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**TRENDS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THEATRE: AN  
AFRO-SEMIO-AESTHETIC INTERPRETATION OF IDEGU'S  
*TOUGH MAN AND ODODO'S HARD CHOICE***

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**Abstract**

Since the emergence of theory in the literary circle, right from the time of Aristotle till date, there has been changing phases of theory. That is theories wearing a new garb. There has been nothing really new since the ancient time rather, we have witnessed a new dressing of theories. These trends gave birth to a mother movement or theory like Afro-postmodernism. This emerges because most literary scholars till recent times believe there is dearth of African theories that can help in the interpretation of African plays. This is because Western theories may have not really helped in the interpretation of African plays. Afro-postmodernism has created the avenue of trending theories like Sam Ukala's *Folkism* and Canice Nwosu's *Ichoka Mythic-Folkism* and many others in Nigeria. Therefore, it is against this backdrop that the current study looks at Afro-Semio-Aesthetics as viable approach in the interpretation of Nigerian plays. The study adopts the content analysis of qualitative research methodology by experimenting Afro-Semio-Aesthetics in the interpretation of Emmy Idegu's *Tough Man* and Sunnie Ododo's *Hard Choice*. The findings reveal that there is dearth of African/Nigerian theories that can be used in the interpretation of African plays. The study concludes that there are lot of Afro-semio-aesthetic elements embedded in Nigerian plays that require indigenous creative/literary theories of interpretation for meaning making. The paper recommends that efforts should be geared towards the evolvement of more African theories of interpretation for interpreting African play texts.

**Keywords:** Trends, theory, practice, theatre, Afro-semio-aesthetics, interpretation

## **Introduction**

Right from the time of Aristotle to modern era there have been different forms of conventions in the theatre practice. Aristotle the Greek philosopher has postulated what drama should look like and what should be put together for a work to be referred to as drama. This trend has influenced Nigerian dramatists, right from Soyinka, Rotimi, Clark, and others; and this has equally transcended the aforementioned dramatists till the current playwrights (Mohammed-Kabir & Onuche 1).

The above is an insightful epigram for the current study. This is overwhelming because it serves as a key into the discourse. They may not have been anything new in terms of theorisations, rather wearing the existing theory(ies) a new garment and making it looks like it is new. In the same vein, Ameh Akoh submits that,

every theory thus merely exhumes past theories and wears them new baptismal garbs, and from structuralism and semiology to feminism to reader-response, each theory always attempts to offer its own mode of salvation to the reading of the text, or when it cannot it ends up celebrating its impossibility. And by extension from the reading to the writing and production of a text (1).

Ameh Akoh argues further that, "...theory had always existed since Plato-Aristotle, or even earlier in its orality, in no other period in history has it so vigorously been a subject of academic discourse than the last three decades of the twentieth century up to date" (1). That is to say, besides Aristotle's conventions in the practice of theatre and drama, theatre practice since the advent of Hegel, Marx and Engels has taken a definite ideological repositioning in the struggle of theories and theorisations. Example can be drawn from this:

As against Aristotle's position on giving strong vent to capitalism, Marxist aesthetics and analysis of the society has been employed both in the conventional and popular realm to release the people from the claws of capitalism, and even conscientise them to revolt against decadent social order that oppresses them (Mohammed-Kabir & Onuche 1).

The trending thing since the inception of theory and practice of theatre – ranging from traditional theatre to the modern theatre, theories have assumed different position in the practice of the arts. Some of these theories stem from romanticism down to modernism, postmodernism and post postmodernism, and many others. This is corroborated by Mohammed-Kabir and Onuche thus:

Out of the many ideologies that have influenced playwrights around the globe are classicism and romanticism. This no doubt has not help in the emancipation of man. Therefore, other ‘isms’ like realism and naturalism began to ensue with the quest to solve the numerous problems facing human existence (1).

These theories not only influenced playwriting and the interpretation of such plays, but also influenced acting, directing and the performance of these plays on set for audience consumption. These theorisations as trending thing in theory and practice of the theatre, equally affected the management of the performance space like the theatre complex, found space. Hence, from Aristotle to Hegel, what we have witnessed in these periods is a shift from one form of capitalist ideology that supports the high class until Hegel who slightly digressed and made a scholastic U-turn and expanded by Marx and Engels, as captured by Saint Gbilekaa thus:

The appreciation and celebration of literature in the world today comes under two critical schools: the formalist and the radical. The formalist school is guided essentially by literary canons of Aristotle and Hegel while the radical are guide by the precepts of Marx and Engels. It is important to note that this aesthetic schism is clearly based on ideological persuasion (28).

Niyi Osundare’s submission that theory in the process of transformation provides a “neat, handy background aid to methodological and analytical procedures” (19), corroborates the foregoing; that is, of reading, writing and producing a text. In the same manner, it goes to “govern interpretation of text by appealing to an account of interpretation in general” (Knapps & Michaels 723). By extension, it aids the analytical discourse, criticism and rational diagnosis of the text, in the perception of Jackson, a “revolutionary fantasy” (1). It is against this backdrop that this study set the foreground to look at the influence of Afro-semio-aesthetics as one of such trending approaches to text interpretation as an act in theory and practice of the theatre.

Semiotics is concerned with the study of signs and symbols of all kinds, what they represent or mean and how they relate to the things or the ideas they refer

to; sign, signifier and signified. Semiotics, also known as, semiology, the science of signs, according to Charles S. Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, is concerned with the relationship between form and meaning, with particular emphasis on language. Peirce further defines sign as, “something which stands to somebody for something” (67). On the other hand, Mark Fortier defines semiotics or semiology as, “the study of signs: words, images, behaviour, human and animal arrangements of many kinds, in which a meaning is relayed by corresponding outward manifestation. The falling leaves in autumn, for instance, are sign of the coming of winter” (18); that is, they can be used interchangeably. On this premise Gowon Ama Doki argues that, semiotics is, therefore, “concerned with the process of signification and communication, that is, the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged” (31).

Aesthetics is generally believed to mean ‘sensual perception’ and is concerned with ‘feelings.’ Sensual perception as we know is connected to the/with the ability to acquire an insight in something, an object, symbol, sign, language, character, spectacle, costume etcetera. However, that ability is not dependent mainly on the physical manifestation of the eye-sight, but on the reflection that is transmitted into the eyes and the sense of sight. This implies to this research that perceptions are reflected into the inner eyes; they belong to the sense or the mind, and are capable of generating some feelings and meanings. It is closely related to the philosophy of art, which is concerned with the nature of art and the concepts in terms of which individual works of art are interpreted and evaluated.

### **African Aesthetics and Semiotics Explained**

African scholars and critics like Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark, Okot p’Bitek, Rowland Abiodun, Kofi Agawu, Zulu Sofola, Obiakor, Sam Ukala, Sunnie Ododo and Canice Nwosu, among others, have captured the term, African aesthetics, directly or indirectly in their quest to propagate Afro-postmodernist discourse. It is argued that, the term, *African Aesthetics*, refers to “the African perception and appreciation of the nature, beauty, and value of artistic expressions or representations” (Shava 11). This is the sensual perceptions of Africans about their works, nature and culture (Afro-semio-aesthetics). By extension, it is the perception and appreciation of nature, art and beauty of artefacts by Africans and for Africans at home and in the Diaspora. It is embedded in the plurality of African cultures, and embodied in people’s art and practices within their lived African societal contexts. It draws from and is directly related to the diverse geographical, environmental, historical, cultural, religious, or spiritual experiences of African peoples, which is the position of African semio-aesthetics. African semio-aesthetics is a significant component of African people’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage that simultaneously affirms their diversity and reinforces their cultural



unity and togetherness. These cultural components of the African people are reflected in the plays of Emmy Idegü and Sunnie Ododo, respectively.

While it may have been useful to utilise only Western theoretical paradigms in the study of African art history and aesthetics early in the twentieth century, it has now become imperative to search carefully within the African cultures in which the art originate, and to use internally derived conceptual frameworks in any critical discourse on African art (17). The essence of the African semiotic and aesthetic concept is its representation as a construct of African people on the continent and people of African descent in the Diaspora that articulates African culture. Hence, “Africanist art historians have begun not only to re-examine their Western-derived methodologies but also to search for theoretical alternatives, lest they lose the ‘African’ in the African Art” (Abiodun 20). To this study, African semio-aesthetic perception may be seen as how Africans consciously define their own concept of beauty that is, the African-derived standards of perceiving, appreciating, appraising, or applying Afro-semio-aesthetic values or knowledge of things in Africa.

African semio-aesthetics is African-centred; and it reveals the cultural bond between Africans in the continent and abroad. Corroborating this, Susan Vogel posits that, “African artists place a high value on fine workmanship and mastery of the medium” (43); which may need proper understanding by the West to avert misjudgement of the African/Nigerian conceptions of their cultural practices. Therefore, African semio-aesthetics embraces a rich variety of creative forms and styles peculiar to people of African origin that incorporate a combination of practical, physical, material, temporal, and spiritual aspects. To this end, Maurice Adams posits that, “while the African continent is vast and its peoples diverse, certain standards of beauty and correctness in artistic expression and physical appearance are held in common among various African societies” (45). It includes African artistic expressions: visual and performative images, signs, symbols, verbal arts (poetry, oratory performance), rhythm, music (song and dance), dress, hairstyles, cosmetics, designs (African architecture and decorative patterns), and crafts in and from Africa. African semio-aesthetics, therefore, can be seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values in both discursive and non-discursive perceptions.

Beyond the rituality of African art history, Afro-semio-aesthetics goes a long way to portray other values like communication, social interaction, meaning making values that are critically perceived and conceived by Africans in Africa and Africans in the Diaspora. Thus, “taken collectively, these values and standards have been characterised as comprising a generally accepted African aesthetic” (Welsh-Asante 60). African artefacts have generally been exhibited with reference only to

cultural context and use. In view of recent studies of African aesthetic principles and related moral and religious values, there is good reason to emphasise the formal African semio-aesthetic aspects of the objects and the moral and religious ideas they express.

The ethical and religious basis of African art may explain why the principal subject is the human figure; African art often appears in ritual contexts that deal with the vital moral and spiritual concerns of the human condition. To corroborate this, Rowland Abiodun submits thus:

No single traditional discipline can adequately supply answers to the many unresolved questions in African art history. Because of the aesthetic, cultural, historical, and, not infrequently, political biases, already built into the conception and development of Western art history (18).

Hence, Afro-semio-aesthetics is an ideal enterprise in the arts which is used to evaluate, judge and interpret artistic consumptions in Africa. This is to say aesthetics is not alien to Africa as well as other climes like Europe, America and Asia. Aesthetics was also explored in the Greek and Roman arts as found in their art forms, be they sculpture, artefacts, literature and performing arts, among others. African aesthetics has been dominated and influenced by the West who misjudges African semio-aesthetics. Harris Barry also argues in favour of African aesthetics in the arts, maintaining that, “African cultural aesthetics has been dominated and characterised by Euro-western tradition and culture because of the influx of colonialism” (61). Brian Hansen comments further that,

the study and analysis of African art and aesthetics have been dominated by Western culture. Initially the aesthetic sensitivities of African cultures were characterised as ‘primitive’ and of low intellectual calibre. Africans reacted to such negative stereotyping by articulating their own, deliberately by non-western aesthetic theories (61).

Therefore, African critics and writers have done a sort of re-writing or re-examination to the practice of Euro-Western misconception of African cultural aesthetics in many instances, such as, in drama, poetry, music, novel, and film, among other means. Supporting this, Adedeji Sesan argues that:

At the turn of twentieth century, African philosophers, anthropologists and literary historians began with frantic efforts to

examine and revamp African art and aesthetics from the moribund state it was forced to be by the western critics. Their argument was that the aesthetic quality of any art cannot be appreciated without due consideration for the culture that produces it. Before full aesthetics of African art can be appreciated, there should be close consideration of African culture (10).

Consequently, we are not only concerned in the cultural signs and symbols explored in the plays selected to be studied and analysed as African cultural symbols of Afro-semio-aesthetics which eventually produce the desired taste, beauty, and communication, rather we are also concerned about the different meanings they (cultural symbols) project 'non-discursive' wise. Therefore, we are looking at cultural signs and symbols in Idegu's *Tough Man* and Ododo's *Hard Choice*, as African cultural semio-aesthetic signs, symbol, and codes for communicative hegemony.

Afro-semio-aesthetics, as coined by these researchers, is a conceptual amalgamation of both semiotics and aesthetics designed to bring some strands of semiotics that are relevant in the interrogation of aesthetics in the selected plays from the African/Nigerian perception. It implies that if both concepts deal with sensual perception, as posited by the researchers, it means that, African-semio-aesthetics in Afro-postmodernist era simply means the ways Africans perceive their signs and signification which amount to African semiotics and the sensual perception of their work of art and culture which is African aesthetics.

The concept of Afro-semio-aesthetic dwells on the premise that every clime has its culture, so does Africa. African-semio-aesthetics leans on idea and correctional impetus against the Euro-centric domination of the African semiotics and aesthetics. This correctional impetus is that Africa has semiotics and aesthetics. It deals with the philosophical sensual perception of the African and his cultural heritage. The African's perception of his culture lies with how he perceives his culture and tradition, arts and artefacts, mythologies, legends, symbols and signs which are relatively African. Thus, Africa has the aesthetic and semiotic sensibilities that are different from the Euro-American aesthetic and semiotic sensibilities. In other words, African semio-aesthetics is the manner the African evaluates, assesses and judges his arts and culture.

Drawing from the above, it could be surmised that African semio-aesthetics is geared towards evolving a concept or theory that can be used in the reading and interpretation of African play texts with a view of revealing those Afro-semio-aesthetic ingredients fused in those play texts by the playwrights, which can assist in the generation of meanings and communicating effectively. In other words, emphasises that Africans have aesthetics and semiotics which deal with the way

Africans perceive their cultures and arts; this perception influences the reading and interpretation of African play texts. This is the position of this study.

### **Synopsis of Idegu's *Tough Man***

A mad rush, then a heavy bang suggests that a big massive auto crash has taken place and plucked down Steve Achema in his prime in Efile, the land of the living, from where he transcends to Efojegwu, the land of the dead to meet other beloved patriots and descendants of Igala land. In Efojegwu, Achema is accosted by Inikpi and Ameh, who lift him up to his feet and offer a seat among them. These three beloved descendants of Igala engage themselves in a discourse on the purposeful leadership and good followership in Igala land. As the drama unfolds, Inikpi, Ameh and Achema agree to take a look and watch the activities of characters in Efile, the land of the living. From the echoes of reality in Efile, the land of the living, Inikpi, Ameh, and Achema are flabbergasted and bewildered as demonstrated by the sighs, shaking of heads, heads resting on palms and similar postures. Inikpi, Ameh and Achema agree that the future of Igalaland and the people is blurred. Achema provides reasons for the ugly state of affairs in Efile, the land of the living. They nod their heads in agreement that all hope is not lost. As they continue to gaze down unto the land of the living, they see a boy on whom, they believe, lies the future hope of Igala land.

