union" (David et al. n.p). The European community later transformed into the European Union. From 1999 till date, the European Union remains a strong, vibrant and stable Union adequately taking care of the economic welfare of her members.

From the above, it is apparent that the political and administrative, economic apparatus of the country Nigeria need to be restructured to enable her different regions to maximise their potentials and accentuate development. Development, according to Abah, is

to improve, to make progress, change for the better, higher income or better living standard. Increase in the quality of goods and services available to people and thereby the quality of their lives. Social and material advancement which enables people to gain greater control of their environment (4).

Development is progressive; the opposite is retrogressive; It is the total transformation of a system: thus when used to describe a nation, describes the transformation of the various aspects of the life of the nation. To Abah, development can also be defined "in terms of attacking wide-spread absolute poverty, reducing inequalities and removing the spectre of unemployment-all these being achieved within the context of a growing economy"(5). The *United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) Report* of 1987 sees development as that which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (cited in Abah 4).

It is evident that we are not developing with the existing political structure of federating states with power highly concentrated at the centre. We had a structure that the regions had their means of subsistence which was highly viable and in tandem with global best known practices, but which was brazenly changed. The regions were dissolved and more states created which can hardly sustain themselves. Again, corruption is striving in the existing structure because the system is too broad. In most instances, the people even lack information on issues articulated at the centre – Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory This is because, peripheries are not aware of what is happening at the centre.

The foundation of Nigeria as laid by the colonial masters was characterised by a divide and rule philosophy which saw to their one region over the others. Again, in development studies, it has been established that the colonial administration strived on centre periphery relationship. This ensured that the centre developed through resources sourced from the periphery, ensuring that while the periphery remained

underdeveloped, the centre is continuously developed. Today, government policies are tilted to favour the Northern region, we can easily say that Abuja the centre of government is being developed at an astonishingly fast rate, comparable to Texas in America, while the southern states, like Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers, that produce Nigeria's crude oil remain grossly underdeveloped and impoverished.

The multi-cultural composition of the country is a bane to her development. It is a known fact that the diversity of culture strengthened by religious dichotomies cannot enhance desirable development. These cultural differences breed enormous suspicion, coupled with the spirit of capitalism which is exhibited through material acquisition ostentatiously displayed by our leaders. There is no trust among the ethnic nationalists leading to accusation and counter accusations of favouritism and lopsided appointment against the present government in power as majority of the political appointees are from one part of the country.

The Federal Character Commission (FCC) was established under para. 8(1)(a), Third Schedule of the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* to work out a formula for the equitable distribution of all cadres of posts in the public service. The act categorically warns that apart from equitable distribution of all federal and state appointments, it shall "draw as much as possible in equal number from each states of the federation" (https://federalcharacter.org). What this portends is that every state must be represented in the federal civil service and on an equal number whether they have qualified personnel or not. This has greatly reduced productivity as non-qualified and ineptitude persons are trusted with responsibilities they are not qualified to handle. More worrisome is the fact that the quota system has taken root in our higher institutions where students who ordinarily should not have been admitted in the university because of their low scores are admitted because of the quota system and the state of origin. This explains a scenario where a candidate from a particular part of the country is admitted to read a course with a JAMB score of less than 100; while his counterpart from another section of the country with 250 marks is left behind.

Again, crime rate is on the increase. Terrorists, herdsmen attacks and the Boko Haram menace has greatly escalated that people are clamouring for the establishment of state and community police to enable the states to manage their security challenges. The state and community police are to exist side by side the federal police as is the practice in the United States of America where the Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI) exists with local sheriffs who understands the districts and virtually knows everyone in the neighbourhood thus making crime detection and control easy thereby ensuring improved security of lives and properties. This call arose out of the conviction that the national security agencies are shielding these criminal out of ethnic sentiments. This is because the composition of heads of all security agencies is from one side of the country which no doubt raised some unanswered questions about such composition in a multicultural and multi ethnic country such as ours.

There is no doubt that restructuring will lessen the burden on the Federal Government as most of the people jostling for appointments into federal jobs will

move to the states since restructuring is decentralisation of power from the centre to the states and local governments. This will also mean allowing states and local governments to take charge of certain responsibilities like power generation and distribution, provision of water and other basic amenities. This will give them a sense of belonging among the federating states as well as build patriotic zeal in them. When citizens realise that their money is used to fix roads as well as provide water, electricity, tension will be doused, vandalisation of installations will be greatly curtailed and sense of communal ownership will increase. On the other hand, when they see that their communal wealth is wasted, looted and carted abroad, they become restive and agitated.

Above all, each region will build on their strength and develop rather than wait for monthly allocations which get shared among the few privileged individuals. It is an erroneous assumption to think that some regions are more viable than the others. The east has palm oil which could be developed as a major export product. The west has cocoa and the north groundnuts. There are also abundant mineral resources in all the regions which could be exploited for full economic yields. However, the reverse is the case. Oil money has created a lazy monthly allocation sharing mentality which our leaders have imbibed. Agricultural industry, if properly utilised and in fact mechanised, can fund each region adequately, such that most of the moribund industries built with proceeds from agricultural products, can be resuscitated.

Nigeria had a structure that the regions had their own means of subsistence which was highly viable and in tandem with global beat known practices. However, overtime, we changed from the regional system where the regions were semiautonomous and developed according to their strengths. Salaries were paid promptly and many developmental projects were executed by the regional governments. Unfortunately, the reverse has been the case since the dissolution of the regional governments, we have retrogressed. Salaries are no longer being paid and no lasting developmental projects are being carried out in most states. From the above, it is evident that the need to change the status quo may be due to unsatisfactory result, deprivation, marginalisation, or even for experimental purposes as well as political, social or economic reasons. Hence, the thrust of this paper is to expose through the structure of Nigeria and recommend ways to ameliorate the situation.

The choice of street theatre will therefore, serve as a vehicle for the conscientisation of the people to be aware of the need to restructure so as to maximise our potentials. This view is supported by Taylor, who submits that street theatre is a very crucial avenue to raise people's consciousness to their problems. He opines that street theatre as an

informally staged street performance become important events for calling attention to major political policies such as those that actively promote exclusion of certain cultural group or budgetary reduction in fiscal affairs such as cuts... social and health services (Taylor xxi).

From the above, it is pertinent to point out that development is aptly measured on comparative analysis.

#### **Synopsis of the Performance**

The performance took place in three locations in Awka municipality, at Amawbia Flyover Junction, Oji River Park by Eke Awka Market and Aroma Junction, between 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> June, 2019, during evening hours of 4-6pm. Selected students from the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, were used for the experiment. Excerpts from John Iwuh's *Birthright* formed the foundation of the script used for the performance. There were additional improvisations occasioned from the reaction of the audience.

Each performance starts with mock wrestling which results in the death of one the wrestlers. The narrator introduces his country Nigeria and links the mock wrestling to the raging civil war. He recounts the losses on both sides, especially the death of Obidike and other young boys and stresses the need to heed to dialogue to resolve issues. Yagazie, Obidike's widow eulogises her husband who died in the war and is about to be buried and charges the gathering to guide their loins. She is closely followed by Uredia who retrospectively looks at the Nigerian system to expose some of the ills in the society/system and predicts that if change is not affected, the whole system may collapse. Achumba clearly identifies the problem in the system as he pins it down to visionless leaders. The narrator advices the gathering to take a second look at the issues raised to proffer solutions. Members of Obodonile included some members of the audience who joined in the post-performance dialogue/interview

### **Analysis of the Performance**

It is the narrator that acted as a link in joining the various excerpts in the performances. He introduces the performances with a short prologue thus setting the pace for other performers. The dialogue of Yagazie, Obidike's widow which was reminiscent of civil war agonies clearly shows the trauma most families who are victims of the present Boko Haram attacks face with the loss of a beloved family member in a country that has been bedevilled with strife, banditry, kidnapping and other terrorist's attacks. According to Yagazie:

That is my own lot from the war... tell them that you courted evil created by men of the city. Tell them that the oppressor's cutlasses are still sharp for us. Aha, before I forget, tell them to send us a leader (Iwuh 49).

The above is corroborated by the Narrator who laments:

The war has led to the fall of great men. That was the man who enthusiastically alerted the people of that war. And who was the first to respond to that war? Obidike, the great hunter. But the war was more than a hunting expedition... (Iwuh 51).

Uredia's speech is a metaphor of the Nigeria's situation where mediocrity, nepotism, quota system is the order of the day. According to her,

that is the life of women in a male dominated society. Every great woman among us are looked down upon and forced to hide under their husband. I remember that while the war lasted, our husbands never allowed us to be part of their deliberations (Iwuh 52).

It is Uredia, who raises the hope of the people by assuring them that though the war has ended, is hopeful that the events and outcome of the war must change the political landscape of the country.

Uredia: All:	don't look at me as if I am a prophet How?
Uredia:	It won't be long before each region and each state will rule
	itself again
Omasiri:	How did you know?
Uredia:	He is not for our good. He's here to protect the interest of
	Obodonile. Even if he is from Ndi Ala, our land will suffer
	(Iwuh 52-53).