### **Synopsis of Ododo's *Hard Choice***

The play, *Hard Choice*, opens on a joyous atmosphere where the prince of Igedu Kingdom and the princess of Emepiri Kingdom are about to get married. But there is pandemonium as some unidentified and masked youths invade the venue and snatch the crown of the king of Igedu kingdom. This ugly scenario marks the beginning of the tragic events in the play. The quest to find the missing crown begins. The High Chief Ubanga is behind this ugly incident because of his selfish desire to marry the princess of Emepiri Kingdom. After the snatching the crown, it is handed over to the queen, who is unknown to King of Emepiri, the chief plotter of the incident. As the play progresses, King Iginla, who is in hiding and his Bashorun, begin to plan for war, if the missing crown is not found. The snatching of the crown is a disgrace to their kingdom; that act is on its own a taboo, because one of the symbols of authority of Igedu kingdom is missing. They threaten to go to war which makes Eze Okiakoh to seek for peace. Consequently, he goes to meet King Iginla in his hideout. It is eventually revealed that the missing crown in question is in Oguguru shrine; and the only thing that can bring it out of that shrine is red wine, which is human blood, and that is the blood of the Princess. But it comes to the fore that it is the Queen who vows to sacrifice the Princess for her husband to become the king about twenty-one years ago, an event that led to the

death of Eze Okiakoh's brother. On hearing this, the Princess makes a hard choice by willingly presenting herself for the sacrifice, as that is the only thing that will avert the impending war in Emepiri kingdom.

### **Afro-Semio-Aesthetic Interpretation of *Tough Man* and *Hard Choice***

Emmy Idegu's *Tough Man* brings together the world of the living and world of the dead. Through sensual perception of aesthetic and semiotic elements, Idegu attempts to bridge the gap between the world of the living and that of the dead. This is explicit from the conversation between Achema, Ame and Inikpi:

**Inikpi:** (*Deep silence.*) Oh, what a shame. Is this the same land I died for? (*Silence.*)

**Ame:** Their intrigue, blackmail and sabotage that brought me here before my time has not ceased.

**Inikpi:** Will their intrigues ever end?

**Achema:** How? They are terrible students of history. They refused to abide by the selfless sacrifice that Inikpi stood for. They rejected the focus and development dream of Ogbaikolo Ame.

**Ame:** (*Looking at Achema.*) And they terminated the vision, mission and pragmatic people-oriented leadership you stood for (*Tough Man* 64).

Idegu looked into the cosmic world of the Igala culture, artistically, to create smooth and peaceful co-existence between the world of the living and that of the dead, substantiating the position of Soyinka in *Myth, Literature and the African World View*. Wole Soyinka, in postulating his theory of the "Fourth Stage," locates the link between the world of the living, the dead and the unborn and opined that there should be link between these three worlds for a better tomorrow. This world is what Soyinka refers to as chthonic realm, mythonic helm or divinity essence. Idegu may have leaned on this to create communication between the Igala cosmic worlds of the living (Efi'ile), the land of the dead (Efoj'egwu), and the highest realm (the realm of Odoaba Oga'gwu-Ojo Chamachala). Ancestral help is explicated thus:

**Inikpi:** (*Sighing.*) Humnnnn. So what do we do? How do we help our people? Things cannot continue like this. (*To Ame*) What do you think?

**Ame:** There you come again. You sacrificed yourself for Igala people. Your death was never appreciated... (*Tough Man* 22).

The above may be understood through what Paul Ricoeur refers to as, “the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter’s) understanding and meaning gained from the text” (1627). Locating the synergy between Soyinka’s perception of the cosmological order of the African world and that of Idegu is an effort to deconstruct the plays selected for this study through language, character and Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses. This last realm alone may create difficulty for the reader if he is not well grounded in the art of interpretation through binary oppositions and sensual perception of semiotic and aesthetic analyses. Through the playwright’s use of the character of Achema, we are able to deduce what Idegu means by the last realm. These are all encoded in the play for the reader to create meaning out of what he has read. It is clearly stated in the line of Achema thus:

**Achema:** Ogbai Kolo. You know we have three worlds. I lived in the first, I tarried in the second with you. It is time to go and take a look at the third realm with Ojo chamachala. I cannot keep him waiting any longer. Odobaoga’gwu has waited for me enough (*Tough Man* 70).

Adopting Ricoeur’s explanation that,

the interpreter explores about this question ‘What is this book about?’ And examines the texts inside nature thereby developing the quest to take an adventure into knowing what the play is all about on the part of the reader of a play (1624).

This could be interpreted as whether Odoba is sitting there and waiting for the character of Achema or that is the third world. This can only be done and understood through the tenets of Afro-semio-aesthetics. The reader/interpreter may equally find ideological disparity between Idegu’s interpretation of the three worlds and Soyinka’s perception of the three worlds. Emmy Idegu crafted his play, *Tough Man* by bringing together the world of the living and the dead. African semio-aesthetics therefore is seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values. Idegu artistically, looked into the cosmic world of the Igala culture to create smooth and peaceful co-existence between the world of the living and the dead.

The exchange between the trio in Idegu's *Tough Man* will implicitly help in the interpretation of the play text through Afro-semio-aesthetic values. The trio enumerated their sordid experience and ordeal in the world of the living.

**Achema:** They pursued me from birth.

**Ame:** Oh yes, I remember. Yes, from birth they sharpened their swords against you. Odoaba used me to defend you.

**Achema:** That is true. Your concern before you left us helped me to a point.

**Inikpi:** (*Smiling.*) What a joy to hear that. It is good you both are here now.

**Ame:** (*To Inikpi.*) But you started it all. You gave your all for those of us coming after you to emulate.

**Achema:** That is correct. But they always have a way of pushing their best into early exit from *ef'ile* (*Tough Man* 21).

The connection between the living and the dead is established by Inikpi as she tries to champion the way forward on how to ameliorate the problem of the people. What is most important is that, the relationship between the living and the dead should be well understood by the reader/interpreter through Afro-semio-aesthetic elements for proper understanding.

In Ododo's *Hard Choice*, a clash of interest exists between Chief Ubanga and the Queen. There is an indication that the Queen is only using Chief Ubanga to deter the princess from marrying a prince from Iginla kingdom (tribe) and Chief Ubanga carries out the action due to his interest in marrying the princess. In order for the Queen to achieve her devilish aim, she resorts to the use of hooligans or touts through Chief Ubanga, who invade the venue of the marriage and snatched away the crown of King Iginla. The crown here caught the attention of the researchers; the symbol of authority to King Iginla and Igedu Kingdom. After the crown was snatched away, what becomes of the character of King Iginla? This is because the crown is an embodiment of meanings. The sensual perception of Africans about the crown which culminates African semiotics and aesthetics is apparent to Africans/Nigerians. This is evident from Bashorun's line thus:

**Bashorun:** Good to know, but Your Highness, your search is rather too slow for us. In case you don't know, the life of our king hangs on that crown. If in three days, it not recovered and surrendered, we shall be left with no other choice but to match on your kingdom and recover the crown ourselves. I believe you know what that means. In one word ...

WAR! (*Turns and leaves with his men. The others remain speechless as the message sinks*) (*Hard Choice* 23).

The crown that propelled Bashorun to threaten Eze Okiakoh and the entire Emepiri kingdom with war demands interpretation through Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses of the play. The crown holds sensual perceptions of Afro-semio-aesthetics. The three elements (explanation, understanding and appropriation) of Ricoeur's theory of interpretation become necessary to the study of these play texts. A reader/an interpreter needs to know what these plays are all about. He needs to know what the plays talk about and he appropriates the plays to existing phenomena in the world. The priest in Africa means a lot, hence they all resorted to consulting him and Eze Okiakoh in *Hard Choice* asks:

**Eze Okiakoh:** Debia, what is the message?

**Debia:** The sun and the moon are on a course of collision and the stars are trembling. Why? A vow is abrogated but appeased. The object of appeasement is sacrosanct and restless. Your Highness, only the original vow will avert the calamity, but it is too dear to let go. My king, when a medicinal pot of soup sits on fire boiling, only the brave and courageous attempt a leak from it. My lord, fire is burning inside water and water is helpless. Otapaipoh says that only red wine will quench this fire if...

**Chief Ubanga:** (*Cuts in.*) Enough of these incomprehensible statements.

**Debia:** It's not me, it is Otapaipoh. Otapaipoh says that what belongs to the gods is being forcefully substituted; deceit and connivance are conveyor belts in this act. Your Highness, your clue to solving this impending calamity is to offer royal red wine to the gods. I speak no more ... (*Packing his things to depart, other chiefs intercepted him.*)

**Chief Bembe:** Debia, the gods have spoken through you in their own language. To leave without speaking to us in the idioms we understand is to leave us more confused and far withdrawn from the answers we seek (*Hard... 27-8*).

Bringing the Debia in and consulting the gods is Africa's, which can only be deduced through African semiotics and aesthetics. The language of the gods, as an element of Afro-semio-aesthetics, is equally African and it is only the Debia that



can interpret it. That is why through the priest, it was discovered that the crown is in the shrine of Oguguru. Of all the places, why the queen decided to drop the crown at Oguguru shrine? This is in line with the Afro-semio-aesthetic concept. It was discovered as the play progresses that Oguguru shrine requested for royal red wine, which is purely African. This royal red wine, which was latter translated to be royal blood, may be achieved through African semio-aesthetic elements. The Princess of Emepiri's necklace that she handed over to the Prince of Igedu kingdom is symbolic and the jubilation by the two kingdoms in unity is a signifier; these are all elements of African semio-aesthetics, which must be well interpreted for communicative enterprises. This is explicit from the following dialogue thus:

**Princess:** (*She removes the coral beads on her neck.*) Oki my love, with these coral beads, I decorate you to reaffirm the vision we both share...

**Debia:** Yes, she's right. It is one aspect of our customs that has remained a guided secret because of fear of abuse. Apart from marital ties, any male that an only-child-princess gives her royal coral beads, automatically becomes the crown prince of Emepiri Kingdom... (*Hard... 50-51*).

African semio-aesthetics constitutes the factors both tangible and intangible in form and ideas to represent African world-view. In recent times, African semio-aesthetics is at the core of Nigerian plays directly or indirectly. Nigerian playwrights have explored African semio-aesthetic approaches to present and explore African sensual perceptions through cultural symbols and signs that are peculiar to Nigerians/Africans in the writing of their plays.

## **Conclusion**

Revealing from the discourse above, obviously, Afro-semio-aesthetics deals with the ethnographies of the African people as most of the African plays are re-written of African culture, tradition and arts. Thus, they are reflected in the plays selected for this study conspicuously. Hence, the ethnographies of the African people should be well understood for the reading and interpretations of African plays to enable free flow of meaning generally and effective communication in the text. The ethnographies include – the language, food, clothes, ceremonies, medicines, burials and so many others.

Consequently, before a reader condemns the construct of the play from character, language, idea, conflict or any other thing in an African play, he must

understand why the playwright constructed the play in that order. He needs to understand what the culture of the people permits and what it does not permit. Thus, the reader/interpreter will be well guided through all the aforementioned elements of African semio-aesthetics. The study established that there are lot of cultural elements embedded in Nigerian plays that require indigenous creative/literary theories like Folkism, Ichoka-Mythic-Folkism and more recently, Afro-semio-aesthetics, for proper interpretation.

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# **RELEVANCE OF THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY AND THE MEDIA TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

The creative industry, which is an informal sector, stands a great chance of developing Nigeria socially and economically due to its potentials. The film and music sectors alone, just aspects of creative industry, raked in a whopping sum of \$104 Million into the country's economy in 2019. However, this industry has been given less critical attention. This paper, hinged on Status Conferral theory, examines the contributions the creative industry offers society, and enumerates the need to invest more in it. It also highlights the collaborative roles of the media in promoting the creative industry to bring about the needed socio-economic development of Nigeria. The paper adopts qualitative research method which relied on non-quantitative or non-statistical modes of data collection and analysis. Thus, the primary sources of the research are the primary texts, relevant books, journals, articles, library materials, newspapers, and the Internet. It argues that the creative industry in Nigeria has the potential to unleash its benefits on the society. Consequently, it concludes that the creative industry remains significant in the scheme of things in Nigeria. The recommendations are that government should invest more in the industry to encourage various artists who are helping to grow the economy without tasking the government to provide jobs for them. Also, that government should enact enabling laws that will guarantee artists the leverage to operate smoothly.

**Keywords:** Artists, creative, development, entertainment, film, industry, media

## **Introduction**

The creative art is a big receptacle that houses varied fields, including film, music, dance and choreography, drama, comedy, design and installation arts, painting, theatre arts, illustrations, spoken words, acting, carnival arts and performance, and sculpture, among others. These form the creative industry, sometimes referred to as the entertainment industry. They can be rightly referred

to as the heartbeats of society because every aspect of life revolves around them; without them, society is dull and as good as dead. They spice up life, and give meaning to living. They have consistently contributed to the development of the society in many ways. In an interview with Tosin Omoniyi and Halimah Yahaya, the Chief Executive Officer of the National Unity Museum and Trade Tourism Village, Panda, Nasarawa, Akin Olowokere, avowed that the entertainment industry can be compared to the oil and gas industry as it is even more lasting. He stated that even at the war front, there is still the Army Band, Navy Band, Air Force Band, or the Police Band, and that entertainment still goes on in all facets of human endeavours.

The creative industries also play important roles in shaping the pattern of economic activities. Temidayo Badmus reports the Managing Director of the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC), Dr. Chidia Maduekwe, to have said that:

in the United State of America, USA the creative industry generated a staggering \$698 billion dollars equivalent to 6.5% of all goods and services generated in that country. In India Bollywood, it accounts for over 7% GDP and is next to ICT in terms of importance and job creation to the economy (3).

Nigeria`s Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed, avers that there are many countries in the world that have made it from the creative industry, “for instance in California, the GDP is largely dependent on the creative industry, which is like the fifth in the world” (NAN 2). Mohammed describes the Nigerian creative industry as the “new oil.” According to him, the feat that Nigeria is recording in its creative sector indicates that it harbours a breakthrough for the nation. *Premium Times* cites the minister as noting that Nigeria could not afford to take the creative industry with levity, as it had become the cash cow for many other nations (“Creative Industry is Nigeria`s...”). The Minister said the creative industry “contributed £84.1billion to the British economy in 2014. It also contributed \$698billion to the US economy, according to a 2015 report. So, Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind; hence, we are ready to explore and exploit the new oil” (Afolayan 2).

The Director-General of National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), Adedayo Thomas, agrees that Nigeria`s creative industry has big potentials to create jobs and earning foreign exchange if the necessary facilities are put in place. According to him, “the industry has this export potential because it has contents that are appreciated all over the world” (*Sun News Online* 1). The Nigerian creative industry is not doing badly at all. According to *Vanguard*, Nigeria`s blockbuster movie, *The Wedding Party 2: Destination Dubai*, made

over ₦73million on its opening weekend in 2017, going down as the highest Nigerian box office grossing in an opening weekend ever for both Nollywood and international films (*Vanguard* “*The Wedding Party...*”). After just eighteen days of screening in cinemas, the *TWP 2* was reported to have film raked in ₦312million (*Vanguard*, “*Wedding Party 2 Hits ₦312m*”). It was in the bid to boost the creative industry in Nigeria that Plume and Partners Limited signed a production deal valued at ₦1billion with Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA). Friday Olorok reports that it will involve more than 45 universities and 20 colleges of education in Nigeria offering courses in Theatre Arts. The project revolves around the production of movies and documentaries, tagged **Project Hostage**.

Diversification of Nigeria`s economy away from oil to areas like the creative industry is a way forward in not only revamping the country`s economy, but also in sustaining it. It is simple and achievable because it does not cost the government much investment apart from providing the enabling atmosphere for creative arts stakeholders to ply their trade and function. The neglect of an industry like the creative industry in Nigeria is one of the reasons Richard Samans observes that, “many countries have significant unexploited potential to simultaneously increase economic growth and social inclusion” (4). It is the recognition of the importance of the creative industry worldwide that is making Saudi Arabia to be planning to spend \$64billion over the next 10 years to develop the country`s entertainment industry. Speaking about Saudi Arabia`s creative industry, Rob Smith points out that it is diversifying its economy so as to reduce its reliance on oil which has been hit by falling oil prices.

Almost all aspects of the creative arts perform some, if not all the functions the conventional mass media do. Basically, these functions are the provision of information, education, entertainment and transmission of culture from one generation to the other. However, the entertainment function tends to be the most pronounced because of its ability to bring relief to man, especially helping to ease tensions of various forms. It is also the sector that mainly generates revenue. This paper is significant because, even after we have identified the remarkable strides the creative industry is making in Nigeria, and also come up with indigenous theories to back up the practice of creative arts in Nigeria, if the mass media are not engaged to publicise the outcomes, such efforts will only amount to futility. The media are capable of putting the creative industry on the global radar as exporters of world-class services and contents.

There is need to study the relevance of the creative industry and the media to the socio-economic development of Nigeria. Before now, PwC had predicted that Nigeria`s entertainment and media sector would be the fastest-growing in the world between 2017 and 2020 (*The Guardian* “*Entertainment Industry...*”).

Therefore, the core objective of this paper is to highlight the important roles the creative industry and the media play in the socio-economic development of Nigeria. Within the context of this study, “Artists” refers to all those involved in creating artistic products, to wit, dramatists, musicians, actors and actresses, dancers and choreographers, comedians, poets, and so on.

### **Theoretical Construct**

This study is hinged on the *status conferral theory* of the media. This theory was propounded by Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton in 1948. According to Ryan Smith, the status conferral function was created when Lazarsfeld and Merton were explaining the functions and the power that the mass media have in our society. They argued that the media have the ability to force so much information from anywhere, at any given time, about any topic, and that they can make this topic seem like the most pressing matter to date. Ryan Smith is of the opinion that it is the role mass media give to a person, group of people, or events that make them seem significant or important, whether justified or not.

The theory states that the media make the audience to see certain individuals, people, ethnic groups, political class, or professions in a particular way based on the nature of coverage given to them. According to Janes Lemert, “status conferral” is the notion that press coverage singles out and confers importance upon the person or group covered. Hence,

Status conferral, or recognition by the mass media, indicates that one is important enough to single out from the mass and that one’s behaviour and opinions are significant enough to demand media attention. By legitimating the status of individuals and groups, the media confer status and prestige (Severin & Tankard 327).

Further, since media attention draws attention to people, subject and issues, Ezekiel Asemah opines that the media perform the status conferral function, where they create prominence for issues and people, by giving them coverage. The attention brings about a degree of prominence, although it may sometimes be undue. It means the media can elevate an individual, event, or institution to a position or extent that the members of the public will begin to look at such an individual, event, or institution as very important.

Put sufficiently, status conferral by the media is when they give prestige, clout, and importance to certain persons or events through the instrumentality of priming and framing. It could be deliberate or an unintentional act. This could occur in the line of performing their core duties of informing, educating and entertaining the public, among other functions. This is in line with the position

of Barclays Ayakoroma, who avers that once the media take on an issue, and they are critical about it, “there is the likelihood of the mass audience looking at such issues from that perspective” (7). Elo Ibagere also supports the view that the media have power to attract attention to themselves, and they also “have the tremendous power to direct this attracted attention on a single event or phenomenon” (21).

No doubt, the creative industry has the potentials to enhance the socio-economic development of Nigeria. However, it seems its contributions, at present, are not taken into cognisance because people and the government tend not to be aware of them enough. The reason may be that the media have not been giving them priority reports, and setting agenda around their significance by conferring status on issues concerning the creative arts; hence, this theory is germane for this discourse. It is relevant because it is the duty of the media to confer status by reporting the importance of the creative industry to the society, and how it can be further used to for the socio-economic development of the country. This underpins the position of Chukwuma Anyanwu that the media call attention to those areas of need which are of particular relevance to economic growth. When the media confer status on the creative industry by focusing their reports on it, the country will draw economic benefits from the industry.

### **Concept of Development**

Development can be viewed as the arithmetic and geometric growth that takes place in the lives of people and a society in all ramifications, especially economically, socially and politically. According to John Eberlee, in contemporary times, the concept of development has moved away from the fetishism of growth and development, to the ability of a people to recover their resources and use same accordingly to solve their individual and collective problems, to bring about new frame of life, where each stage is an improvement of man’s wellbeing and welfare due to poverty of leadership and bad governance which has given rise to monumental corruption. Similarly, Everett Rogers says, “development is a widely participatory process of social change in a society intended to bring about social and material advancement for the majority of the people through their gaining control over their environment” (345). In other words, development implies a change in which the people are involved and the essence is a positive advancement in the lives of the people. The people are the drivers of this type of development which empowers them as they increasingly gain control over their environments.

Hitherto, ‘development’ was seen as only being limited to growth in the economy, rise in per capita income, and increase in gross domestic product (GDP). But for Michael Todaro, the objectives of development include the ability to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, health and protection, achievement of



self-esteem and human freedom. Todaro is of the opinion that society deserves human freedom in form of emancipation from alienating material conditions of life and freedom from the social servitude of man and ignorance of nature, misery, institutional and dogmatic beliefs. Hence, former Nigerian President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, maintains that the welfare and security of the people were, to a large extent, synonymous with national development and stability (*Naijaloaded*). Emphasising that growth and development are positive attributes, Obasanjo recalls that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) espoused the concept of *human development* as the ultimate goal of *national development* (Olubanjo Femiwa).

Deriving from the foregoing, Elo Ibagere observes that one can maintain that social development, therefore, is the change of the people constituting a social system toward patterns of that system that allow better realisation of human values which allow that system greater power and control over itself, its environment, and its political destiny. Ibagere concludes that social development has to do mostly with the behaviour of those who make up the social system (49). Recognising that film production is the engine that drives peace, unity and development, Ibrahim Agboola Gambari, a former Foreign Affairs Minister, and at present the Chief of Staff to President Muhammadu Buhari, calls on Nollywood to be at the forefront of using film to build values of love and tolerance among Nigerians (Araayo Akande).

Consequently, it is very important to examine the relevance of the creative industry and the media to the socio-economic development of Nigeria because there is a consensus that broad socio-economic progress is a much stronger priority in economic policy, just as gross domestic product (GDP) growth continues to be the primary way national economic performance is tracked statistically by governments and reported in the media (Richard Samans). From the above, it is glaring that the creative industry can aid the socio-economic development of any society.

### **Creative Industry and Development**

The rebasing of the Nigerian economy in 2014, which put it at \$510billion, showed that there are great potentials in the non-oil sector of the economy (Manuaka 18). According to Manuaka, the entertainment industry generated \$600 million and employed over a million people (18); although, Benjamin Njoku claims the industry has employed about 2.5million Nigerian youths. These facts are corroborated by Nigeria`s former Coordinating Minister for the Economy and the Honourable Minister of Finance, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, whom Wahab Gbadamosi and Sylvester Inegbedion quote as declaring that the rebasing showed that Nigeria had a much more diversifying economy than we thought

because the underlying strength of the economy was not so much in oil as in other areas.

From the rebasing, it can be seen that services rose from about 26% to 51%. It is noticed that some sectors of the economy that were not counted before then were significant. The movie industry that did not even feature as a contributor to the GDP before accounted for about 1.2% of the GDP. Okonjo-Iweala added: “What I am saying is that Nigeria’s economy is evolving like others all over the world in terms of services” (5). Barclays Ayakoroma also submits that in the next economic re-basement of the Nigerian economy, Nollywood has the capacity of increasing the nation’s GDP, and help reduce poverty and unemployment in Nigeria if the potentials and creativities are sold to the world using modern strategic marketing means (*The Guardian* “Dons canvass improved marketing...”).

The Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed, also avers that the creative industry is the fastest-growing sector of the economy with \$53million and \$51million (\$104m) accrued in 2019 from film and music, respectively. Kabir Afolayan quotes the Minister as saying:

We need to work harder so that we can actualise the potentials of this industry and make it, not just the fastest growing sector in Nigeria, but also increase our GDP from 1.24 percent.... This can actually grow to 3 percent of the GDP (2).

Kingsley Iweka also reports that the vibrancy of Nigeria’s music industry has also had a sizable economic impact. PwC’s Global Entertainment and Media Outlook (2017-2021) forecasts that revenue from the sector will hit US\$73m by 2021 (making it the biggest in the region).

The Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Zainab Ahmed, states that in 2016, the film industry sector contributed ₦239billion to Nigeria’s GDP; Nigeria’s music industry grew by 9 per cent in 2016 to reach a value of US\$39million, according to a *Vanguard Newspaper* report (“FG Approves ₦7bn...”). Furthermore, Nollywood (the movie industry in Nigeria) has been adjudged by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as the second largest film making corridor globally in terms of production quantity, after Bollywood (Ayakoroma, “Interrogating the Art of Storytelling... ” 1). The implication is that the industry has attracted global attention because our films are viewed all over Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and continental America. The films portray the goings-on in the society, and film producers re-enact them to make them pertinent to society. Benjamin Njoku and Silvia Lambiase add that as the second largest movie production industry in the

world, in terms of production quantity, after Bollywood, Nollywood contributes 5% to Nigeria's GDP. Also, it is worth over US\$5billion, and produces more films than Hollywood (*The Guardian* "Entertainment industry..." 2).

Artists are employers of labour by engaging helping hands locally and internationally when they take part in shows and performances within and outside Nigeria, like in film festivals in Africa, Europe, India and North America. The creative industry has created a lot of jobs for our youths by taking them off the streets. Popular movie director, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, during an interview with Seyi Sokoya, declared that Nollywood has employed over 10 million Nigerians, directly or indirectly. Silvia Lambiase, Country Editor at *The Business Year*, reiterates that it is also the second-largest employer in the country, proving its huge socio-economic impact (*The Guardian* "Entertainment industry..." 2). Aderibigbe Tolulope reports that stand-up comedy entertainment has become a source of livelihood to many Nigerians who in recent times have become superstars, celebrities and millionaires from the craft.

Artists are social influencers and crowd pullers when they perform anywhere around the world. When it is in Nigeria, at the end of the day, a large percentage of the crowd lodge in hotels; they buy drinks and clothes; and government generates money in form of taxes which ultimately develops the economy. Nigerian musicians like Wizkid, Davido, Timaya, Seun Kuti and many others have been able to dazzle the world with their genre of music. According to the *Washington Post*, the success of these artists is the reason why Afrobeat continues "to the surface in a number of recent hits, such as Justin Bieber's *What Do You Mean*, Rihanna's *Work* and Alicia Keys' *In Common*" (Bellanaija 1). Such collaborations with artists from other countries expose both parties to millions of new fans worldwide. Also, when such music sell, Nigeria's economy reaps the economic effects indirectly.

Again, the creative industry helps to launder the image of the country around the world, and this invariably attracts foreign direct investment (FDI) through annual festivals, workshops, and multi-cultural performances. Foreign musicians now proudly put on Nigerian fabrics to shoot their videos thereby affording our indigenous (*Adire*) cloth makers the opportunity to export their products in large quantity. Hence, *The Business Year (TBY)* recognises that entertainment is today one of the country's main expressions of soft power, "a country's persuasive approach to international relations through its economic, cultural, and media influence in order to gain positive attraction" (*The Guardian* "Entertainment industry..." 2). However, this is not to ignore the fact that Nigeria's image has been dented by the activities of 'Yahoo Yahoo Boys.' Their dubious way of doing business has not only negatively affecting the image of Nigeria in the world, it has caused embarrassment to Nigerians at several airports

in foreign countries through undue vigorously checks (Guanah & Obi 9).

The creative industry reduces crime rate in the society. Former Lagos State Governor, Akinwunmi Ambode, attested to this fact when he received artists who performed at the *One Lagos Fiesta* (OLF) in 2016. He said, according to statistics, the state recorded the lowest crime rate during the period of the OLF. Ambode averred that the artists contributed significantly in keeping the city secured and in scaling up the international rating of the state as a safe place (*Premium Times* “We’ll use Entertainment...”).

It has been established by scholars and medical personnel like Modupe Omibiyi-Obidike, Meki Nzewi, Randel McClellan, Steven Friedson, Fabian Maman and Mariam Iyeh, among others, that the creative arts, especially dance and music, are therapeutic. Specifically too, comedy, just like every other performing arts, has therapeutic powers, because it serves as an antidote for depression, sickness and disease; and as the *Holy Bible* says: “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (Prov. 17: 22). Merriment caused by laughter can reduce various social frustrations that people face daily. More sources like Justina Iyasere and Juliet Bumah acknowledge that laughter has therapeutic values, and has several physical, mental, and social benefits. Also, Stella Ogundipe avers that, “humour and laughter strengthen your immune system, boost your energy, diminish pain, and protect you from the damaging effects of stress. Best of all, this priceless medicine is fun, free, and easy to use” (33). Further, Bisola Akindeko, a medical doctor, supports this view when she asserts:

Humour and laughter can cause a domino effect of joy and amusement, as well as set off a number of positive physical effects. A laugh a day may help keep the doctor away, say a growing number of healthcare professionals. Laughter is like 'internal jogging,' a form of exercise that keeps the body and the mind fit. It can give the heart muscles a good workout, improve circulation, increase your pulse rate, fill the lungs with oxygen-rich air, decrease tension, and perhaps even relieve pain, says Donald Black, professor of psychiatry at the University of Iowa College of medicine (49).