Concluding the re-enactment, Achuba regretfully asserts:

I can see that our people aspiring for leadership positions never learnt any lesson from the war. No one has taken account of our losses or am I dreaming?

His question is answered by the narrator, thus assuring the audience:

No you're not. It is not easy to write tomorrows history by our utterances; our ambitions are buried in the death of tomorrow as if the reasons for the troubles of yesterday are too far from us (Iwuh 54).

The narrator directly involved members of the audience in the dramatisation by throwing questions to them and echoing their answers.

## **Findings /Audience Reaction**

The choice of adopting street theatre as a vehicle to reach the people is in line with the advocacy of Boal who took performances to the people (Theatre of the Oppressed) in the streets of Rio, prison, churches factories to empower them allowing them to

participate in the theatre process. During our presentation, members of the audience participated in the post-performance dialogue where they unreservedly voiced their opinion on the issue raise during the performance as well as accepting to apply the lessons learnt in their lives. In the same vein, Brook's Empty Space theory was also rewarding as it provided the opportunity to take performance to the audience in any available space closet to them.

The foregoing explains why they participated and were fully involved during the post-performance discussions, question and answer sessions. Thus, the theory of the theatre of the oppressed by Boal and Brook's Empty Space empowered spectators to partake in the dramatic process as well as enabled the researcher to realise the goals of the research. This is because, any space found suitable for our production and where we perceived will attract a large audience was converted to a stage. This is evident from the reactions of some of the audience-participants during our discussion segment after the enactments. Okechi Chidi, a 65 year old retired civil servant and a participant, confirms during the post-production oral interview which was transcribed, that he witnessed the Nigerian/Biafra war but regrets that nothing has changed as the factors that led to that war has not been addressed. In the oral interview, he laments:

I am 65 years. I was 13 years when the war started. I am happy that you brought this drama here. Your presentation has reminded me of the events of the war, what we went through and that is why we support the restructuring of the country so we can grow at our strength. It was only God that saved my life because I had kwashiorkor, and almost died. They took me to the Red Cross station were milk and corn meal were rationed to us. Many others were not as lucky as I was. People were fainting on the queue while waiting for the relief material. The conditions that led to that war have not been rectified. They have even multiplied. The best thing to do is to divide this country into six so that each zone can form a country of its own.

This above is amplified by Mazi Joseph Okwudiri, a 58 year technician who also participated in the post-performance interview. Again from the transcribed oral interview, he agreed that the performance reminded him of his late uncle who was conscripted into the army but never returned from the war front:

This short performance is like opening an old wound to me. My father's only brother was conscripted into the war but he never returned. He was killed by the federal forces. My father did not recover from his death as he kept calling his name many years after the war. All problems that led to the war have not been addressed. The east is even oppressed more. Look at the operation python dance targeted principally at the Igbos to annihilate them. What have we done that we are treated as vomits? If they don't want us, they should let us be.

Almost all the participants who spoke during the post-performance dialogue expressed disgust at the composition of the country. Chiemeka Adanna, a 35 years old graduate, during the post-performance dialogue/interview is of the opinion that the country is so vast and comprised of people without any affinity to each other and needs to be broken into six different independent countries. According to her:

This country is so large and made up of many divergent nationalities. It is better we are divided according to this present zones and allow each to develop at their pace. How can you explain the wealth of the south being used to develop the north, leaving the south more impoverished? Building refineries where there are no oil deposits and constantly militarising the south to cage them; taking over all juicy appointments and leaving the crumbs for the south. They should better restructure the country. After all some smaller countries in Africa are doing better than our lame giant.

## Conclusion

The study set out to use street theatre as an agent of mass mobilisation in the sensitisation of the populace in restructuring the country. The theory of Empty Space by Peter Brook gave impetus for the performances while the theory of the Theatre of the Oppressed by Augusto Boal, enabled the audience to participate during the performance and empowered them to express their opinions. The post-performance dialogue with the audience enabled the researcher to fully realise the objective of the research, which explored and exposed the potentials inherent in Street Theatre not only as a vehicle for entertainment but for education and sensitisation of the populace on national issues. The study acknowledged these potentialities and recommends the adoption of street theatre as a major tool for mass mobilisation of the populace.

Again, the language of the presentation was mixed as the performers used English, Pigeon and Igbo languages. The narrator who linked the episodes was able to switch to different dialects of Nigeria to drive home his point. During the postperformance dialogue, participants were at liberty to use any language convenient to them as most of them spoke in Igbo which was later translated and transcribed. This is also in line with what Ngugi wa'Thing'o, Paulo Farier and Boal did with their people, using their native languages to communicate with them to drive home their messages in Kenya, Peru and Brazil, respectively.

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## DANCE AND IDENTITY IN A MULTI-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT: DELTA STATE COUNCIL FOR ARTS AND CULTURE AS CASE STUDY

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### Abstract

The experience of many countries has shown that there is no modular or particular route to mobilise and achieve national identity, which is the most needed ingredient for national cohesion and sustainable development. The options available to societies seeking to create or enhance self-identity typically include the mobilisation of language, symbols, past historical experiences, folklores, and politics. Although dance as an art of movement that transmits images of feelings, ideas and intentions into movement sequences, has featured pertinently in mobilising people to create national identity. There is a growing awareness that it is capable of contributing even more prominently not just as an end but as a key constituting means towards that end. The need to study dance and its elements as a tool or paradigm in the evolution of national identity therefore becomes paramount. This paper negotiates dance as a platform to pulverise ethnic tensions between and among the diverse people, traditions and cultures of Delta State. The essence is to foster the broader project of mobilisation and consolidation for national identity. The researcher relied on industry experience and practical participation alongside seasoned professionals in performance events organised towards the fostering national identity, where dance was an essential component. It is discovered that dance can and has been used effectively, not only for cultural diplomacy, but to foster national identity. The submission is that dance engages the multiple ways that Nigeria's multi-cultural environment and local content could be mobilised for national identity, with especial focus on Delta State Council for Arts and Culture.

#### Introduction

National identity is the sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, as represented by distinctive traditions, culture, language and politics. Nigeria, as a multi-ethnic nation, is known for her diverse cultures, which comprise the distinct cultures of the various ethnic nationalities and therefore defines the different identities. The expression of one's national identity is patriotism, which is characterised by national pride and positive emotion of love for one's country. National identity, therefore, can be sustained through a collective orientation that pursues the critical coalescence of certain multi-ethnic variances and performance elements of Nigerian dances, towards the construction of a socio-political agenda of cultural education and cohesion.

For the purpose of this paper, dance becomes the conspicuous element and vehicle. Nigeria, as a nation with different cultures, has evolved through pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras. The citizens' homogeneous lifestyle is what has kept them as one united entity until the advent of colonialism, modern education, trade and commercial interface. These have necessitated the need for securing boundaries and control of natural resources. Also, they have precipitated conflicts among neighbouring cultures; and that which held them together had been threatened, leading to series of conflicts in the North, South, West and East of the Nigerian nation.

Dance as an art form rooted in culture becomes apt for the discourse, since it encapsulates the ethos and pathos of a culture. It may use the same human body, but the nuances of performance (movement, music and costuming) are largely determined by traditions and customs. Dance as a cultural product and an art of movement, transforms images of feelings, ideas and intentions into movement sequences that are socially significant. Furthermore, national identity, in the heterogeneous context of Nigeria's multi-culturalism, therefore, becomes those cultures, norms, behaviours, temperaments, fashion and food that a community, state, enclave or nation can easily be identified with.

This paper highlights the intriguing and connecting bridge between people, their culture and their distinct identities, using Delta State Council for Arts and Culture (and by implication, the ethnic nationalities of Delta State that supply their performance repertoires). These are used as the vehicles to show how the state has been able to use her local content (dances, especially) to attract national and international attention and establish the multi-ethnic identity of a modern Delta State/Nigeria to the outside world.

### **Cultural Promotion in Nigeria**

During the colonial period, cultural activities suffered a set-back in Nigeria as the missionaries considered them as inferior and primitive. From 1914 (when Nigeria took its present amalgamated form) to 1946 onward (when constitutions after constitutions were made), cultural development took an unprecedented turn for the worse with the missionaries curtailing all cultural activities, formerly encouraged by traditional rulers in most of the big towns. There was introduction of a new religious and educational system in lieu of the former traditional system. This was reflected in dance, poetry, religion, music and other cultural forms alien to the society. Young boys were trained in the ways of the Whiteman in schools set up for such purposes; and this meant abandoning all that was indigenous. In the place of the indigenous languages, English was foisted on the people, the effect of which can still be felt today, as the English language become Nigeria's official (Umukoro, Language has "Cultural Administration..." 223). This is also reflected in the way of worship in many churches today. However, indigenous cultural activities have continued to flourish in the hinterlands where the impact of the missionaries was minimal.