In a YouTube video, Sadhguru asserts that, “there is substantial data to show that if a person is exuberant, joyful and wonderful, his immune system is always functioning at a better level of protection than those who are depressed and worried about something.” If comedy engenders laughter that neutralises depression and anxiety, it enhances social participation on the part of a

guaranteed healthy workforce that will invariably accelerate the economic development of the nation because workers are considered as the engine room of the economy of every nation. No wonder Roundtable gives credit to comedy for neutralising the dire situation in Nigeria in the face of stark ineptitude of its leaders and the very harsh economy. Due to their roles and contributions to the development of the society, most creative artists are qualified to be referred to as social entrepreneurs. This is in tandem with the position of David Bornstein, who asserted that,

what business entrepreneurs are to the economy, social entrepreneurs are to social change. They are the driven, creative individuals who question the status quo, exploit new opportunities, refuse to give up, and remake the world for the better” (Abimbola, Agboola & Olarewaju 564).

Communication is vital for peaceful coexistence and for meaningful development to take place in any society. The media provide various communication channels through which the different segments of the society can be reached with development information. Some aspects of the creative industry like drama, dance, and music, referred to as the traditional media, are considered as being capable of functioning as mass communication media because they perform exactly the same functions the conventional media carry out. Their effects bring about socio-economic development of the country. They are being used to create awareness, sensitise and mobilise citizens, and to create peaceful atmosphere where development can take place. Hence, Taiwo Ajai-Lycett is convinced that artists have the potential to help develop the people politically by giving them the correct information, correct ideas about their country, love for their country, and responsibility to their fatherland. She declares:

Entertainers have a responsibility to impart social skills and information to the generality of the public because we have a captive audience who looks up to us. If we do appreciate our importance in the polity, then, we should grab it (Igbinovia 33).

Creative contents satisfy the needs of citizens; and most times, the citizens do not benefit from these contents without the media making them to be aware of their availability, and where and how they can be accessed. The media have a great role to play towards projecting and raising more awareness about the happenings in the creative industry. This shows that the relationship between the creative industry and the media are symbiotic in nature because one cannot

do without the other, and they do benefit from each other.

### **Collaborative Role of the Media**

Mass media are the channels used in communicating with the general public. The common ones are the social media, films, newspapers, television, magazines, radio, books, and so on. The media do have a great impact on the society because, as gate-keepers and critical factors in the information dissemination process, media practitioners decide what they filter for their various publics to consume, depending on different yardsticks. Sociologist Michael Schudson sums up the societal impact of media thus:

The greatest effects may not be measurable influences on attitudes or beliefs produced by media but the range of information the media make available to individual human minds, the range of connections they bring to light, the particular social practices and collective rituals by which they organise our days and ways. The media are more important, not less important, than popular opinion would have it, but rarely in the ways assumed by popular views. The media organise not just information but audiences. They legitimise not just events and sources that report them both readers and viewers. Their capacity to publicly include is perhaps their most important feature. That you and I read the same front page or see the same television as the President of the United States and the chair of IBM is empowering; the impression it promotes is equality and commonality (24-25).

Suitably then, since the media survey the environment, and also interpret the news, Oluwalanu Sanusi, Adelabu Omowale and Myke Esiri posit that the media offer various explanations correlating and interpreting information to make the reality clear. Therefore, the mass media are able to decide exactly what information that will be delivered because they can influence the public's mindset and raise people's aspirations. Dennis McQuail summarises the power of the mass media thus: attracting and directing public attention; persuasion in matters of opinion and belief; influencing behaviour, intentionally or not; defining reality, concerning status and legitimacy; informing quickly and extensively; more available to those with political and economic power (86-97).

The way the media operate in a society, set agenda and confer status on entertainment issues determine the state of the creative industry there. Even when

artists are faring well in their trade, it is the duty of the media to put more pressure on them to be on their toes so they can work harder, and do better because their creativity accelerates social development. Therefore, to create visibility for creative artists, the broadcast media outlets invite artists to their studios for interactions and interviews that fans can call in to participate too. Quality air play on radio and television are given to such artists` songs, videos, and performances. The entertainment columns of the print media, comprising newspapers, magazines and other publications do give a lot of coverage to activities of the creative industry. They also dedicate feature articles and editorials on the creative industry. Other ways the media publicise, as well as help to promote the creative industry include public relations, media relations and advertising. That is why communication experts and marketers agree that the right combination of the promotional tools or marketing communication will result in maximum publicity for a product, and will also increase turnover, promote corporate image and enhance corporate growth (Nwamara 111).

The important place the media occupy in the society guarantees the fact that when they carry positive news items about the creative industry, such news will get to the right recipients. This kind of alignment between the media and the creative industry aids the latter`s development efforts. As noted earlier, the media engender the important role of development through positive reporting and promotion of artists` works. Through publicity via the social media, for instance, works of artists reach the right audience globally. Due to the instrumentality of powerful information sharing platforms of the social media, like the electronic mail (Email), instant messaging Apps, short message service (SMS), YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Blogs, Sound Cloud, Hulkshare and many more, artists` activities are effectively promoted. Through the YouTube, for instance, music labels and artists release movie trailers ahead of the release. By these means, they reach out to both local and international potential audiences, who buy their products, thus generating revenue internally and foreign exchange for the country.

The mass media, especially the social media, also serve as powerful creative materials sharing outlets through which the media promote the creative industry. This is done by helping creative artists to create *buzz* about their acts; upload and post their acts, as well as engaging in interactive conversations with their fans; connect with fans on a personal level using photographs, videos and audio clips on a regular basis; and also network with other stakeholders in the creative industry. Again, with social media, drama productions can be streamed live as they are being staged. As at the end of 2018, Ajala Akindele said 51.2% of individuals, equivalent to 3.9 billion people, were using the Internet; that is, about 30% of global population is actively living in the cyberspace, in real terms

(Olubanwo & Oguntuase); and it has been estimated by IT experts that there will be 70% Internet penetration by 2023. These users are potential consumers of creative arts.

The media are like market places of ideas where people with various views bring them forward, and the best of such ideas may eventually prevail. They have the ability to generate ideas about the creative industry, and go ahead to also create awareness about the potentials inherent in the industry because, apart from growing talents that abound in the country, the industry positively develops the country socially and economically. Chukwuma Anyanwu argues that the media, in all forms, have direct effect on the economy and are also influenced by the economy. To support his view, he quotes the MacBride Commission:

Both in its structure and its content, communication intermeshes with, and is dependent on, the economy in many ways. A constant flow of information is vital for economic life. As well as being a great economic force, with incalculable potentials, it is a decisive factor in development. As an element of increasing importance in all national economies, communication represents a growing segment of a country's gross national product and has direct repercussions on productivity and employment (129).

When the media give hype to news about the creative industry and artists, it catches the attention of people who eventually patronise them. This has brought about artists being used for the endorsements of products by big companies or conglomerates. While this enriches the artists, the companies receive more patronage; and invariably, the economy of the nation benefits too because the money circulates in the nation's economy as individual taxes, company taxes, and value added taxes are paid. This gives credence to the status conferral theory, which gives significance to people or events we see or read about regularly in the media. Ryan Smith explains that, "subtle mentions of a person or seeing their face in a commercial make us think that the person is "worth" the mentions and that they are actually worth the attention, just because we are seeing their faces or hearing their voices constantly" (3).

## **Conclusion**

The creative industry is an integral component in the socio-economic development of Nigeria because of its potentials. It would not be out of place for government to include the creative industry in its top priorities in the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), having realised that the country can generate



huge revenue from it. Also, it is imperative for artists to be included in policy and decision making when it comes to the creative industry, as this will eventually boost the nation's economy. This will go a long way because it will afford them the opportunity to address the various problems the industry faces, especially funding, access and opportunities.

Popular Nollywood movie director, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, amplified this view further in an interview with Seyi Sokoya, when he emphasised:

We have to be part of the policy-makers... we are more connected to the people than the politicians; we influence than the political office holders. If our films can make people stay glued to their seats and make them laugh and cry without seeing us face-to-face, we can make things happen. We have the pedigree, brand and followership to make things happen positively (2).

Thus, for awareness purposes, if the media give flight to the contributions of the creative industry, by reporting them regularly with more captivating stories and media framing, the attention of readers, viewers, and listeners would be drawn to them.

## **Recommendations**

1. The government should play more active role in the creative industry by providing opportunities for stakeholders to access soft loans and grants through the Bank of Industry (BOI) and other financial institutions. Such grants and loans will assist the industry players in expanding their businesses and come up with quality products.
2. Government should ensure that there is an enabling environment, in terms of the regulatory framework and laws, and protect artists' intellectual properties to enable them express that creativity, and for the industry to thrive. There should also be provision of adequate critical infrastructure for artists to curb cross-border filming and production.
3. There should be regular and sustained media relations with stakeholders in the creative industry, including government agencies.
4. The different professional associations operating in the creative industry should unite so as to have a common voice to pursue their common goals.
5. Government should ensure that violators of creative works' copyrights and pirates of creative works are persecuted to serve as deterrent to other potential violators.
6. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should ensure that

broadcast stations in Nigeria adhere strictly to the code of ethics that stipulates the transmission of 30 percent foreign programmes and 70 percent of local programmes which are the products of the creative industry.

7. Government should give a tax rebate and tax holiday for stakeholders in the creative industry so that they can have strong footing before they are subject to full tax payments.

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# **VERISIMILITUDE AS SOLUTION FOR RESPONSIVE COSTUME DESIGN: A CRITIQUE OF NOLLYWOOD'S REPRESENTATION OF PRE-COLONIAL IGBO CHARACTERS IN HESSIAN FABRICS**

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## **Abstract**

Nollywood's idea of uniformly costuming Igbo pre-colonial characters in hessian fabric also known as sackcloth appears to be a misrepresentation of time and place. The picture created by Nollywood's pre-colonial Igbo characters appears to be far removed from the films' presumed background, which is pre-colonial Igbo. This research has therefore investigated the adherence of these costumes designs to the reality of pre-colonial Igbo people. The primary goal of this research was to examine the pre-colonial Igbo costumes with a view to retelling authentic pre-colonial Igbo costumes. Realist film theory and traditional historicism were adopted for the research, while select Nollywood films were used to amplify Nollywood's Igbo pre-colonial character. This research would, by the strengths of its insights, provide appropriate model or catalogue of Igbo pre-colonial dress culture.

**Keywords:** Costumes, hessian fabrics, pre-colonial Igbo dress-culture, authenticity, Nollywood costume design

## **Introduction**

Nollywood's tradition of presenting pre-colonial Igbo characters in hessian fabrics calls attention to verifying the plausibility of this idea to the realities of the pre-colonial Igbo people. Igbo people are an ethnic group native to the South-East and some parts of South-South of present Nigeria. Although there are notable divergences in dialects of the various Igbo areas (which is hardly noticed by non-Igbo), the people are generally identified with a commonality of language, fashion and dress pattern. Before the British invasion of Igbo land and its consequent annexation to the other parts of present day Nigeria, the Igbo society was an egalitarian one. Religion conditioned and gave force to all social and economic activities – planting, harvesting, gender-relations, and others. Agriculture was the

mainstay of the people's economy. Everyone was first a farmer before any other vocation.

The political organisation of the pre-colonial Igbo times did not extend beyond the village level. The council of elders provided leadership and arbitrated over civil and criminal cases. The kindred system was a well-developed governance mechanism; needless noting the fact that the society was patrilineal. This does not, however, mean that women were considered insignificant. In fact, the *umuada* – an association of daughters born into a clan but married outside it – exerted enormous authority in virtually all parts of Igboland.

In most parts of Igboland, age-sets, title and masquerade societies provided varied forms of social control. Children and teenagers went about unclothed until they had become adults. Ceremonies, such as, *iwa-akwa*, which directly translates as, cloth-wearing ceremony, marked the passage from boyhood to manhood. In a personal interview, Alex Ugwuja revealed that in Nsukka area, young maidens were referred to as, *umu-mgboto* (unclad girls). They were given a piece of cloth to conceal their buttocks only after their initiation into womanhood. Most of them still had their upper bodies uncovered even after the initiation.

In his research on the Igbo history, J. O. Ijoma relates that the Akwete community in the present Abia State was famous for weaving of cloths. The cloth, *akwete*, named after the town, was woven on a narrow loom installed in the corner of a room (42). Natalie Kimani detailed the fabrics used by the weavers as wool, silk, raffia and bark of certain trees (hemp) (n.p.). Cotton textiles were said to have been weaved into cloths worn at the time. Describing the materials used for weaving at the time, George Thomas Basden relates that cotton, palm leaves and bark of tree were employed as fabrics for weaving of cloth. He states that the bark employed for the purpose of weaving cloths was sourced from the *ufa* tree (327). The bark was gathered and spun in the same way that cotton was.

Notably, fabrics other than cotton were reserved for men who wore them during hunting expeditions. Corroborating this fact, Dani Lyndersay avers that, “warriors (*egbenu*) and hunters in the past used bark cloth (*aji*) – the bark of the *achi* tree...” (405). Although Basden's account seems to differ from Lyndersay's because of the difference in terminology of the trees – *ufa* and *aji*, respectively, both accounts reveal that the bark used by the Igbo pre-colonial weavers were sourced from trees and not jute plant as Nollywood films portray. Another clear point here is that, contrary to Nollywood seeming postulation that hessian produced from jute was the only fabric used by the pre-colonial Igbo people, the cloth produced from bark were never used as every day wear by the Igbo of that time. They were rather used by hunters as previously noted. Kimani agrees that, “... the coarse raffia materials were used by masquerades and in the past as headgear for

warriors.... The more comfortable and colourful spun cotton is used to weave cloth for everyday wearing” (n.p.).

The significance of this research therefore lies in the fact that costume as a purveyor of culture has the ability to simultaneously capture and reveal the past of a people. It could therefore be used to depict the history and evolution of a people’s culture. To what extent a costume could be effective in recreating history, however, depends to a large extent on the willingness of the designer to embark on a meaningful research into the past of the people. The designer’s ability to go beyond discovering not just how the people wore their cloths, but also the fabrics or materials their cloths were made from, will no doubt facilitate depiction of the true picture of the culture and time being portrayed by the film.

However, the knowledge of the fabric used by a culture at a point in history will not only facilitate the designer’s ability to create a responsive costume. It will also eliminate the tendency to create costumes with pejorative undertone as it appears in Nollywood’s use of hessian fabric in depicting Igbo pre-colonial characters. Adherence to reality is therefore very vital in costuming a film, as the designer’s ability to dig into history will, to a large extent, determine the authentic representation of the actual fabrics used by the people portrayed in film.

It is pertinent to note that costume in film (unlike stage costume which is ephemeral) endures for as long as the film lives. It could thus be used to either present or distort history. History will be misrepresented if due attention is not paid to how the elements and principles of costume design are manipulated during production process. Film costumes as bearers of a people’s culture and past, could thus serve as a tool for creating and disseminating derogatory information about a people.