Consequent upon the need for the preservation of the arts and crafts of the people, the colonial masters made some efforts towards the artistic development of the

country. Two people in the colonial Ministry of Education, E. H. Duckworth and K. C. Murray were said to have inspired the colonial government in this direction in the early 1950s having solicited for the preservation of the arts and crafts of the people which they considered might disappear (Umukoro, "Cultural Administration..." 224). The first Nigerian Festival of the Arts was held in 1950, and then the second and third held in successively in the following years. It was thus designed to be an annual event. The whole point of the of the Nigerian Festival of the Arts, according to D. A. Cannon, then Festival president, was "to encourage Nigerian artists, craftsmen and musicians, to try and to keep on trying, to produce articles of artistic value which are truly Nigerian" (Umukoro, "Cultural Development..." 69). It was indeed an opportunity for Nigerians to show to the world what they can do.

Upon the realisation of the important role the Festival of the Arts plays in the lives of the community, not only for the participants but also for the general public, the Nigerian Arts Council was established in 1956 (Umukoro, "Cultural Administration..." 227). As a voluntary organisation, the responsibility of the council was to cater for the administration of Nigerian arts and culture, with membership drawn from all the states of the federation. The Nigerian Arts Council was financed with contributions from its members and donations from individuals from various walks of life, and bodies noted for their interest and participation in traditional cultural activities.

This also implies that the organisation and its later established regional branches were completely independent of government. Between 1952 and 1967, cultural matters became a local affair, the state level as the component units in the country implemented their cultural programmes as deemed proper. The state governments also placed responsibilities of cultural matters in more than one ministry, though most of them operating without any cultural policy document to guide their steps. The states provided library services in their local councils, organised festivals of arts, provided cultural information through the mass media and gave subvention to local councils and museums. The local councils had a major role in planning and executing cultural programmes.

Joseph Umukoro also notes that during the early period of independence, there were many arts and cultural agencies involved in cultural matters in the country. These were institutions neither directly under the federal nor state governments. Rather, they were autonomous agencies, established by private bodies or individuals and foreigners to promote Nigerian arts. One of such organisations, mentioned earlier on was the Nigerian Arts Council (established in 1956), whose responsibilities included mounting exhibitions of Nigerian arts and crafts and organising annual national festivals. The other organisations involved in cultural promotion then were the Yoruba Travelling Theatre Troupes, the 1960 Masks, the Orisun Theatre (formed in 1964, as a foster child of the 1960 Masks), Unibadan Masques (established in the mid-1970s), Artistes' Societies, and many more smaller cultural groups that existed in the towns and villages that were involved in the promotion of culture in their ethnic fashions (Umukoro, "Cultural Administration..." 231). The post-Independence period (1970s onwards)

witnessed a rigorous effort to promote culture by both the state and federal governments.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that in order to achieve real development, a resort to culture was necessary in reversing the damage that the slave trade, colonisation and foreign domination have inflicted on Africa's cultural and spiritual values, on the African identity and on the African soul (Edosamwan 77-85). Thus, a further step taken by the federal government in providing a modern basis for cultural action by the state was the promulgation of legislation relating to the establishment of various cultural organisations with the main purpose of strengthening and broadening the bases for the promotion of various aspects of Nigerian cultural life. These are essentially to be found in the decrees setting up the Federal Department of Culture in 1972; National Archives and National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) in 1975; and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in 1977. Others establishments are National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM); Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC); Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN); Centre for Blacks and African Arts and Civilisation (CBAAC); and National Library of Nigeria (NLN) in 1979 (Umukoro, "Cultural Administration..." 232). The National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria are also cultural institutions that were established as necessary organs essential for cultural management.

A significant improvement in cultural promotion emerged in the 1970s as Nigerian political authorities began to assert our cultural identity, as a means of bringing about positive changes in our national outlook, as well as establishing greater confidence in our national values and aspirations. To be specific, this led to the establishment of the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) in 1975 by Government, through the *National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) Decree No. 3* of 1975, and the amended *Decree No. 5* of 1987, as the body for national coordination of cultural and artistic promotion and development in Nigeria. The creation of the Federal Department of Culture and the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) eventually led to the establishment of State Arts Councils for the effective administration of culture in Nigeria. One of such organs was the then Bendel State Council for Arts and Culture, the body which, with the creation of Delta State, birthed the Delta State Council for Arts and Culture, the focus of this paper.

### **Prospects of Culture in the Modern Society**

## Employment Opportunity and Socio-economic Development:

The importance of culture as an engine of national development can be fully gauged by considering its role in regenerating cities. In the last few years, interest in the cultural industry as an economic force of its own has grown. The European Commission has identified culture and the various sectors of cultural industry as a major economic and social force in Europe. The growth of cultural employment has been strong in the past ten years, exceeding average employment-growth figures. Culture is eminently a national industry, and more generally an urban phenomenon (Borg and Russo 19-20).

Through the ages, and in particular, since the end of the Middle Ages, the most important works of art, the most influential circles of creative thinking, the best schools and universities, and the flourishing of cultural trends and languages, have been closely associated with cities, their power, and their economic strength. It is thus not surprising that as of today, the cultural heritage of most nations – especially in Europe and East Africa – are concentrated in cities, and that most start-up artistes or organisations would look for an urban location, preferably in one of those 'cultural hubs' like London, New York, Nairobi or Berlin, where cultural values have now reached levels common to any other global industry throughout the world.

By underlining the transformative character of culture, its connection to development becomes obvious. Although development has many different notions, it intrinsically contains an element of progress or 'good change' (Spencer-Oatey 1) – a (positive) transformation of the present situation. Development can also generally be associated with the reduction of poverty and the stimulation of economic growth. The question remains as to which efforts have the potential to achieve change for the better and reach those people who most need it.

## **Objectives of Delta State Council for Arts and Culture**

The Edict establishing the Delta State Council for Art and Culture spelt out its cardinal functions as follows: to promote, propagate, preserve and present rich cultural heritage of Delta state at the state, National or international levels (*DSCAC Bill, 2008*: C81-88).

With due regards to the multi-cultural component of Delta State and how this is represented at the DSCAC; for the purpose of good and effective administration, the functions are shared amongst the following divisions which are manned by five senior management staff from the five major ethnic groups:

- 1. Research, Documentation and Publication
- 2. Administration and Finance
- 3. Performing Arts
- 4. Visual Arts
- 5. Field and Festivals Organisation

In pursuance of the aforementioned, the Council is statutorily vested with the following responsibilities:

- a) Organising festival of Arts and Culture at local, zonal and state levels in promotion of the state's identity.
- b) Ensure that Delta State participates in national and international festival of arts and Culture for cultural exchange.
- c) Publish and sponsor the publication of Journals of Arts and Culture of the State.
- d) Establish Art galleries in the State.
- e) Manage the State cultural centre.

- f) Erect historical/cultural monuments.
- g) Collaborate and associate with other organisations engaged in the promotion of Arts and Culture.
- h) Groom and supervise cultural groups in the state.
- i) Manage a performing troupe for cultural entertainment at both government and private occasions.
- j) Organise Art exhibitions and encourages craftsmen of Delta State origin to aspire higher (*DSAC Bill*, 2008).

### Stylistic Features of Delta State Council for Arts and Culture Performances

The stylistic feature of any dance production remains the technique, features and peculiar style employed in the execution of the dance performance. These are the features that place the council in sharp contrast with other arts councils, it's her identity and the council can comfortably claim the originality too. These features can be seen in the movements, the attitude of the dancers, the costumes, the songs, their peculiar entrances and exits and finally the choreography of the dance performance. The Council has a specific performing style, since it's a state owned council for arts and culture, with her staff drawn from the twenty five (25) local government areas of the state, her performance style is culturally based. Firstly, the council is established for the propagation, preservation, promotion and presentation of the delta state multi ethnic diverse cultures, to her identity and to guard against some of these historical stories and dances from going into extinction. It is also established for cultural presentations at state functions, representation of the state at national/international functions, and also performing at private engagements where money is generated internally for the running of the council and supporting the state internally generated revenue.

Marian Iyeh opines that, "the stylistic feature of dance could be referred to as the peculiar features identifiable in a particular dance" (64). She enumerates these features to include the type of dance, philosophies behind the dance, style, the context of occurrence, manner of performance, performance structure, floor patterns, designs of bodies in space, time frame, sexes of participants and the paraphernalia involved in the dance such as costumes, props, make-up, and so on.



Plate 1: Delta Unique (members of the DSCAC Troupe), performing at an Alumni function at Ibadan in 2017. Each of the songs fade into the next, leading a change in movement and choreography from the transition, one can easily identify the different ethnic nationalities. The title of the dance shows the unique beauty of diverse Delta ethnic nationalities.

*Photo:* Author



*Plate 2: Delta Unique (members of the DSCAC troupe), performing at an Alumni function, at Ibadan in 2017. Photo:* Author

'Delta Unique' is a dance that accommodates the five conspicuous ethnic nationalities in Delta state (Izon, Itsekiri, Anioma, Urhobo and Isoko, fused together). Like the title, it is unique as the beauty in Deltan cultures is prominently displayed.

This time, it was performed in Ibadan at the University of Ibadan at the occasion of its Alumni Lecture. Here, there was a platform for cultural exchange as the people of Oyo and Bayelsa States felt the aural composition that was the Delta State Cultural display. The dance was choreographed by Timi Lugard, costumed by Pat Rapu – both of the DSCAC – and performed by the State troupe. The songs and instrumentation were purely traditional, while the dancers interpreted the songs. The performing instrumentalists are members of staff of the Delta State Council, ably led by Eniye Action, the lead drummer. The audience reaction and acceptability was very encouraging as they cheered the dancers throughout the period of the performance.



*Plate 3: Emma Royal Dance (the State troupe performing at a dinner in Government House, Asaba in 2017. Photo:* Author



Plate 4: Emma Royal Dance. State troupe performing at a dinner held at the Government House, Asaba, in 2017. It was staged in honour of the Presidential Economic Diversification Initiative Team's visit to Delta State under the auspices of the Bank of Industry (BOI). The delegation from the Presidency cut across the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory. Photo: Author



Plate 5: Team Delta at NAFEST Opening Ceremony, Rivers State, in 2018 Photo: Author

The children are always part of the Delta State contingent to NAFEST, as members of cast of the children entries for the competitive events: drama, essay writing, board games, hand craft and wrestling. The above is a picture of the freestyle march-past dance during the Opening Ceremony of NAFEST 2018. The aesthetic function of the dance at the event was to celebrate the natural resources of Delta State and communicate that the State is safe for investors and tourists. Costuming was by the DSCAC costumier, Pat Rapu, who adopted materials with emphasis on the colour blue, to mirror Delta's official colours. The dance itself was modelled in the traditional Ibo stylistic features of performance. With regards to choreography, no specific style was employed. The varying heights of the performers were used to achieve an artistic perspective for better view of the spectators. Below is a transcription of two of the songs used during the parade:

### Song:

Delta Bu Ani Eze-oo Ewo (x3) Ochichi Mali nma ka okwananyi uya nenu nednio

### **Translation**:

Delta is a land of milk and honey Let the good things of life and good people come to us.

### Song:

Ora bialije anyi ekene unu-o nenu ndeni Ochichi Mali nma ka okwananyi uya nenu nednio

### **Translation**:

We welcome every visitor form far and near May your coming bring us fortune.

The National Festival for Arts and Culture (NAFEST) was introduced, after its change of name from Unity Festival in 1970, as a vehicle to foster unity among various sectors of the country after the thirty months civil war. It is an avenue to showcase diverse cultural heritage, talents, spirit of national identity, play host to foreign partners and promote peaceful coexistence among the different ethnic nationalities. Among the states that participated, was Delta State, radiating in her array of beautiful costumes, as they displayed the intimidating sights and sounds of Delta State at the opening ceremony in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Delta State has been consistent in attending NAFEST since 2002, when the hosting was revived and became rotational. The NAFEST Rivers 2018 edition was a cultural gathering and the stylistic feature of all the Delta entries was culturally oriented as the state tried to showcase the state content and contexts to enthusiasts and investors. The dance entry was choreographed by Timi Lugard and Josephine Odunze, and costumes by Patani Esiri; and the artistes where not just the troupe members as some ministry staff and other freelance artistes were co-opted.



*Plate 6: Team Delta at NAFEST march-past, Rivers State, in 2018 Photo:* Author



Plate 7: Team Delta at NAFEST 2018, with trophies won. In the category of Gold gong for Attendance, the State won a Gold trophy for 'Best Costumed State', Gold in Wrestling, Silver for Board Games, as well as Bronze for Essay Writing. Photo: Author

### Cultural Performances of the Council as National Identity

One of the very prominent tasks of the Delta State Council for Arts and Culture is to promote and propagate the rich cultural heritage of the Delta people through her performances on stage and any other medium. The troupe has been responsive in this role and has had series of performances within and outside the shores of this country to her credit since the creation of the state. In the year 2000, the Delta State Troupe was among the State Arts Councils invited to perform in Accra, Ghana for an international cultural exchange.

In the same vein, the Council has been very consistent in featuring in the National Festival for Arts and Culture since 2002 till date; and Abuja National Carnival since inception in 2005 till 2016, when it was stopped by the Buhari administration. Delta State Council for Arts and Culture has also hosted Delta State Festival of Arts and Culture (DELFAC), entertainment summits, and has performed in both government and private-paid performances within and outside the State since the creation of Delta State. Delta State also was privileged to be invited to Tokyo, Japan for the Nigeria's Independence celebration in 2010.

These were some of the ways the state propagated culture within and outside the state and these largely helped in the cultural development and National/International identity of the state by laundering the image of the state through her cultural engagements and performances to the outside world.

#### Conclusion

Ethnic identity creates inter-ethnic rivalry among different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria and therefore poses a threat to National identity promotion. The challenges in Nigeria ranging from boundary disputes, communal conflicts, insecurity and unstable economy have threatened the unity of the country and a genuine model for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence is inevitable. To make people capable of understanding and shaping the new world; to give them the power of self-expression and of communicating within groups by using the languages of their time, is a prerequisite to lifelong education and the principal condition of development. This paper has succinctly showed that dance cannot only be used for entertainment and diplomacy but can serve as a good tool for conflict resolution and national/state identity development.

Conclusively, dance and cultural resources, which the people can easily identify with as their identity and cultural root, can be mobilised for the promotion of Nigeria's national identity and effectively enhancing its cultural diplomacy objectives. The present study has attempted to situate dance in the policy strategy for the country's identity. The application of dance to attain national identity is impossible if this does not start from the States, which all share the familiar history of forced incorporation. It is hoped that this paper, coming from a multi-ethnic state as Delta, addresses dance and national identity, while laying the platform for a broader discourse on national identity.

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### AQUATIC PERFORMANCE: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF AN IJAW CULTURAL PHENOMENON

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### Abstract

Aquatic performance is a form of entertainment that takes place in, on and around water. This performance is mainly carried out by the Ijaws of the Niger Delta. The aquatic performance, though very entertaining and educative, has not been fully appreciated as an art form. Therefore, this paper, titled, "Aquatic Performance: A Descriptive Study of an Ijaw Cultural Phenomenon" investigates the prevailing alienation of Ijaw youths from aquatic performances, with a view to awakening the cultural/aesthetic values of the people concerning the performances. The study uses qualitative analysis as the research methodology. The bulk of the information for this study comes from the researcher's participant observation of aquatic performance can be a huge medium to promote the Ijaw culture, if well planned. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that proper attention be given to publicity whenever aquatic performances are organised.

### Introduction

The Ijaws, who are predominantly fishermen, live their lives daily by the aquatic terrain of the Niger Delta; they carry out businesses such as farming, carving, palm wine tapping and trading. Again, for their survival, the Ijaws indulge in social-cultural activities, such as, festivals, initiation rites, rites of passage and the worship of deities (very often marine spirits). To pay homage to their gods or goddesses, they perform rituals in, on or around water (called *beni-kamai* in Izon). Sometimes, the Ijaw man performs ritual by going to the bank of the river, or paddling to the middle of the river, and calls out the name of the deity that he has come out to worship. He throws biscuits, groundnuts and bottles of soft drink into the water and, at the same time, expresses himself in ordered movements and gestures inspired by sounds of his aquatic environment. At other times, he performs the *beni-kamai* ritual act by pouring libation into the river and offers animals as sacrifice. Rituals and performances in the aquatic terrain of the Niger Delta become the Ijaw people's culture and they define the existence of the people.

Culture and drama are inseparable because it was a people's culture that birthed drama in Ancient Greece. In Africa, drama reflects African indigenous aesthetics and values. As Africans, the Ijaws reflect the African aesthetics and values in their art –

imitation of creatures from the sea, re-enacting sea battles and ritual appeasement and worship of deities, all in his aquatic environment. These activities indulged in by the Ijaws for harmonious living do have theatrical features; and aquatic theatre originated from such ritual performances.

### **Aquatic Performances, Venue and Style**

According to Sunday Abraye, "aquatic theatre which is also called regatta is any dramatic performance that takes place in, on and around water" (39). Aquatic performance constitutes a major aspect of all riverine entertainment. This special type of entertainment is performed daily by the Ijaws of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The Ijaw man takes aquatic performances as a way of expressing his cultural value. Abraye further states that, "aquatic theatre in Ijaw land is a special cultural event that celebrates the people's attachment to the water and their riverine environment" (39). Also, Ernest Weridonghan states that, "the people of the Niger Delta find entertainment, documentation and recreation in aquatic performance" (29).

Aquatic performances in Ijaw communities have elements of dance, music, chants and incantations, all in a beautiful performance area, the river. An aquatic performance sometimes begins on the shoreline of the river in the community; then it transits to a boat and may finally climax in the river. In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, aquatic performances are staged on three kinds of stages: the floating stage, the fluid stage and the shoreline stage.

*The floating stage* is the most common type of stage for aquatic performance in the Niger Delta region. In this stage, the performers perform on a canoe or outboard engine boat, and even barges, which are the most common examples of floating stages. A floating stage can take any form; it can be built to represent any creature to highlight the theme of a performance. Performing on this stage is unique because the performers dance and paddlers paddle to choreographed movements, making sure that the boat is well-balanced to avoid capsizing it. Sometimes, musical instruments are fitted to the boat to give the desired aesthetics to the performance.