### **Film Costume as a Documentary of History**

Of all the components of film making with which characters and cultures are defined, the images created by costumes and set appear to be the ones that could be indelibly registered in the minds of film viewers long after viewing the film. Costumes and set are visual components, because they appeal to the viewers’ minds and stick there for a long time. While dialogue and sounds could easily be forgotten by viewers, the narrative or image of a culture relayed by the costumes in a film could become a recurring images in the minds of the viewers. And this could become the viewers’ sole definition of the film’s cultural background.

Film, by its nature, has the ability to set the tone for the values and images of the culture presumed to have informed it. To this end, Clementina Abone asserts that, “films are... artefacts created by specific cultures which reflect those cultures” (23). However, Abone’s assertion is true only when the film does not just draw facts from the culture it intends to reflect, but also present what authentically

reflects the culture. That is the only time that a film could be said to have been created by the culture. So, a film filled with misrepresentations of fact could be presumed to have been borne out of the film makers' imagination and not of any culture. Julie Umukoro, however, corroborates Abone's opinion when she avers that, "drama and society are so inextricably interwoven that the study of dress as a basic theatrical concern tends to be hinged on the study of dress in social reality, usually of the perceived background of the play" (47). Unfortunately, this is not the case with most Nollywood films as the costumes most times tend to be far removed from the realities of the films' backgrounds. Critiquing the erroneous design concept of Nollywood costume designers, Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh observes that, "these dress codes more often than not, conflict with periods, settings, and concepts of the productions..." (67).

Nonetheless, the need for film to present reality in its narration of culture or history can never be over-stressed. Regrettably, Nollywood films appear to be lacking in this demand, as it seems that their presentation of reality in costuming appears to have been relegated to superficiality. Abone maintains that, "quite often, the projected image determines the perceived image since it is what you give out that is received..." (27). She reiterates that, "...film can propagate and even influence national image" (27). Costume design, as it has been practiced by Nollywood, appears to negate this enormously powerful attribute of film as a cultural image formatter. As cultural ambassadors, Nollywood costume designers have been in the forefront in presenting Igbo characters with what viewers automatically accept as Igbo costumes.

It appears that Nollywood costume designers have been practicing the tradition of presenting Igbo pre-colonial characters with hessian fabric which is commonly known as sack-cloth. This practice appears to alienate these films from the realities of the pre-colonial Igbo people. Unfortunately, many viewers of Nollywood epic films, some of whom are unaware of Igbo traditional dress culture, accept this historical fabrication as the true picture of Igbo characters of the pre-colonial era. Majority of what they believe about the Igbo people appear then to be determined by what they are fed with by Nollywood films. Barclays Ayakoroma, a Nollywood film critic, in his study of the trends in the development of Nollywood films posits thus:

The industry has gradually developed an iconography... a set of visual imagery in video films – houses, costumes, props, visual movements... which are identified with various locations.... If we are watching a traditional genre for example, we see native doctors, who must be adorned in white or red cloth.... If it is an epic or



historical genre for example, what we see are sack cloths as costumes... (“Trends in...” 13).

Considering the fact that these costumes do not show evidences of false fabrication of history, they are internalised as reality even by the critical viewers of Nollywood films. Sadly, these costumes by extension tend to corroborate the claim of Europeans that Africans were uncivilised prior to colonisation. Nollywood ideology of presenting pre-colonial characters with hessian fabric, unfortunately, does not just extol colonialism but also portrays the colonised as primitive people, devoid of craftsmanship. This practice therefore tends to be defamatory. Recounting the economic activities of the Igbo of the pre-historical times, Ijoma avers that:

Over the centuries the Igbo showed dynamism in their technology and their quest to improve their lot and environment. Contrary to wrongful notions created by European observers at the turn of this century, the Igbo were not stagnant. Early enough, they acquired the knowledge of iron working and this helped them to overcome the ecological difficulties of the forest environment. Awka in particular showed great dexterity in iron technology (42).

The problem of this research does not however bother on how foreign observers have presented the Igbo of the past; but it focuses on how indigenous film makers have been negligently misrepresenting them. Although, in his attempt to accentuate the need for African films to project true African identity, Emeka Emelobe observes that filmic representations:

...are in a sense ideological tools that can serve to reinforce systems of inequality and subordination. They can help to sustain colonialist projects. For instance, Hollywood’s representations of Africa are largely misguided. Their movies and literature place Africa at a one-dimensional stereotype based on their preconceived notions. These notions ...are mostly negative, primordial, biased and unbalanced (213).

Hollywood’s representations of Africa could be taken with a pinch of salt by any critical viewer, since there are many works that have condemned their representations of Africa as false and deliberate attempts to demean Africa, probably in order to justify the invasion of Africa countries by the colonialists. Nevertheless, when the misrepresentation is projected by an indigenous film

industry, it becomes more difficult to doubt or perceive the picture as false or a defamatory fabrication of history and identity. Nollywood is an indigenous film industry; so, its portrayals of indigenous costumes have the ability to shape the perceptions of its viewers on indigenous characters. This is even truer, especially when the creators of these narratives are not just Nigerians, but Igbo indigenes. In his analysis of the trends in the development of Nollywood films, Barclays Ayakoroma notes that,

since the financial control of the industry is in the hands of Igbo businessmen, it has been easy for executive producers to raise video film stars of Igbo extraction. It is not surprising then that a greater number of the “selling faces” in the industry are Igbo (“Trends in...11).

As a point of fact, it appears that the issue of misrepresenting Igbo pre-colonial characters in hessian cloths by Nollywood films were initiated and had continued to be reinforced by Igbo film makers. Incidentally, this idea of costuming pre-colonial Igbo people with hessian cloth by indigenous film makers might become a powerful force in forming what non-Igbos would consider as authentic Igbo pre-colonial cloth; thus, authenticating what Europeans portray as justification for colonisation of the Igbo people. Smith Aniyah avers that, “European justification for colonisation includes the idea that the quality of life of colonial subjects will be improved by the presence and guidance of Europeans” (n.p.). Although Smith’s research on the Igbo pre-colonial dress culture initially appears to be objective, he concludes with an idea which appears to be biased as he opines thus:

there were major differences in clothing regarding both the pre-colonial and post-colonial times. More clothing and colours were adopted and worn post-colonial. The citizens of the Igbo society would now easily express themselves through clothing. Attire is now made up of more expensive and durable fabrics, and is now more stylish (n.p.)

Smith’s submission appears not just prejudiced but also tilts towards romanticising the essence of colonialism.

### **Igbo Pre-colonial Dress Culture**

Igbo people are globally known for their resourcefulness in trade and industry. Notably, this attribute was not devised during colonialism but were innate in the

people. If the people are truly resourceful as they have been globally acclaimed, it is then doubtful that they would rely on one source of fabric for making their cloth as suggested by films such as *The Beautiful Ugonma*, which have all its characters costumed in hessian cloth. The idea that the pre-colonial Igbo people clung solely to this fabric is thus questionable, especially when the fabric in question is not friendly to the skin. Making reference to Spear's account of his experience in Igboland of the pre-colonial times, Lyndersay recaptures the archaeological perspectives of traditional Igbo dress. She reiterates a well-known folktale recounted by Spear on how an Igbo hunter invented weaving. She recounts that the hunter who got his inspiration from a spider and its web, eventually made a prototype of the spider's web with "bush-rope" (403). Succinctly put, Lyndersay's account of the hunter and how his wife eventually requested for a cloth like the hunting-net implies that before the hunter's discovery and invention, what was worn by the people was bark. The hunter, in response to his wife's request, developed "a loom made from bush rope used for climbing (*ukpa*) and later from raffia" (Lyndersay 404). This is an indication that the Igbo are naturally creative artisans. Also quoting Paul Edwards, Lyndersay referenced Olaudah Equiano, the Igbo ex-slave's recollection of the dress of his homeland:

The dress of both sexes is nearly the same. It generally consists of long piece of calico, or muslin, wrapped loosely round the body... this is usually dyed blue, which is our favourite colour. It is extracted from a berry, and is brighter and richer than any I have seen in Europe. Besides this, our women of distinction wear golden ornaments... when our women are not employed with the men in tillage, their weaving cotton... (405)

Nollywood's practice of costuming the pre-colonial Igbo people in hessian cloth, however, tends to suggest that the people could not weave cloths from fabrics, such as, cotton and other natural fabrics until the advent of the European colonialism. Equiano's narration above is an indication that the people used and wore cotton cloth before the advent of the Europeans to Igboland. The detailed description of Igbo dress in the late 1790s by Joseph Hawkins, a trade explorer, also debunks this Nollywood ideology and notion. He establishes that:

Both sexes... go almost entirely naked, the loins and waist only being covered; the women wear a slight garment, or bandage of cotton cloth, round the waist, or a small apron of cotton stuff, fancifully decorated with feathered, or strips of different coloured cloths... about six inches long, and eight broad, hanging in front,

and tied on by two strings of cotton.... The men from the age of puberty... wear a narrow bandage of cotton round the waist... (87).

Hawkins' descriptions are pointers to the fact that both men and women of the pre-colonial times wore cotton. His account is undoubtedly authentic because while hessian fabrics needed to be imported at the time, the people grow cotton and needed not import them; thus, making cotton more accessible to them than hessian which are made from jute plants and imported from India. Although the people also employed other kinds of fabrics other than cotton for cloth-weaving, there are still no evidences to show that they used hessian fabrics for clothing. Ijoma notes that, "the material for weaving was not always cotton; palm leaves and bark of tree were also used" (43). Nevertheless, the bark of tree used by the Igbo for cloth-making was not extracted from jute plants as Nollywood films seem to insinuate. In her account of the evolution of dress culture among the Igbo people, Utoh-Ezeajugh postulates that,

for the Igbo... the dress culture for men evolved from *Ikpachi* or *Aka Nwoke* which was a woven cloth tied at the side of the waist, creating a kind of slit-opening from the waist down the length of the cloth... (38).

The contentious hessian fabric is however made from jute plants and is used by Indians as lining for rugs and for making sacks used for storing agricultural and industrial products.

Although most Western anthropologist accounts of Igbo people of the pre-colonial period appear to have undergone criticism based on the fact that their information were considered to be second-handed, hence, faulty. Yet, it appears that none of the accounts of these anthropologists describe the Igbo of pre-colonial era as people wearing hessian cloth. The question now is: What informed Nollywood costume designers' idea of costuming pre-colonial Igbo characters with cloths made from jute plants? It appears that the issue is that of not paying attention to details as the film makers appear to be motivated by profit alone; thus, relegating the quest for intricate knowledge of designing to the background.

To adequately describe the pre-colonial Igbo cloths, however, in addition to researching into history, one could also look at the socio-cultural life of the traditional Igbo people. Some of the extant traditional rituals appear to still retain to a large extent aspects of traditional cloths, as acculturation of such cloths appears to be regarded as taboo by the ritual performers. Just as foreign food items (such as bread) could not be used in feeding or venerating the Igbo gods, the wearing of foreign cloths or fabrics is still not adopted as cloth worn during most Igbo ritual

performances. Thus, Igbo ritual performances could also serve as gate way to accessing pre-colonial Igbo cloths.

Among the pre-colonial Igbo of South-East Nigeria, costume was an essential part of the people's way of life because all their festivals were celebrated with spectacular costumes. Judith Perani and Norma Wolff posit that, "among many peoples living along the Niger/Benue river valleys in Nigeria including the... Igbo, cloth is used to fabricate a spectacular ancestral masquerade" (42). There were also performers who costumed themselves for dances and wrestling. For traditional performances, dancers used colourful costumes – maidens wore short waist beads, neck beads, anklets with bare chest; men wore loin clothes barely covering their genitals. The traditional seers who mediate between the community and the gods wore symbolic clothes and accessories such as feathers signifying grandeur.

There are also various traditional theatrical genres in the traditional Igbo society. Therefore, different kinds of costumes are used to portray the different characters and situations of the diverse performances. Traditional performances such as the *Ozo* cult of Onitsha people, the *Ine Ezi* of Anam people, and the *Igba Nja* of Awka people are done merrily. This explains why colourful regal costumes are worn during such performances. On the other hand, rituals like the *Igu-Aro* of the Umueri people and *Iti-Mmanwu* (masquerade performance) are done in a more serious heightened mood and so were performed in serious costumes which inspire awe and respect. Describing the social-control functions of Igbo masquerade, Aniako reiterates that, "...spirit forces incarnated as masks exercised executive, juridical and legislative authority in many Igbo villages and towns" (346). Masks are therefore indispensable aspects of costume of Igbo masquerades.

Quintessentially, among the Igbo pre-colonial people, young Igbo men wore loin clothes, older men were dressed in calf-length cotton wrapper gathered and knotted at the belly. Some Igbo clothes were worn to help restrict the wearers' movements so that he could move in a dignified way. Thus, giving the wearer a dignified posture and in turn signifying an elevated economic or social status. Examples of such costumes are the *odu* of the Onitsha *Otu-odu* women, the *nja* of the *Igba-nja* maiden-group of traditional Awka people, the *nja* of the *Ine-ezi* maiden-group of Anam and the costume of the *Ijele* masquerade of the Umueri communities all of Anambra state. These ornaments were variously used to symbolise merits, authority and status in society. It can thus be deduced that the Igbo traditional society has a lot of accessories which Nollywood could adopt and use in creating pre-colonial Igbo characters.

Agreeably, some of these evidences were not documented; we learnt about them from dramas, novels and folklores. *Fate of an Orphan*, a play by Alex Asigbo, which is set in the pre-colonial times, precisely in the 1870s (Personal Interview with Asigbo), provides information on some aspects of pre-colonial Igbo clothing

designs. Describing an Igbo traditional prophetess, the playwright states that, “she’s attired in a red wrapper. A white head band covers her hair and on hand she carries a lump of chalk” (7). Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (which is also set in the pre-colonial times) also describes the traditional Igbo man everyday cloth thus: “*Okagbue* was [in] his underwear, a long and thin strip of cloth wound round the waist like a belt and then passed between the legs to be fastened to the belt behind” (82).

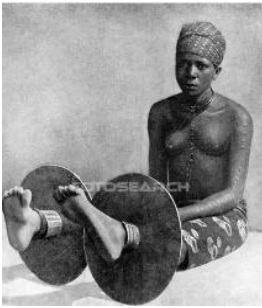
Traditionally, the attire of Igbo men generally consisted of little clothing as the purpose then was to conceal private parts, although elders were fully clothed. Loin clothes in the Igbo traditional world signify youthfulness. Wrestlers wore it during their wrestling performances; hunters also wore it during their hunting escapades. It is still worn in the Omambala area of Anambra state during the *ilonmuo* (ancestral worship celebration). The extinct *Igbanja* of Awka people and *Ine-ezi* of the Anam people both made use of *nja* (a brass leg-band signifying wealth). Children were usually nude from birth till their adolescence but some ornament of beads and cowries were worn around their waists. Describing the use of cowries for body adornment in the traditional Igbo world, Elizabeth Isichei relates that,

the curved back is cut away, and the shell, open on two sides, is threaded on double thread to place around the neck or body.... Some boys wear no other clothing or adornment but these chains of white shells on the neck or the body (17).