*Fig. 1: A Floating Stage being designed for an Aquatic Performance at Beke-ebi Lake, Warri, 2019* 

*Fluid stage* has the performers performing in water. Sometimes, performers on the floating and shoreline stage take their performance to the fluid stage to tell a story. Some common examples of performances in Ijaw land that take place in the fluid stage are swimming competitions, *beni-andau* (river wrestling), *bor-owein* (fishing festival), *owu-sei* (masquerade display), and so on.



Fig. 2: Amasighan love boat performance floating in to the fluid stage (Pic. Abraye 2010)

*Shoreline stage* is like the avenue stage. It is the route which performers pass to the fluid and floating stage. The shoreline stage does not hold performance for a long time; instead, it plays a transitory role between the floating and fluid stages. Special dance steps are most times done on the shoreline stage. When performers transit to the fluid or floating stage, the members of the audience stand at the shore of the river/water to be entertained by the performers. However, there are some special performances that

take place on the shoreline stage, such as, Ijaw traditional wrestling as seen in Fig. 3 below, beach party celebration, and so on.



Fig.3: A traditional wrestling at the Shoreline stage in Sagbama, 2019.

Aquatic displays in Ijaw society are classified into two: the sacred type and the theatrical/secularised type. The sacred aquatic performance is also called non-theatrical aquatic displays. They are devoted to religious purposes and follow well-ordered specific principles. An example of a sacred aquatic display is the *beni-kamai* ritual act. On the other hand, the secularised aquatic performances are those performed solely for entertainment. However, these two categories of aquatic displays frequently observed by the Ijaws come in four different ways: *ekian-aru* (sacrificial boat), *Su-aru* also called *Amau-aru* (war boat), *Oge-aru* (celebration boat), and *Sei-aru* (love boat).

### The Ekian-Aru (Sacrificial Boat)

At the end of every year, Ijaw communities, like most African societies, engage in purification rituals. The ekian-aru is organised to take away or cleanse the evils in the community organising it at that period to the outskirt of the town where a carrier in the boat disposes all the symbolic evils of that year into the river. It is an example of a sacred performance. The performers depart the community in solemn mood to the place where the community's problems will be disposed; but in returning to the community, the performance takes theatrical form with the performers dancing to songs announcing the success of their mission to the admiration of the villagers who watch the performance from the shoreline or river bank of the community.

The beni-kamai ritual act, as a sacred kind of performance, may take place on a boat or in the river. When it is done on a boat, it is considered as an ekian-aru performance; but sometimes, the performer of the beni-kamai ritual goes into the water to perform the ritual; a situation that is considered a fluid stage performance of beni-kamai.



Fig. 4: A sketch of beni-kamai ritual act in water (Pic. Waidor, 2009)

## Amau-aru (War Boat)

War boat performance is one of the most common types of entertainment in Ijaw communities. It is a secular performance carried out to pay special tribute to very great warriors in the event of their death or to honour special dignitaries. For example, during the royal visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Nigeria on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, 1956, the Nembe war boat, carrying ninety-one warriors as performers, was decorated and entertained her and her entourage in Bonny River. Also, as part of cultural activities in the Africa Movie Academy Awards (AMAA) 2006 and 2007, the Otuokpoti War Boat (from Ogbia Local Government Area) and Toru-Angiama War Boat (from Sagbama Local Government Area) were among other boats used to entertain dignitaries at the occasion. The event was packaged by the Bayelsa State Council for Art and Culture, under the artistic directorship of Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma.

War boats are manned by actors playing warriors costumed in war regalia sporting war paints, brandishing weapons and chanting war songs. Also, Wrestling canoes with athletic, energetic and artistic wrestlers, who chant, sing and dances to energetic Izon songs announcing their arrival by paddling along the waterfront of host community to threaten opponents by noisily boasting of past exploits is another example of a war boat performance in Ijaw land.



Fig. 5: War Boat Performance in Patani Community, 2019.

# Oge-Aru (Ceremonial boat)

*Oge-aru* is staged during festivals in Ijaw communities. The performers who are to man the Oge-aru are selected based on performance credibility after an audition organised by the community hosting the festival. The ceremonial boat performance often has singers, drummers and dancers. The dance steps are choreographed and the songs are well rehearsed for the ceremony for which it is performed. Some examples of Oge-aru performance are The Amasinghan Oge of Aleibiri, The Ogoriba Uge Aru of Odi, Okolode Oge Aru of Ikibiri, etc.



Fig.6: Oge-aru at Okolode Festival at Ikibiri Community, 2009.

However, the Oge-aru can be repackaged after a festival to entertain guests and dignitaries in special events like inter-communal marriages and rites of passage. When

it is repackaged for special events other than the communal festival performance is now considered as a sei-aru. An example of such is the Bayelsa State Council for Art and Culture repackaging the Aleibiri Love Boat as its performance piece during the Abuja National Carnival in 2007.

### Sei-aru (Love Boat)

Love boat performance is a theatrical performance for young and unmarried adults. This performance has no formal/choreographed dance steps, and the prerequisite to partake in the love-boat display is to buy a participant ticket and have specified costume required by the organisers of the love-boat display. However, anyone who wishes to participate in the love-boat performance is expected to be a good swimmer because the performance takes place on water/river.



Fig. 7: Amasighan Love Boat Performance of Aleibiri (Photo: Abraye, 2010).

Sei-aru is also staged on special occasions such as burials and marriage ceremonies. In Ijaw societies, the period of marriage and funeral are times for joyous celebration. During these periods, aquatic performances are packaged with different kinds of Izon music heralding different occasions the performances are packaged for. Owigiri music tells of the conveyance of a corpse or other death related occasions and other times it may be a bridal train or people going for introduction of the groom to the family of the bride. Dancers perform on the river as their boats travel to and from funerals. Abraye avers that,

the sight of a big outboard engine boat with music blaring from loud speakers and people dancing on it, tearing through the middle of the river in the afternoon or late hours of the day, is a common sight in Ijaw land. These boats announce the conveyance of a corpse from one neighbouring village to another (38).

These boats, specifically designed for the purpose of conveyance corpses and marriage celebrations, are also classified as sei-aru (that is, a boat of entertainment or dancing).

## **Aquatic Performance and Cultural Identity**

Cultural identity is the feeling that a culture belongs to a particular group. Through cultural identity, a people can relate themselves to a specific nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, etc. The Ijaws, through the phenomenon of aquatic performance, construct their self-perception and identity. Aquatic performance is classified as a cultural phenomenon of the Ijaw society in Niger Delta, Nigeria because aqua performances are linked to the Ijaws through religion, location, language, and birth.

*Identity through Religion:* The Ijaws believe their gods are in the marine world therefore, take their worship to the river. This association with the gods that dwell in the rivers is clearly indicated in the opening passage of the first scene of J.P. Clark's *Ozidi*, when the story-teller comes in to demand the company of seven young women, all virgins, to pay homage to the sea people (2). Every Ijaw man's ceremony is tied to a ritual in, on or by the river. For example, in Tungbo, a community in Bayelsa State Nigeria, the Akpolokia ritual drama is performed at the Lake Akpolokia to keep crocodiles at bay while fishing is going on and secondly to be given much fishes by the god Akpolokia who is believed to inhabit the River Nun.



Fig. 8: Akpolokia Fishing Festival of Tungbo, 2019

*Identity through Location:* whenever riverine people of Nigeria are mentioned, the Ijaws come to mind because they live by the riverine environment in Nigeria. Thus, "there is scarcely any Izon (Ijaw) community that does not stay along a river or a stream were dugout canoes form the major transportation system" (Ifie 102). From this

assertion by Ifie, the Ijaws are identified through their location, the riverine environment. And to entertain themselves, they start imitating acts seen in their aquatic environment. This imitation is called an aquatic performance because the imitation is done in that riverine environment. A typical example is the *Amoun-aru* performance of Ebedebiri community in Sagbama Local Government Area, Bayelsa State. In the Amoun-aru performance of Ebedebiri, warriors who were victorious in sea battles reenact their success story on a floating stage for curious audience members of the Ebedebiri community.



Fig. 9: Ebedebiri War Boat Performance, 2012

*Identity through Language:* the Ijaws speak the Izon language. All entertainments using the Izon language are identity to be Izon art. The songs sang during aquatic performance are traditional Izon songs. Therefore, aquatic theatre entertainment is classified as an Ijaw cultural performance.

*Identity through Birth:* everyone born is born into a culture. When an Ijaw man gives birth to a child, that child becomes part of the Ijaw community, therefore, has an Ijaw identity.

### **Aquatic Performance and Development**

Development is a gradual progression of a person, place or thing so that it becomes more recognisable, stronger and better. Ganiyu Olalekan, Kayode Jimi, and Husseini Shaibu state that, development represents ideas and practices designed to bring about positive change in human societies (108). It is anything done to make sure a people or society have a better life. Therefore, the aquatic performance of the Ijaws of the Niger Delta is a tool for development. Performances in the aquatic environment whether sacred or secular are cultural phenomenon that exists to influence change positively in the lives of the Niger Delta people. Through aquatic performance, deities are appeased, history is created and culture is transplanted and transferred from the Ijaws to another people. Aquatic performance like the ceremonial boat performance is significant in providing a platform for the preservation of the Ijaw cultural heritage. Not only does it provide an avenue for the transition of knowledge, it also promotes communal experiences. In other words, it has proved to be a source of cultural enlightenment. People who never knew about the Ijaw culture and values can come to know about it by been an audience member in an aquatic performance.

Olu Obafemi maintains that, "culture is fundamental to human existence and human civilisation. It offers meaning, purpose and value to the socio-economic, political and aesthetic ethos of society" (25). Aquatic performances attract mammoth crowd, people come from far and near to partake or have a feel of an aquatic performance. The presence of these people improves the economy of the people. Tourism is a good source of revenue to a society, and the period of an aquatic performance is a period were tourist come in their numbers to Ijaw lands.

By the communal spirit of oneness established during an aquatic performance, unity is fostered among the people of the community hosting an aquatic performance. This is perceived in general cooperative and participatory spirit, of participants and observers with a common goal of ensuring a successful performance. Also, aquatic performance is an avenue to harness the talents of youths. When selecting the performers for a performance, there is usually a hunt for specific skills in singing, dancing, drumming, carving, sewing, building and painting. This process has led to the discovery of a chain of new talents marked out and nurtured for immediate and future use.

#### Conclusion

The aquatic genre of drama is a genre in African theatrics performed to honour deities, heroes and legends and their historic deeds in, on and around water. Also, it is an avenue to reconstruct and pass history to generations born and unborn. History is a precursor to cultural preservation and social integration. The aquatic performance of the Ijaws is a tool that goes beyond generic boundaries therefore can help in national unity and integration.

#### **Findings and Recommendations**

Aquatic theatre is a good avenue to sell the Ijaw culture to the world. However, publicity is lacking and for that reason aquatic performance is still not much recognised by the Nigerian populace. Also, in course of this research, it was discovered that aquatic performance culture exist in almost every Ijaw communities in the Niger Delta, but most youths have refused to partake due to their believes that partaking in African indigenous rituals and activities are barbaric.

From the findings above, this research recommends that publicity be given high priority during the period of festivals that will involve aquatic performances in Ijaw communities. The ministry of culture and tourism in Ijaw speaking states should give a priority to the study of Ijaw art and culture in her schools. Also, the Federal Ministry of Culture and Orientation, through the relevant cultural institutions, should place a high priority in inculcating cultural values to Nigerian youths who have deviated from the African cultural values due to colonialism and influx of foreign religions.

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## PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE AS A TOURISM DESTINATION

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### Abstract

This paper is a comprehensive study of the National Theatre with a focus on its problems and an interrogation of how far it is meeting the objectives for which it was established. The study will situate its findings on the prospects of the National Theatre as a veritable avenue for tourism development in Nigeria. It examines the establishment of an ideal National Theatre, the issues that impede its development, and finally posits how these issues could be resolved in order to achieve the desired tourism potential. The study found that the objectives of the founding fathers of Nigeria's National Theatre have been jettisoned for personal and political gains. The National Theatre, Iganmu-Lagos, as an organisation, is structured into two parts: the artists and the administrative or management staff. There have been clashes of interest between these two bodies as they struggle for supremacy. This acrimony or animosity made the nation's best artistic talents to boycott the edifice. Therefore, the study recommends that there is need to appoint arts professionals to manage the National Theatre and to remove the theatre management from the vice grip of the civil service bureaucracy.

### Introduction

Tourism is as old as man; and from inception of his being, man has been very adventurous. Whenever he discovers a beautiful and captivating scene, he develops such a place into an attraction and later to a site/destination where people can visit either for sight-seeing or as a dwelling place. Tourist attractions usually reflect the people's rich cultural heritage, historic institutions and scenic beauty.

Theatre is a quintessential tourist attraction that aids the socio-economic development of any nation. It creates a conducive environment for human and material growth, which gives the society a sense of belonging. Jean-Louis Barrault maintains that, "theatre is an activity that is useful to the public since it purifies and revitalises human beings and reassures them against anxiety and solitude" (25). The role of the theatre is imperative now that many people are going through difficulties as a result of the economic melt-down and social ills ravaging the society.

Like theatre, tourism's initial and primary focus was geared towards entertainment; but time has changed such orientations. Tourism, aside from its entertainment needs, serves both social and economic needs. It has demonstrated its economic viabilities in the growth and development of human society through economic impacts on the national economy. Tourism generates fund for the economic development of a nation, especially in the developing nations of the world. According to Nelson Obasi,

the relationship between theatre and tourism, it seems, is like a marriage without divorce.... Theatre and tourism are basic sources of entertainment in any society. Nevertheless, they also offer to society invaluable socio-economic opportunities (44).

Unlike some developed countries, such as, the United States America, Canada, Britain, France, and Germany, among other countries in Europe and Asia where theatre sites abound, we can hardly boast of theatres as tourism sites in Nigeria, except, perhaps, the carnival sites which are only prominent in Calabar, Cross River State, Lagos in Lagos State, and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. Somehow, the National Theatre in Iganmu, Lagos provides an exquisite venue for tourism activities. Unfortunately, Nigeria is yet to harness her resources along this line of entrepreneurship.

The National Theatre, Iganmu-Lagos is a theatre edifice that was conceived and built by the military regime under the leadership of General Yakubu Gowon. It was built specifically to host indoor performances during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77), which eventually took place during the administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo. Ironically, this edifice, which ought to have been replicated in the various states of the country for the purposes of tourism development, has been utterly neglected. The critical issue is that if the Federal Government cannot maintain the only theatre site it has, it is doubtful if it can think of building more theatre structures. This infrastructure decay has greatly diminished the essence of socio-economic empowerment envisioned by those who conceptualised and constructed the National Theatre.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is hinged on two theories in order to enhance the actualisation of the objective of the study. It is worth noting that a theory is an assumption or set of assumptions, accepted principles and rules of procedure based on limited information or knowledge, devised to analyse, predict or explain the nature of behaviour of a set of phenomena. The theories employed for this study are the theory of culture and environmental theory. The study of the National Theatre is a study of culture; and culture encapsulates the complete life style of a people. Robert Kolker is of the view that cultural theory looks at various kinds of texts within the context of cultural practice; that is, the work, production and material stuff of daily life, marked as it is by economics and class, politics, gender and race, and need and desire.

The second relevant theory for the study is the environmental theory. J. A. Lesser, an environmental economic theorist, sees the environmental systems such as clean air, clean water, and diverse species of healthy forests, as public goods in the sense that they can be enjoyed or used freely by many individuals. The study of the National Theatre as a tourist destination is a study of the environment, which comprises animate and inanimate objects or structures. As a point of fact, if the National Theatre as a structure becomes dilapidated, with patched walls, leaking roofs, broken chairs and windows, and roads full of pot-holes, with very poor management, people will not venture to visit the site as a tourist destination.

### About the National Theatre

As noted earlier, the National Theatre was built by the Military Government of General Yakubu Gown in 1976, preparatory to the hosting of FESTAC '77, which eventually came up during the General Olusegun Obasanjo regime. This was after the overthrow of the government of General Yakubu Gowon and the assassination of General Murtala Muhammed in a bloody coup d'état. *Wikipedia* states that, "the National Theatre is the primary centre for the performing arts in Nigeria. The monument is located in Iganmu, Surulere, Lagos." In the same vein, Adeyemi Adisa avers:

Constructed in 1976, National Theatre which hosted the festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977 is a multi-purpose national monument for the presentation and promotion of Nigerian arts and culture.... The building is termed "the culture house" which represents one of the most identifiable national symbols about Nigerian arts and culture at home and abroad (1).

The theatre, located about 30-minutes' drive from Lagos Island, is one of the best masterpieces in Nigeria. Having a magnificent auditorium that has the capacity to seat about three thousand (3,000) persons, and a conference hall that can accommodate about one thousand five hundred (1,500) persons, it is a major attraction in Lagos. Furthermore, the edifice has a banquet hall which accommodates about one thousand (1,000) persons and two cinema halls that have capacity for more than seven hundred and fifty (750) persons each. It is on record that, originally, the main hall was equipped with facilities for simultaneous translation of eight (8) languages. Events hosted at the National Theatre, Iganmu-Lagos include: musical concerts, play performances, comedy shows, festivals, film shows, art exhibitions, children's funfair, conferences, annual general meetings, religious conventions, social and family events, and so on.



Photo: National Theatre on a busy day. Credit: Web

Kabiru Yusuf writes that, "the National Theatre will forever remain one of the most important points of reference to our great nation. This magnificent edifice will continue to stand tall and proud..." (3). He goes on to state:

No one can deny that there have been significant developments, out of which the National Theatre stands tall and proud. Since its establishment, it has served as major events venue, relaxation centre and tourists spot for both nationals and foreigners. We have been able to maintain the serenity of the environment over the years through sheer hard work. All halls have served as important venues for historical events, meetings and gatherings. Our cinema halls have wrapped interesting dramas. These facilities have been able to meet the needs of both our Nigerian and foreign guests. We take particular pride in our ability to have preserved the artistic nature of the edifice (3).