*Uli* liquid makeup was also used to decorate both men and women in form of lines forming symbolic motifs on the body. Emphasising the significance of *uli* makeup in Igbo culture, Aniako posits that,

what seems paramount aesthetically is the graphic quality of designs painted on the body which has endeared this art form to the Igbo women as a tool for the visual alteration, expansion and manipulation of the human body for aesthetic effects (334).

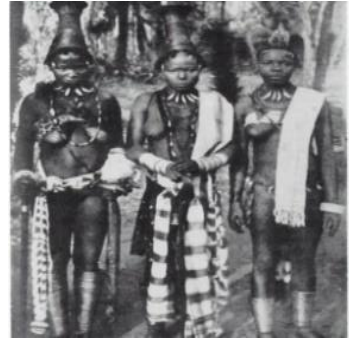
These fashion items were pre-colonial Igbo peoples’ invention, perhaps the most quintessentially pointers to pre-colonial Igbo peoples’ dress culture.



*Plate 1: First*



*Plate 2: Second*



*Plate 3: Third*

*Source: Ndebe Wordpress.com*

The above pictures show precolonial Igbo maidens dressed in *nja* anklet, *jigida* waist beads and *akwete* fabrics respectively.

### **Examples of Nollywood Presentation of Pre-colonial Igbo in Hessian Fabrics**

Film costume as a purveyor of culture and history has been effective as a tool in that regard. But it could also become effective as a tool for undermining the values and essence of a people past. It could thus be used to make pejorative comments on a people. This research finds Nollywood's presentation of Igbo pre-colonial character questionable and worthy of reconstruction. A German film theorist, Siegfried Kracauer's ideas on cinematic realism and traditional historicism were thus adopted in studying pre-colonial Igbo dress culture. Traditionally historians have been concerned with finding out what actually happened at a given time and place. Ann Dobie suggests that,

they worked to establish the factual accuracy of the stories that make up the record of the human past so that they could establish, with as much certainty as possible, that the account they render was a valid delineation of what had happened (175).

Since this research is concerned with investigating the realities of Nollywood's portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo characters in hessian fabrics, it becomes pertinent that the research should take a cue from a theory which lauds realism in film making and accuracy in recounting history.

Realistic film theory which is also known as cinematic realism as upheld by Kracauer, has been an extremely useful model for questioning the nature of cinematographic images, the relationship of film to reality, the credibility of filmic

images and the role film plays in the shaping and understanding of the world. The concept specifically points to the verisimilitude of a film to the believability of its characters and events. Kracauer has argued that realism is the most important function of cinema. In his book, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, he maintains that of all the arts, film is the one uniquely qualified to record physical reality. Although he concedes that many films combine reality with formalist tendencies, he insists that the films that bring viewers to bear with “aspects of physical reality are the ones most valid aesthetically” (221). His opinion thus berates film costumes that mislead viewers’ idea of physical reality of the character or culture being portrayed by the film.

The ability of film to present physical reality, according to Kracauer, is not far-fetched because, according to him, unlike stage plays, films possess unique qualities of recording and revealing the world authentically. Conveying camera’s affinity to life, Kracauer posits that though other art forms such as stage performance or painting are “real”, they “...reach into the world without... really forming a part of it” (29). Expanding on this notion, he reiterates that, “a theatrical play, for instance, suggests a universe of its own which would immediately crumble were it related to its real-life environment” (29). Further analysing the properties of the film medium, Kracauer opines that the basic properties of film resemble those of photography in the sense that, “film... is uniquely equipped to record and reveal physical reality... the only reality we are concerned with is actually existing physical reality...material reality...physical existence... (28). His *Film Theory: The Redemption of Physical Reality* accentuates film’s “photographic nature” which enables films to capture and represent the world in its real or natural form. He therefore advocates for filmic realism of everyday life.

Agreeably, costume designer could manipulate the elements of costume design to suit the film’s concept; but it must however be done on purpose. Any manipulation of the elements of costume design in a historical/epic film that misrepresents reality is considered inappropriate and not a worthy effort. Going by Kracauer’s idea on film and its ability to represent reality, Nollywood costume designers could achieve a seemingly undiluted authentic pre-colonial Igbo costume design if they actually spend time to research into the Igbo past. This will of course entail more work in terms of reading and interviews as observation of the pre-colonial Igbo people is now impossible. Oral enquiry into the dress culture of the time will in addition to reading documented evidences (that point to the dress culture of the people) would be revealing. Since the misrepresentations abound more in Nollywood epic films, which could be likened to historical films, it is important to carefully present viewers with costumes that authentically represent the Igbo people of the pre-colonial era.



As noted earlier, costumes as components of film making are culture bearers. So, using costume design elements, costume designers recreate cultures, personalities, eras, social and economic statuses so that film costumes become story telling tools – a means through which films communicate to viewers. Certain fabrics and styles are hence used to indicate specific cultures and periods. Using *asoke* to costume Yoruba characters in historical films would be considered appropriate because the costume depicts the Yoruba traditional dress culture. However, defining a Yoruba historical character with the traditional Fulani cloth, *leppi*, would no doubt create conflict in the mind of a knowledgeable viewer because the cloth is far removed from the realities of the Yoruba dress culture. But a viewer who is not conversant with Fulani dress culture will quickly imbibe this as the traditional Yoruba dress culture. Therefore, authenticity should be the primary motivation for costuming a cultural or historical film.

Contrarily, Nollywood costume designers have been engaged in costuming Igbo pre-colonial characters in hessian fabrics. This practice seems to have evolved simultaneously with the emergence of the industry. Films such as Andy Amenechi and Donpedro Obaseki's *Igodo* have all the characters uniformly costumed in hessian fabric. Although the costume designer, Iyen Agbonifo, had all the warriors' hessian fabrics dyed with purple colour and variegated with assorted beads, the everyday costumes of the villagers were the natural hessian carton colour. This is also contradicting as warriors' costumes should have been the ones left plain. One begins then to wonder what message the costume designer intended to communicate with such contradictory designs.

However, it is worthy to note that *Igodo* was among the pioneer epic or historical films produced in Nollywood industry. Though historical blunder in costuming could never be justified, we assume that the costume designers were still in the early years of their career as most of them appeared not to have been formally or informally trained in the art of costume design. Nevertheless, leaving the usual green marks seen on the sack bags on the costumes of the villagers is an act of carelessness on the part of the costume designer.



Plate 4



Plate 5

Plate 4: *Igodo's* warriors, wearing hessian fabrics dyed purple and designed with white beads; while Plate 5 shows the village Council of elders all costumed in plain hessian fabric.

Deplorably, however, Nollywood costume designers still cling to the practice of costuming pre-colonial Igbo characters in hessian fabrics up to the present time. This gives the impression that the practice was informed by the peoples' realities of the pre-colonial times. While costume designer could simulate fabrics such as those weaved from bark with hessian fabrics, it must be fortuitously done with the aim of achieving desired message. It becomes necessary then to critique such simulations if they become a constant practice as seen with Nollywood costume designers – especially when such practice is far removed from the realities of the time and place being portrayed by the film and has been severally faulted by critics and viewers.

Examples abound of Nollywood films made in the recent times that still stick to this practice. In 2018, Nollywood released another epic film, *Tears of Ugonma* directed by Emmanuel Godwin Apeh. This film followed the same Nollywood established fashion, of uniformly costuming all characters, who appear to have existed before European colonisation with hessian fabrics. Given the interval between 1999 when *Igodo* and its contemporaries were costumed, it was expected that Nollywood costume designers would have engaged in meaning research to discover what the people wore at the time. This is because this practice that does not reflect the reality of the presumed place and time has been frowned at. It appears however that Nollywood costume designers are unaware of the existing reviews on their work. It appears also that Nollywood costume designers have deliberately decided to imitate most of the Igbo film producers, who have evidently ignored any form of improvement on what they serve their viewers. Profit appears then to be the sole motivator of their art. This becomes so clear as the industry has continued to release more of such films into the market.

Another example of this practice is drawn from *Eyes on the Throne* produced just in 2019. This film has all its characters depicted with hessian cloth, just like its predecessors. Also adhering to what appears to have become a norm in Nollywood, *The Beautiful Ugonma* (produced in 2020) has all the characters costumed in hessian fabrics. The major characters had their own hessian fabrics dyed black, to form various motifs, ranging from horizontal lines to curves. Though the costumes were worn in the appropriate Igbo fashion of dressing men in long wrapper, mini wrapper for maidens, ankle-length wrapper for mothers and knee-length wrapper for young men, the use of hessian fabrics severed the costumes from the realities of Igbo people of pre-colonial times or of any other time for that matter.

*Plate 6*



*Plate 7*



*Plate 8*



*Plate 9*



Pictures above show characters from *Eyes on the Throne*, *Tears of Ugonma* and *The Beautiful Ugonma*, respectively. All the characters in the various films were dressed in the Igbo fashion of long wrapper for women, short wrapper for maidens and ankle-length wrapper for men. They were however all costumed in hessian fabric which is not an Igbo fabric. The fabric thus severs the films from the realities of the Igbo pre-colonial times.

## **Conclusion**

This research argues that Nollywood's practice of Igbo pre-colonial characters with hessian fabrics is a misrepresentation of the Igbo pre-colonial peoples' cloth. It frowns at the seeming complacency of Nollywood costume designers towards research. The result is perceived to have misled Nollywood film viewers, into believing that what Nollywood films present as pre-colonial Igbo cloth is historically authentic.

Film, by its nature, appears to attract more viewers than written documents or other sources of history. It becomes imperative then that films, as carriers of culture and history, should endeavour to present reality, especially in historical films. Nollywood can be a powerful tool in shaping perceptions as seen in its efficacy in creating popular dress culture among the populace. It is therefore a powerful tool for shaping the perceptions of people on reality. Nollywood films have thus become undoubtedly a powerful source of knowledge, and by extension image creator of diverse Nigerian cultures.

Unfortunately, in an attempt to make films that have been classified as epic, the costume designers have severally used hessian fabric to portray pre-colonial Igbo characters. The practice is perceived as having pejorative connotations which tends to romanticise colonialism. It creates the impression that the knowledge and usage of cotton fabric by pre-colonial Igbo people was consequent upon their encounter with the European colonial masters. This research has attempted to disprove this idea as baseless, with evidences of the peoples' use of cotton fabrics prior to colonisation. It has attempted to re-tell the pre-colonial dress culture of the Igbo people. It has also attempted to provide what could be termed a "catalogue of the pre-colonial Igbo cloths." Through this research, it is hoped that Nollywood costume designers will tap into the insights provided on pre-colonial and traditional Igbo cloths in costuming pre-colonial and traditional Igbo characters. It is believed that this will help to change the way Nollywood viewers conceive pre-colonial Igbo people.

The research maintains that verisimilitude is essential in historic film making if a responsive costume design is to be achieved. It suggests that Nollywood costume designers should abide by reality in their costuming of historic characters; and it enjoins them to adhere to actual representation of history and time. It stresses the need to create an authentic costume plot that will conform to the realities of places and periods. It thus recommends that Nollywood costumes designers should begin to embark more on adequate research before costuming historical films as this will ameliorate the lapses and flaws seen in their earlier works. The research believes that it is Nollywood's ability to dig into history that will determine its adherence to responsive costume designs.

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# **THEORISING AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIAN LIVE THEATRE PRACTICE: A STUDY OF MUSON CENTRE, LAGOS**

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## **Abstract**

Audiences constitute an integral component of the theatre. Their participation in theatrical performances through attendance and patronage is germane to the growth and development of Nigerian live theatre practice. Nowadays, patronage of live theatre performances in Nigeria has been experiencing decline. People no longer visit theatres as they used to do in the 60s, 70s and 80s. Studies have shown that most Nigerian live theatres do not have a large number of audiences compared with other entertainment outfits. Conversely, it has also been observed that MUSON Centre, Onikan-Lagos, still enjoys substantial audience patronage, and has achieved success over the years in audience engineering, audience loyalty sustenance and profit maximisation. This study examines the relation between the management strategies employed by MUSON Centre in audience engineering, marketing and sales of their theatre programmes and the success of the Centre in the areas of audience generation, audience sustenance and profit maximisation. The information for the study was basically from interviews conducted with the House and Operations Manager, MUSON Centre and questionnaires administered to selected members of the audience. The study demonstrated that an increase in audience patronage and acceptance leads to corresponding increase in profit maximisation and that audience are major determinants of the success of MUSON Centre and its theatrical productions. The result shows that audience participation has great influence on the success of MUSON Centre. Based on these findings, it

is recommended that more attention should be given to theatre management practice because it is an important aspect of the theatre that is capable of stimulating improved audience participation in live theatre practice in Nigeria; thus, restoring the lost glory of live theatre and also enhance successful theatre business.

**Keywords:** Audience participation, audience engineering, audience sustenance, Nigerian live theatre

## **Introduction**

All organisations including home, church, mosque, school, and theatre are coordinated and controlled in peculiar ways. Management is a universal phenomenon that cuts across every aspect of life. The art of planning, staffing, directing, motivating and controlling human and material resources towards achieving a desired objective is essential to the growth of any given organisation. Management is an interesting area of the theatre that has attracted recognition from theatre practitioners and scholars due to its indispensable contribution to the sustainability of theatre business. Theatre management, according to Barclays Ayakoroma, is seen as: “the process or art of planning, organising, controlling, and directing all commercial and non-artistic aspects of a theatre, or any production programme, in order to generate audience patronage, audience satisfaction, and maximise profit”(23). Apparently, for a theatre to be able to achieve its desired objectives, which include satisfying its consumers (audience) needs, and maximising profit, such theatre must manage its scarce human and material resources properly. The survival of a theatre is dependent on how its fiscal as well as administrative activities are managed. Positioning live theatre as a veritable relaxation and entertainment centre requires effective theatre management practice.

It is no gainsaying that theatre business is a lucrative venture that is capable of boosting the country’s local economy if managed properly. At a point in the history of Nigeria, theatre houses were very functional as the culture of theatre-going was very pronounced among the people. Venturing into theatre business was one of the best and safest ways of making money because of its commercial viability. However, one can say today that the story of theatre business has changed. Theatre practitioners can no longer pretend that all is well with professional theatre practice in Nigeria. People no longer visit the theatre the way they did in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. Patronage of live theatre performances keeps declining and the theatre business can no longer boast of its commercial viability. This perplexed state in which Nigerian theatre finds itself today has been a major concern for upcoming theatre practitioners. The level at which patronage of live theatre has fallen in Nigeria today is quite alarming.

No doubt, the arrival of digital systems and technology, most especially cinemas, home videos and social media, has contributed adversely to audience



attendance and patronage of Nigerian live theatre. The fact that other genres of the entertainment sector are getting and maintaining their audience in spite of the advancement of technology and the economic recession affecting the country can also not be ignored. Affirming this, John Iwuh juxtaposes live theatre patronage with other entertainment genres and concludes:

Live theatre in Nigeria cannot be said to have witnessed competition if judged from the point of view of audience patronage driven by the need and willingness to pay for theatre entertainment to consistently sustain a production company. Conversely, it has been passion and sheer commitment on the part of the practitioner (128).