Going by the information readily available, it could be surmised that the National Theatre is a major tourist attraction. It covers an area of about 23,000 square metres and stands well over 31 metres in height. The edifice has seven floors. According to former General Manager, Kabiru Yusuf:

A meaningful tour of the complex takes more than eight hours. With two bore-holes and two surface tanks, the complex provides its own water requirements.... The National Theatre is home to eight (8) Federal Government Parastatals. The National Theatre can handle twelve programmes simultaneously (7).

The National Theatre is indeed monumental. There are sections for halls, utilities and projects. Paying a glowing tribute to the National Theatre with regards to its successful hosting of FESTAC '77, Joe Musa, former Director-General of National Gallery of Art (NGA) observes:

The conclusion of FESTAC in 1977 probably made the whole country yet very upset about Nigerian culture in general. The "FESTAC House", actually the National Theatre in Iganmu, Lagos that symbolised the World Black and African Arts Festival also quickly yielded a major part of its own expensive structure to the newly constituted "National Gallery of Modern Art" (48-49).

The National Theatre is the number one events venue in Nigeria. The Theatre provides more than adequate venues; and the complex is unarguably a rallying point for both Nigerian and International artists wishing to share experiences with their Nigerian counterparts.

After Independence, Nigerians began to seek for national identity; and the National Theatre became a strong contact for such identity in tune with the nation state. In accentuating this position, Victor Dugga observes thus:

Many highpoints are evident in the journey towards a Nigerian theatre, the best two perhaps being the building of the National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos by a Bulgarian firm and the hosting of the Second African and Black Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977. These two capture the sense in which the concept of National Theatre has been used across the word: as a National edifice and performance as national identity (334).

The National Theatre, as an edifice, is a colossal building that hosted all the events during the FESTAC '77. Unfortunately, the edifice has since been neglected due to administrative lapses. Based on this premise, Dugga states further:

Most National Theatre structures serve as venues for nationally significant or patriotic events. Many such venues have become prestigious tourist spots because of their historical theatrical roles; Royal Albert Hall in London and the Kennedy Centre New York are among such exclusive venues. The National Theatre in Lagos has been engulfed by administrative neglect, instability and dysfunctional. The gigantic structure has not only been underpatronised and underutilised. It has failed to capture neither the imagination of creative producers nor represent the pride of the nation (334-335).

It is worth recalling here that the National Theatre and its monumental edifice faced serious decay, both structurally and administratively. However, with pressure from different parts of the world, the edifice was renovated in 2011. The National Theatre is truly iconic in the nation; it is full of potentials but lacking vision and direction. Irrespective of its decay, it is truly a tourist destination.

### Establishment and Objectives of National Theatre Iganmu, Lagos

In 1973, the Federal Military Government led by General Yakubu Gowon, as Head of State and the Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, appointed a twenty-nine (29) member committee to advise Government on a probable concept and organisational structure of a theatre. This was barely three years after the 30-month fratricidal Nigerian civil war. The committee eventually proposed the construction of a National Theatre, which was to also be the home of National Troupe of Nigeria. The design for the existing National Theatre was adopted from the palace of culture and sports in Varna, Bulgaria. The contract for its construction was signed on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1973, with the Bulgarian company, **Technoexportsroy**.



Photo: Side view of the National Theatre. Credit: Soibifaa Dokubo

However, the vision went beyond the provision of a befitting venue for the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77), which the country successfully hosted from January-February 1977 and for which the National Theatre provided more than adequate venues. The complex was also meant to be a rallying point for artistes in Nigeria and for international artistes wishing to share their experience with their Nigerian counterparts. The desire of

General Gowon's government to build the National Theatre monument was fruitful as it has been in use since 1975; but General Yakubu Gowon was overthrown by General Murtala Muhammed in the same 1975. Even though it was put to use in 1975, it was opened formally and commissioned by General Olusegun Obasanjo who survived the 1976 coup and became the Head of State after General Murtala Muhammed was killed on Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1976.

At inception, the following were the residents of National Theatre which were the Parastatals of the then Federal Ministry of Information, Culture and Youth Development:

- 1. The Federal Department of Culture
- 2. The National Troupe of Nigeria (NTN)
- 3. The Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilisation (CBAAC)
- 4. The National Gallery of Art (NGA)
- 5. The National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO)
- 6. The National Council for Art and Culture (NCAC)
- 7. The Pan African News Agency (PANA)
- 8. The Nigeria Press Council (NPC)
- 9. The National Craft Centre and Workshop
- 10. Federal Ministry of Education, Youth Development Department
- 11. Post Office for the Nigerian Postal Services
- 12. A Clinic run by the Federal Ministry of Health

The vision of the Federal Government for the establishment of the National Theatre was to facilitate the preservation and promotion of arts and culture in Nigeria; while the mission for the enterprise was to provide a Centre for the Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture and a home for the National Troupe.

It has been posited that the idea for the establishment of National Theatre in Lagos dates as far back as the 1880s. Jide Timothy-Asobele avers:

The debate for a need for a National Theatre in Lagos dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that is prior to the 1880. Although Glover Memorial Hall was a make shift or Pisaller to the problem of theatre development, the 1976 National Theatre came on the heels of the 1975 National Theatre of London, whose birth had been on the drawing board since 1848 and 1910 respectively (29).

The National Theatre is an epitome of the development of culture in Nigeria. The predominant nature of the National Theatre edifice put the issue of culture at the fore-front in the nation's socio-economic discourse. To build a structure of such magnitude in the 1970's at the cost of one hundred and seventeen million dollars (\$117million), which may be well over four trillion naira

(N4trillion) now, is a testimony of the high regards Nigeria as a nation placed on culture and arts.

## Problems of the National Theatre

National Theatre and FESTAC '77 had strong impact on cultural evolution in Nigeria. Though culture has been with the people, the National Theatre provided a veritable avenue where it could be enjoyed. All the spaces in the National Theatre are meant for the enhancement and exhibition of Nigerian and African cultural heritage. Timothy-Asobele amplifies this viewpoint:

The National Theatre is cultural landmark dedicated to the revival, promotion, presentation and sustenance of Nigeria cultural heritage through theatres. It was little wonder then it was commissioned just in time for the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, FESTAC '77. Given after the festival, it has continued to be a centre in which a lot of research and practical works are done, in the bid to project, promote and enhance the arts and culture of the Nigerian people in particular and the whole community in general (42).

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77), as noted earlier, many activities were featured, such as, dances, song and music renditions, drama and masquerading performances, art exhibitions, conferences and seminars, workshops and colloquiums exhibiting several cultures that were all hosted at the National Theatre complex. On the legacy of FESTAC '77, one-time General Manager of National Theatre and Artistic Director of the National Troupe, Ahmed Yerima, states thus:

The 1970s were a decade of exploitation of resources that had resulted in Nigeria emerging as a major oil producing nation. The government was benefiting from a huge increase in oil revenues which was referred to as the era of "Oil boom". Second, Nigeria had recently emerged from a civil war and had experienced a series of military coups and counter coups which had shaken loyalties to Nigeria as a nation (14).

Like many other endeavours in Nigeria, the National Theatre was constructed and put together in the spur of the moment without any long term plan for its sustenance. After FESTAC '77, the National Theatre building was abandoned to rot away. One could not imagine such a magnificent edifice having a profuse leaking roof, pot-holes everywhere in and around the edifice, bare windows, broken doors, stinking toilets occasioned by dry taps, and other infrastructure within and outside the building having totally collapsed. Apart from the physical structure of the National Theatre, the administration and management of the activities, as envisaged by the founding fathers, were not put in place. The Federal Government failed to realise the objectives and the statutory mandate regarding the establishment of the National Theatre. The mandate, as spelt out by the Federal Military Government, is called *Memorandum on the National Theatre* by Jimmy Atte, General Manager of National Theatre (1991-2000):

The National Theatre has been establishment for the presentation, preservation and promotion of arts and culture in Nigeria. Other functions include the following:

- i. Encourage the discovery and development of talents in the performing arts.
- ii. Ensure that the National Theatre is efficiently managed as a commercial concern.
- iii. Safeguard the property of the Parastatal.
- iv. Specify the category of persons who may be admitted to the National Theatre premises.
- v. Impose scale of fees for the use of the National Theatre and its facilities and for the services rendered by the Parastatal.
- vi. Promote healthy cultural activities and habits in the society.
- vii. Enhance and exploit the tourism potentials of the National Theatre complex.
- viii. Promote the positive image of the National Theatre and that of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
  - ix. Provide technical support services to national and international performers and productions in the Theatre complex.
  - x. Promote the development of children's theatre.
  - xi. Guide and give leadership local efforts in artistic experimentations and strive to ensure that the Troupe is a centre of excellence (286-287).



Photo: National Theatre at Night. Credit: Soibifaa Dokubo

In Repositioning Nigeria's Cultural Industries for Economic Empowerment and Social Security, Effiong Johnson stresses that like the National Museum, the National Theatre

> is the repository of our collective values, the dome of our common heritage; the symbol of our national unity, identity and cultural expression. It should be a vibrant centre, steering the national mind and consciousness in the right direction politically, economically, socially, religiously, ethnically, psychologically, and so on, through its productions... (14).