Put succinctly, some theatre houses in Nigeria can boast of fantastic actors and beautiful performances with great technical paraphernalia; but do these performances and theatres have substantial audience attention and patronage? Obviously, the answer to this question is: **No**. Accordingly, some reasons have been identified as contributory to the dwindling patronage of Nigerian live theatre. Over time, theatre producers give more attention to artistic activities at the expense of the business aspect, which is the live wire of the theatre. Business activities of the theatre such as budgeting, financial control, marketing (publicity, public relations, and advertisement), and house management are handled with levity. Equally, unfashionable appearance of the theatre, inexperience on the part of the theatre practitioners, customers' dissatisfaction, and poor marketing strategies, among others, are some of the identified reasons for the low patronage of live theatre in Nigeria. Relatively, this is a pointer to the fact that having fantastic actors, scintillating performances and a beautiful theatre structure are not enough reasons to attract and sustain live theatre audience. For theatre to be able to achieve its desired objectives of generating and sustaining full house or substantial audience patronage, it is necessary to put certain things in place.

Nonetheless, it is important to mention that some theatre houses in Nigeria still enjoy substantial patronage from audience, and have been identified to be successful in audience gathering, sustaining audience loyalty, while maximising profit. MUSON Centre, Onikan, Lagos, is one of these theatres that are not affected with the dwindled live theatre culture. The success of MUSON Centre is linked to its effective management style. To this end, this paper analyses the theatre management practice of MUSON Centre, Lagos, in order to highlight how its approach has been effective in audience gathering and sustenance.

### **Audience Participation in the Nigerian Live Theatre: Then and Now**

Theatre-going culture was very encouraging among Nigerians during the 1960s up to the early 1990s. Theatre lovers viewed the theatre as a place of relaxation, recreation, social interaction and entertainment. The period between 1960 and 1965 in Nigeria was “marked by the theatre-going culture that motivated Nigerians to go to the theatre with their families for relaxation” (Nwosu 173). It is disheartening that life has been snuffed out of the few available theatres as a result of poor maintenance and management.

The dwindling patronage of live theatre began as a gradual process. The battle with the deterioration process began in the late 90s. The advent of cinema houses and later home videos and subsequent diversion of attention to the new inventions contributed largely to the decrease in patronage of live theatre performances. Other factors such as economic recession and proximity of location equally contributed to the problem of audience patronage facing professional theatre practice in Nigeria. Poor management of fund, material and human resources is another major challenge facing professional theatre practice in Nigeria.

The focus of theatre practitioners has been on presentation of good performances leaving the managerial aspects to suffer. Most theatre houses lack managerial know-how with regards to how to market and position their productions for considerable or appreciable audience attention. The attention given to artistic and technical aspects of theatre projects at the expense of managerial and business aspects of the theatre has gone a long way to contribute to the deteriorating state of theatre patronage.

Most times, the managerial and business aspects of the operations of theatre companies are handled perfunctorily; while more attention is given to the artistic and technical aspects of such projects. The relegation to the background of the commercial essence, which is the live wire of the show, has gone a long way in contributing to the dearth of live theatre practice. Advertisement, publicity, public relations and other aspects of theatre marketing are usually left in the hands of inexperienced personnel who most times do shoddy jobs.

Undoubtedly, theatre arts courses keep receiving patronage in Nigerian universities. It is however unfortunate that this has not translated to an increase in the number of theatres. One will then begin to wonder what the problem could be, as it is expected that the proliferation of the study of theatre arts in Nigerian higher institutions should correspond with the rise in the practice of live theatre. Put succinctly, live theatre has lost much of its patronage and theatre houses in Nigeria are failing in the pursuit of generating, gathering and sustaining audience. ‘Rantimi Julius-Adeoye avers that:

Live theatre has suffered a near extinction on the nation's theatrical stage. The reasons adduced to this are myriad but one that is without controversy is that it is not economical to invest in live stage performances because of lack of ready audience. Ironically, while live theatre audience is dwindling, there is audience for other entertainment events like musical concerts, comedy, and variety shows, festivals, and corporate branding theatrical events (129).

The decline in audience patronage of live theatre is hinged on the fact that theatre practitioners have failed in discharging their duties the way the potential and existing audience expected. It is expected that their safety should be guaranteed whenever they go to theatre houses to watch live performances; but it is disheartening to note that most theatre houses are failing in this aspect. The audiences are no longer satisfied with the plays produced in theatres as most of the productions do not meet their expectations in terms of quality and presentations.

Another significant contributory factor to decline in audience patronage of live theatre is the Nigerian live theatre's rigid adherence to old methods of marketing and showing up. Live theatre practitioners are yet to move with the technological train; hence, the crash of most theatre houses and other consequences. The development of the film industry, which makes people prefer staying at home to watch videos on their big flat screen television sets rather than going to a theatre where their safety and comfort are not guaranteed and then the advent of social media, which has enhanced the mobility of television, demand aggressive and innovative marketing strategies. Unfortunately, this demand has not been met by live theatre practitioners in the Nigerian creative industry. Theatre business managers are still romancing the old, archaic and out-dated marketing strategies. They still prefer to do things the old way.

Indiscriminately, the theatres of the earliest practitioners were economically viable as they were able to sustain themselves reasonably from the returns from this venture. In fact, effective management practice was one of the driving forces that kept the earlier theatre practitioners in business. Their approach to managing the theatre showed that there was favourable consideration for the non-artistic aspects of the theatre production process. The artistic and the business aspects worked hand-in-hand for the elevation of the theatre. Due diligence was carried out in the publicity, advertisement and public relations activities. The understanding of audience expectations and needs kept the earlier theatre practitioners in business.

David advises that, "today's theatre practitioners have to study those factors that accounted for the success of Hubert Ogunde, Kola Ogunmola, and Moses Olaiya Adejumo theatres, before the era of the cinema in Nigeria" (84). This advice was after he had studied the theatre of the earlier practitioners and realised the

factors that made them achieve huge success in the theatre business. He considered the challenges of low audience patronage, inability to generate audience and substantial profit maximisation affecting professional Nigerian theatre today. Studying these forerunners does not necessarily mean one has to rigidly follow their managerial concepts but take a cue from it and adapt to reflect societal trends in the planning and management of theatre practice.

Conversely, it will be that effective theatre management practice is the panacea to some of the factors militating against the survival of professional theatre practice in Nigeria. Once Nigerian theatre managers/producers begin to respond positively to the new trends of managing theatre structures by developing and exploring new theatre management strategies that will be audience friendly and reflect good audience engineering policies, the Nigerian theatre will most likely regain its vibrancy. Proper and effective management style must be adopted in coordinating, planning, directing and controlling all the arts of the theatre to achieve the desired goals and objectives of maximising profits and satisfying the audience.

### **Brief History of MUSON Centre**

MUSON centre is regarded as Nigeria's foremost and biggest musical body. It was set up by the Musical Society of Nigeria, a society that was formed in 1983. It came about as a result of people of like minds, who were interested in classical music, coming together to start performing and enjoying music together. The formation of this society was an initiation of Mr. Akintola Williams, a lover of classical music, who on Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1983, approached Sir Mervyn Brown, the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, between 1979 and 1983, to assist in organising a group of artistes and friends to form a society that will help promote the performance of classical music. By mid-October 1983, Williams contacted Chief Ayo Rosiji, Mr. Louis Mbanefo, Mrs. Francesca Emmanuel and others on a proposal to form a Musical Group. On Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1983, a steering committee of the Musical Group met to map out the strategy for the society. The name of the society, its objectives, structure, secretariat, administration, and short and long term plans were agreed on.

The MUSON Centre complex was eventually commissioned in February 1994 with the support of artistes and other interests in Europe, the Goethe Institute of Germany and Instituto Italiano Cultura of Italy. The Centre is located in Onikan, near the Yoruba Tennis Club and the Lagos Lawn Tennis Club, on one side; directly opposite the National Museum and close to Tafawa Balewa Square (TBS). The complex houses the MUSON School (where the training of students on the theory and practice of classical music takes place), the Library, Car Parks, Shell Nigeria Hall, Agip Recital Hall, and Function Room, among other facilities. Uzoma Nwanaju lists the objectives of the Musical Society of Nigeria thus:

- to promote the understanding and enjoyment of classical music in Nigeria;
- to promote the performance of serious music with emphasis on classical music;
- to promote the education of children in performance and theory of music;
- to encourage the interaction of Nigerian and non-Nigerian musicians;
- to provide facilities for the realisation of the above mentioned objectives; and
- to raise funds from person and organisations for the realisation of the above mentioned objectives (27).



*Fig. 1: Muson Centre, Onikan-Lagos*  
 Source: <https://muson.org>



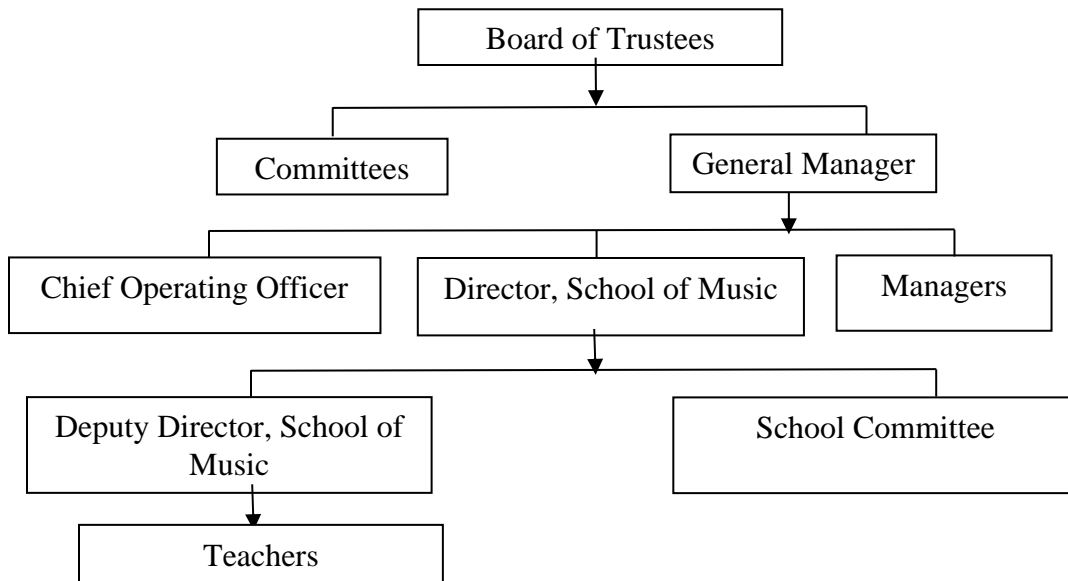
*Fig. 2: Agip Hall, Muson Centre*  
 Source: <https://muson.org>

### **Management Framework of the MUSON Centre**

There is a 12-member Board of Trustees at the peak of the managerial hierarchy of the MUSON Centre. They formulate policies and guidelines for the Centre. Next to the Board of Trustees are the Committees and the General Manager. The Committees (Artistes, Fund-Raising, Technical, Planning, Marketing, School and Competition, Members and Membership), who are volunteers and experts in their fields, give professional advice on issues relating to their respective fields.

The General Manager is the next person to the Board of Trustees when it comes to the general management of the Centre. The General Manger ensures the execution of the policies formulated by the Board of Trustees and the Committees. He has the Chief Operating Officer, and Managers (Finance & Administration, Marketing, Members & Membership Service, House & Operations, Events & Programmes, Technical & Maintenance, Press & Publicity) assisting him. The management holds its meetings every Monday to give reports on weekly activities. The problems encountered, how they were resolved as well as review of activities of the Centre are subjects of discussion at this meeting.

## Organogram of MUSON Centre, Lagos State



*Source: Iwa Alabi (Manager, House & Operations, MUSON Centre)*

### **Theatre Management in MUSON Centre**

MUSON Centre was established to present theatrical performances to the public for an amount considered reasonable and profitable. The management of the theatre involves activities that entail planning, organising, supervising, controlling, and directing of theatrical programmes in order to generate audience patronage, audience satisfaction and at the same time maximise profit. The issues of theatre management in MUSON Centre are discussed under Programme Management, House Management, and Marketing Management.

### **Programme Management**

The programmes of the MUSON Centre are fashioned in a way that the interests of every stakeholder of the theatre are well catered for. Different programmes are packaged to meet their committee, society and collaborators' needs. Programmes are coordinated to project the interest of the Centre members, existing and prospective audience, star and upcoming artistes. The programmes of the Centre are categorised into three – In-House, Collaborative, and Individual Producing Company.

### ***In-House Programmes***

The Artistes Committee is charged with the responsibilities of channelling the course of the artistic performances of the Centre. They work hand-in-hand with the Programme and Events Manager to plan programmes for the year. The Programme and Events Manager liaises with other managers before executing and packaging the various programmes of the Centre. The Artistes Committee does not take the Alpha and Omega position, either. While working on the artistic aspect of the theatre, the Artistes Committee liaises with the Programme and Event Manager, who oversees the business aspects of the production at every point in the production process. The In-House Programmes of the Centre is divided into:

- The Society's Productions; and
- The MUSON School of Music Productions

### **The Society's Productions**

These productions are designed to help the Centre achieve one of its core objectives – to encourage the interaction of Nigerian and non-Nigerian musicians. The Society's Productions equally give the Centre the opportunity to diversify – it gives the Society the opportunity to present productions that are beyond classical music; drama, dance, and visual arts are included as part of the Centre's programmes to accommodate other audiences who may not be interested in classical music.

Similarly, a particular production among the Society's Productions is prepared exclusively by the MUSON Centre, for its patrons and members to motivate and encourage their continuous commitment. The MUSON Centre knows that for it to continue to enjoy the loyalty and goodwill of its patrons and members, their commitment must be appreciated. The members and patrons are volunteers who contribute in their various capacities to the development and growth of the Centre. To encourage their continuous and active participation, the Centre created and dedicated an aspect of the Society's Productions to them. Hence, the Society's Productions are divided into:

- Soiree;
- The MUSON Festival of Arts;
- Season Concerts; and
- Schools Competition.

### ***Soiree***

This is a musical fiesta organised by the Society in the month of January every year, exclusively for its patrons and members. As a kind of motivation, the Society organises this musical party and invites its members and patrons to come and

perform and enjoy music and other forms of performing arts. This get-together party usually takes place in the evening. The patrons and members attend the event with their families and friends. One unique feature of this event is that the patrons and members entertain “themselves by themselves.” Vocal solo and ensemble, instrumental solo and ensemble, choral, and poems are performed by members to entertain members. Limited funds and resources are used to achieve great public awareness and publicity.