He examines the array of programmes and activities the National Theatre can host, adding that the National theatre should be the voice of reason, conscientising the citizenry towards social cohesion, advancement and security. He substantiates his position by citing Federic Lorca as saying that a country that neglects its theatre is dying if not dead already (16).

As if taking a cue from the position of Effiong Johnson, an accomplished America based theatre director, Olusegun Ojewuyi, in *Katanfuru: The Illogic of Culture-Nomics in Nigerian Cultural Administration* looks at the deplorable state of the National Theatre. To Ojewuyi: Katanfuru is a million cultural Parastatals, administrators and programmes without cultural coherence. Katanfuru is a forlorn body of artists, badly trained, uninspired and lft to languish in impoverishment – of no ideas, creativity and patronage (8).

Decrying the poor funding of the culture sector in Nigeria's annual budgets, Ojewuyi advocates for an arrangement where an Artistic Director/CEO oversees the management of both the National Troupe and the National Theatre. Under this arrangement, the General Manager of the National Theatre reports to the Artistic Director. His argument is that it is an irony that the National Troupe has become a tenant in its own house.

The failure to actualise the mandate seemed to have emanated from several factors, such as, clash of interest among the staff; poor maintenance culture; inappropriate appointments that were more of putting square pegs in round holes; corruption at high places; insufficient or inadequate knowledge of individual roles among the staff; being run under the civil service bureaucracy; deficiency in the organisational structure; operating without the mandatory Governing Board for a quite a long time; and lack of adequate pay package. It is necessary to examine some of these critical issues in order to put things in their proper perspectives.

### The Theatre Management:

The National Theatre organisation is in two parts: the artists and the administrative or management staff. These two bodies have never been the best of friends. This anomaly is vividly captured by Timothy-Asobele:

While the National Theatre management says that the beneficiaries of the theatre are the artists and promoters, the practitioners say the complex is not a profit-making organisation. The clash of interest between the management and the Nigerian artists which started in 1979 reached a crescendo in the month of August 1985 when some officials of the National Theatre were sent on compulsory leave. This acrimonious fight or personal animosity or witch-hunting is certainly not good for the National Theatre, because in the heat of the fight, the best talents of Nigerian artists boycotted the edifice (40).

The fight of supremacy continues till today; as a result, the Federal Government does not know what to do with the edifice any more. Lack of maintenance culture has been the bane of Nigerian government which has left most of the infrastructure all over the country dilapidated. This problem was highlighted by Femi Osofisan, as the General Manager of the National Theatre:

The first problem to be tackled is obviously the leaking root. After this will be the electricity supply and telephones ... the next target will be the water supply and the toilet ... finally, we will confront the complete refurbishment of the inside of the theatre ... many sinking places need to be sand-filled and the hostel must be rehabilitated (273).

The National Theatre was so abandoned and neglected by subsequent governments that criminals, trespassers, petty traders, cattle, reptiles, cobwebs and even grass had invaded the edifice.

### Clash of Interests:

This has had debilitating effect on the National Theatre with regards to effective job performance. While the Theatre and the Troupe are supposed to operate as children of the same parents, the reverse has been the case. The National Theatre management looks at the National Troupe management and staff as tenants that could be ejected from the complex at will. Little wonder then that Olusegun Ojewuyi advocates for the Theatre to be under the management of the Artistic Director of the Troupe, while the General Manager of the Theatre acts as who he is in the organisational structure of a theatre – the theatre manager.

### **Poor Maintenance Culture:**

The National Theatre was the cynosure of all eyes when it was first put into use. At night, the bright lights from the edifice and the surrounding expanse of land were a beauty to behold. Families visited the Theatre during weekends and public holidays either to relax in the vicinity or watch play performances, musical concerts or film shows. But all of these are now like folktales because everything has broken down. The level of decay is unprecedented: no running water; very smelly decrepit toilets; old, worn-out, stinking rugs; no power supply; no dependable standby generators; poorly maintained lawns; pot-holed and water-logged access roads; reptiles infested surroundings; as well as rabid stench from the nearly Lily pond, and much more.

### **Problem of Corruption:**

The problem of corruption is not new in Nigeria; it is a malady that has hacked into the Nigerian polity. As a point of fact, the National Theatre has had a fair share of this unsavoury experience; it has affected the planning of programmes and activities. In the early 1980s, when the Theatre was still very active, it used various platforms to draw audience to the complex. The Open Theatre programme, for instance, was conceptualised to give amateur theatre groups opportunities to perform in the Cinema Hall II; while Cinema Hall I was used for screening of Nigerian movies, especially Yoruba movies. The implication was that there were activities every weekend and public holidays in the two halls, in addition to other social and business events. Unfortunately, these events were seen by many as avenues to make money for their personal use, not for the organisation.

## Inappropriate Appointments:

The next militating factor is the issue of putting a square peg in a round hole. This problem is prevalent in Nigeria, perhaps, as a result of tribalism, nepotism and all forms of corrupt practices. In most cases, incompetent hands are employed allegedly based on the quota system. This issue is adequately explained by Muyiwa Awodiya below:

It is observed that the National Theatre with a comprehensive organisation chart ought to have a sound organisational structure. But this is not so because the theatre has a weak organisational structure as a result of inappropriate staff recruitment policy and a bloated workforce.... A major reason why conflict develops in the National theatre organisation is that staff do not understand their assignments and those of co-workers (170).

# Governing Board:

The National Theatre operates without the mandatory Governing Board for quite a long time. Unfortunately, the enabling Law provides for one Governing Board superintending over the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria. This throws up a situation where there the Board members, who are predominantly politicians, are unable to differentiate the peculiar modus operandi of the two Parastatals. This deficiency in the organisational structures of both establishments has brought about poor job performances.

# The Bureaucratic System:

The introduction of civil service bureaucracy has had a telling effect on the National Theatre also. Bureaucracy is a system with rigid and arbitrary routines. The administration of the National Theatre is bedevilled and with the exception of EFSTAC '77, nothing tangible has ever taken place due to administrative bottlenecks. With so much offices created and officers appointed for the National Theatre Administration, before a document passes form one desk to the other, the request would have fizzled away; the timeline for such programme would have expired. There is no doubt that if adequately utilised, National Theatre will be self-sustaining in the area of revenue generation. But having been faced with all forms of bureaucratic encumbrances, no department has made any meaningful effort to be entrepreneurial for self-sustenance.

### Salary Structure:

The salary structure of workers in the National Theatre is very poor. This is probably because they are lumped under the civil service structure. Consequently, there is no serious commitment on the part of workers, who are supposed to work late hours and even during weekends and public holidays.

# Prospects of the National Theatre as a Tourism Destination

The Federal Government had spelt out the mission of the National Theatre as highlighted below:

- a. To be customer-oriented.
- b. To recognise the social and cultural needs of the society.
- c. To foster unity and understanding in its heterogeneous community.
- d. To meet the demands of patron and members of the public.
- e. To be a tourist attraction.
- f. To enhance the good image of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

# The Palliative Measures

In all sphere of lives, once we are able to identify problems that are militating against a particular organisation, the solution is in view. In order to develop the National Theatre, as tourism destination, the following palliative measures could be adopted by the federal government.

- 1. The appointments of all the present workers in the National Theatre should be reviewed and workers whose qualifications tally with the nature of the jobs in the Theatre should be retained, and those that do not have any business there should be redeployed.
- 2. The National Theatre and its Management should be divested from the civil service structure in order to avoid mismanagement, redundancy and bureaucracy associated with the civil service structure.
- 3. A new Management Team should be engaged. The appointment of the new Management Team should be devoid of nepotism and politics; party men and "political settlement" syndrome should not be the case. The new Management Team must be selected from relevant professional bodies and institutions.
- 4. The National Theatre should be commercialised in every ramification. Halls should be leased out for performances, such as, dance, music, concerts, film screening, symposia, seminars and conferences; and not political meetings.
- 5. The environment should be made attractive to boost tourism activities. The lodging rooms, feeding outlets, and all other attractions should be made more attractive and efficient.
- 6. There must be constant arts exhibitions, theatrical performances and all other forms of attractions, including cultural activities. Film festivals should be held from time to time in order to keep the theatre busy all the time.

#### Conclusion

The objectives deduced by the Federal Government for the establishment of the National Theatre were apt. One of the reasons for its establishment was to promote the African culture to the world through the instrumentality of the arts. Promoting the African culture through the arts means making the National Theatre a tourism attraction and destination. It is certain that the problems of the National Theatre, notwithstanding its prospects as tourism attraction and destination, are enormous.

The re-birth of the National Theatre will bring another lease of financial prosperity to Nigeria as the world has turned its focus on tourism. And, tourism if well developed and managed may be replaced the dwindling crude oil revenue for the economic growth and prosperity of Nigeria. In order to raise the National Theatre from its decaying condition to a state of tourism attraction and destination palliative measures have been put in place, including the appointment of arts professionals to manage the Theatre, removing the National Theatre from the grip of civil service bureaucracy, the re-examination of the organisational structure of the National Theatre. By so doing, the redundancy attached to every office will be de-emphasised. The National Theatre and its environs must be made attractive with all the paraphernalia that make tourism destination attractive.

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