### ***The MUSON Festival of Arts***

This is an annual one-week event also organised by the Society. It is an initiative borne out of the fact that the Society wanted to go beyond just presentation and enjoyment of classical music and veer into other genres of the performing arts. The Society invites well-meaning Nigerian stakeholders in the visual and performing arts to collaborate as partners by contributing their events to the MUSON Festival of Arts programme. The scope of the Festival includes classical music, jazz, drama, poetry, visual arts exhibition, Nigerian youth talent competition and concert, Nigerian traditional music and dance, choral music, and opera. The objectives of the Festival as stated by Mbanefo include using performing arts

to increase the number of MUSON’s membership, to extend the scope of interest of MUSON’s membership, to create more public awareness of MUSON’s objectives and activities, and to promote the MUSON Centre as a veritable Centre for the Arts in Nigeria (9).

### ***Season Concerts***

The Society arranged an average of six concerts every year. At the concerts, artistes comprising Nigerians and expatriates present a repertoire of baroque Italian and English pieces, German leieder, opera, classical and traditional Nigerian music. The musical provision of this concert is made possible through the voluntary contributions of the cream of local artistes and international guest artistes.

### ***Schools Competition***

In pursuance of one of the Society’s objectives – promotion of the education of children in the performance and theory of music – the Society organises annual musical competitions for schools. Students between the ages of 10 and 18 years compete in different categories of vocal solo, instrumental solo, instrumental ensemble, and choral. The School Competition further assists the MUSON Centre in widening its audience base. No doubt, new audiences are generated effortlessly through the competition. The advantage of the competition is not only limited to more audience participation but facilitation of wider public awareness and



subsequent increase in audience attendance. The consequence of this is that improved patronage of the theatre can be assured.

### ***The MUSON School of Music Productions***

MUSON Centre has built a niche for itself in the performing arts market. The Centre does not rely on the Society's productions alone for audience patronage. It explored and established a music school to indirectly increase participation and engagement. The MUSON School of Music holds classes in violin, piano, recorder, flute, trumpet and voice, at various grade levels. As part of requirements for the fulfilment of Diploma in Music in the School, students are expected to present musical pieces every Monday for free to the public at the Centre's premises.

The saying "No free food in Freetown" is quite true; the free performances are a form of marketing strategies employed by the Centre to attract their potential audiences. When they visit the theatre once or twice to watch free performances, and they are satisfied with the overall theatre experiences at the Centre, they will be convinced, effortlessly, to see paid performances. Undoubtedly, this style may seem unpopular but its effectiveness as a new audience generating mechanism is quite applauding.



*Fig. 1: Recital Hall, Muson Centre, Onikan-Lagos*

*Source: <https://muson.org>*



*Fig. 2: Shell Hall, Muson Centre, Onikan-Lagos*

*Source: <https://muson.org>*

### **Collaborative Programmes**

The Musical Society of Nigeria is devoted to supporting the arts; and in achieving this objective, they partner with individual producing outfits who are producers of art works. As part of their contributions to these programmes, sometimes, they give out the hall for free, help partly in the publicity, or assist in the Front of House activities for the partner companies. The audiences of the partner companies are most times the target of MUSON Centre. Their attendance at such collaborative programmes will subtly introduce MUSON Centre and its activities to them. Suffice to say that MUSON Centre presents its products and services in the best

light possible to its potential audience with this collaborative and partnership scheme

### **Individual Producing Outfit's Programme**

Some producing outfits come to run their shows in the Centre. These outfits just bring their shows to the Centre after they must have hired and paid for the hall. They do not have any relationship with the Centre. In giving out the hall, the MUSON Centre gives certain terms and conditions to these companies and those conditions must be accepted before the hall can be release for rental.

### **House Management**

The comfort and welfare of audience is paramount. MUSON Centre sees its audience as part and parcel of the theatre. They are concerned not only about what the audience has to offer but how they can satisfy their audience and ensure that the theatre experience is worthwhile. Getting money out of the pockets of the audience is not their primary target but their minds. They are aware that members of the audience already know them; thus, the remaining task is to work on how they can like and trust the Centre. Over the years, the house management approach of the Centre has assisted in building the trust of audience for the Centre. The house management activities of the Centre involve receiving and caring for their clients/audience before, during and after performance. The discussion on this aspect of their theatre management practice is divided into:

- Before Performance;
- During Performance; and
- After Performance

### ***Before Performance***

Before each event, provision is made to cater for enquiries from clients/audience on events. Competent staffers are always on ground to give adequate information about all programmes. Security measures are put in place to make the place safe for every member of the audience. Security officers are always on ground to protect the clients/audience and ensure that their cars/properties are kept safe. In addition, the Centre ensures that her Front of House crews have a very good sense of human relations such that guests and audiences are warmly received into the hall. For those that would like to purchase tickets at the venue, tickets are easily made available. Comfortable spots are also provided at the spacious foyer for audiences who arrived at the venue before the advertised time and elderly ones among them are given chairs to sit.

To ensure safety and comfort, measures are put in place by the House and Operations Manager to make sure the auditorium is not overcrowded. Ticket sales are stopped once the hall is filled to check and control audience crowding. The Centre has three halls: Agip Recital Hall has tiered seats for 298, and 14 boxes seating 78 persons; Shell Nigeria Hall has the capacity to hold 1000 people; and the Function Room that complements the two main halls. It is a small hall that can be used for smaller-sized meetings and has the capacity to hold 200 people.

### ***During Performance***

It is generally believed that every person that comes to the Centre would comport him/herself. In ensuring the comfort of the audience during performances, the Centre ensures that the hall is clean and conducive; all toilets are clean and neat, air-condition facilities are in good working condition. For classical music performances that need much concentration from the performers, special attention is given to audience control. To avoid distraction during this performance, the house manager addresses the audience before the beginning of the performance telling them the *dos* and *don'ts* of the show. Applauses are not allowed during the performance until the end of each piece. In ensuring this, the lighting is controlled in such a way that once a piece begins, a red light comes up; and a green light comes up at the end of every piece to indicate that the piece has come to an end and they can appreciate the performers at that point. Also, children below the age of 9 years are not allowed into classical music performances.

### ***After Performance***

Usually, after each performance, the house light is put on. All doors to the foyer are then left open. Provisions are made for waiters to be on ground to help audience at the foyer. Security measures are also put in place to check uninvited or unwanted guests, who may have come with sinister intentions, for instance, to steal or cause commotion. Once such persons are apprehended, they are interrogated and if information gotten from such persons is not satisfactory to the management, such persons are sent out or handed over to the Police. The user-friendly facilities provided by the Centre serve as a form of incentive package aimed at sustaining the interest of the audience and encourage repeat visitation to the Centre. The audiences are assured that their lives and properties are of utmost priority by the Centre; thus, the fear of insecurity and bad reception is eluded.

### **Marketing Management**

The marketing department of the Centre is headed by the Marketing Manager. He or she controls all the affairs of the department and gives directives on what to be

done in marketing the Centre and its products. The Marketing Manager works hand-in-hand with the Marketing Committee, Artistes Committee, Programmes and Events Officer and the Press and Publicity Officer. The Programmes and Events Manager provides information on the events to be done. From the information provided, the Marketing Manager will mark out the target audience, where to seek advice, where to solicit for support, and where to market the programme. The marketing management of the Centre is discussed under: Publicity and Advertisement, Box Office Operations, and Finance.

### ***Publicity and Advertisement***

The press and publicity officer decides the publicity and advertisement strategy to be used based on the mapped up agenda by the marketing manager. One of the strategies used in advertising their programmes is broadcast on radio. The Centre has established partnership with some radio stations like Cool FM and Rhythm FM such that when they need to advertise their programmes, using these platforms, they do not have to pay for the slot given. The radio station will in turn quantify the cost of the slot and whenever they have the cause to use any of the Centre's facilities, they trade off by not paying too.

Another strategy is the newsletter method. The Centre issues yearly newsletter to its members to give them information on the activities of the Society and matters of general interest in the music world. The newsletter is also a strategy for membership drive and to encourage financial support from music lovers and philanthropists. Also, posters and handbills are taken to strategic places in the city of Lagos; these are places where their target audience visit frequently. Metropolitan Clubs and Quintessence are some of the places they place their adverts.

### ***Box Office Operations***

The bulk of earned returns of the Centre are from ticket sales. The Centre employs both manual and electronic ticket system. Tickets are available at the venues of performances, places advert and can also be booked online. Most times, the nature of the performance determines the price of the tickets. Sometimes, ticket prices are discounted for students. While the ticket price can be ₦2,000.00, students with identity cards pay ₦1,000.00 and V.I.P. goes for ₦5,000.00. Put simply, audience segmentation in pricing is another method used by the Centre to enjoy continuous turnout by the audience. The financial status of the audience is adequately considered before price tagging. The Society is aware that, "all fingers are not equal;" and that, "a little drop of water makes a mighty ocean."

### ***Source of Funding***

Funds available to the Society to meet the cost of the Centre include donations (in cash and in kind from corporate bodies, trustees, friends and members of the Society), debentures, lease/ rentals from Recital Hall boxes, bank overdrafts and loans. The largest source of funding is earned income from ticket sales.

### **Methodology**

Primary and secondary sources of data collection were explored to gather information used in this study. Textbooks, journals, and MUSON magazines were the secondary sources of information consulted. The primary data used in this study were basically collected through interview with the House and Operations Manager, MUSON and questionnaires for audience survey given to selected members of the audience at three different performances. In order to understand the relationship between the management strategies employed by MUSON Centre in the marketing and sales of their productions and substantial audience patronage vis-a-vis audience loyalty sustenance, questions were asked face-to-face and through phone calls to the House and Operations Manager, MUSON to have a clear understanding of the management strategies employed in audience gathering and cultivation at the Centre; while questionnaires were administered to audiences who attended the productions of Gaetano Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* (a comic opera) presented on Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2019, and Andre Gretry's *Guillaume Tell* (a comic opera) presented on Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2019, to measure the effectiveness of the management strategies used by the MUSON Centre in ensuring audience satisfaction at the theatre, and sustaining their loyalty to the Centre.

Using the judgmental sampling methodology, audience within the age range of 20 and 50 were selected for the survey. This category of people was selected because they were identified as the age group that constitutes the largest part of MUSON audience based on the researchers' assessment and evaluation of the Centre's audience. Information was also gathered from students and guests at the 13<sup>th</sup> Graduation Ceremony during the production of Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* presented on Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2019. The sample of this study is made up of one hundred and thirty (130) respondents randomly selected from the three performances. Fifty (50) audiences were given questionnaires to respond to at each of the three performances. Forty (40) audiences at the production of *Die Fledermaus* properly filled and returned the questionnaires. While forty-seven (47) questionnaires were retrieved from audience at performance of *Don Pasquale*, forty-three (43) were collected at the performance of *Guillaume Tell*. Somehow, twenty (20) questionnaires were not either returned or filled properly the respondents.

**Table 1: Study area and sample size**

<b>Performance</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	40	30.8
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	47	36.1
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	43	33.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>

## Results and Discussions

This paper explains why most theatre houses often fail to enjoy significant patronage and acceptance from the Nigerian audience while MUSON Centre keeps receiving audience attention. The management strategies employed by MUSON Centre, Lagos in marketing and sales of their theatre programmes and how the strategies contribute to the success of the Centre in the areas of audience generation, audience sustenance and profit maximisation is examined. Table 2 shows details of the age distribution of the respondents.

**Table 2: Age distribution of respondents at three performances presented between June and November 2019**

<b>Performance</b>	<b>Age</b>			
	<b>Below 20</b>	<b>20-30</b>	<b>30-50</b>	<b>50 and above</b>
<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	7	8	17	8
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	1	10	30	6
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	8	8	22	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>53.1</b>	<b>14.6</b>

The findings in table 2 show that most audience that attended the three performances falls between age 30 and 50 (69 audiences representing 53.1%). The occupation distribution of this category of people shows that most of them are not students; they are either employed, or self-employed with tangible sources of income. Table 3 below shows analysis of the occupational distribution of respondents between the ages of 30 and 50.

**Table 3: Occupational distribution of respondents between ages 30-50**

<b>Performance</b>	<b>Occupation</b>		
	<b>Civil Servants</b>	<b>Self-Employed</b>	<b>Others</b>
<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	7	9	1
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	10	20	-
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	15	6	1

<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>2.9</b>

The findings in table 3 show that the largest percentages of audience in this category are self-employed (35 audiences representing 50.7%). This category of people, to a large extent, has control over their time and activities they engage in. Also, the occupational distribution of this set of people indicates that they have sources of income that they could afford the ticket at MUSON Centre. MUSON has four categories of tickets with fixed prices: the students' ticket at ₦2,000.00; Members at ₦3,000.00; Regular at ₦5,000.00; and VIP at ₦10,000.00. Table 4 shows analysis of ticket admission at the paid performances examined in this study.

**Table 4: Ticket group of respondents at paid production**

<b>Performance</b>	<b>Ticket Group</b>			
	<b>Student</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Regular</b>	<b>VIP</b>
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	10	29	7	1
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	7	23	11	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>57.8</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3.3</b>

The findings in table 4 show that most audience (52 person representing 57.8%) of the paid performances under study in this paper are members of MUSON centre that enjoys subsidised ticket admission fee. The MUSON members are usually people not less than age 21. They are volunteers who contribute in their various capacities to the development and growth of the MUSON Centre. Aside from this, the members support the Centre financially through the annual subscription. There are three categories of Membership at the MUSON; the student, member and special. Each of these categories pays an annual subscription to be able to enjoy the subsidised ticket offer and other benefits accrued to MUSON members. Student member pays ₦2,000.00, Member pays ₦10,000.00 while Special which is also categorised into: *benefactor*, *sponsor*, *sustainer*, *supporting donor*, and *participating donor* pays ₦30,000.00 annually as membership fee. Payment of the membership fee qualifies the member for subsidised ticket fee at every performances presented all through the year. Undoubtedly, the dedication to payment of the annual subscription fee by the members shows their commitment to the growth and development of the MUSON Centre.

Two major ticketing systems are employed by the MUSON centre, the Online and Box-Office ticketing system. Since this study is about measuring the effectiveness of management tools used by MUSON, the respondents are asked to

indicate their most preferred ticketing system among the ones used by MUSON. Table 5 below shows analysis of the information on the most preferred, most used ticket system and the ticketing system used in purchasing ticket for the paid performances (*Don Pasquale, Guillaume Tell*).

**Table 5: Most preferred, most used and used ticketing system of respondents**

Production	Ticketing System					
	Most Preferred		Most Used		Used	
	E-Ticket	Box-Office	E-Ticket	Box-Office	E-Ticket	Box-Office
<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	32	8	35	5	-	-
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	45	2	40	7	36	11
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	38	5	33	10	30	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>24</b>

The findings in table 5 show that most MUSON audience prefer and use e-ticket to purchase ticket for performances. They book ahead of the performances to reserve seat. Thirty-six (36) members of the audience out of forty-seven (47) purchased ticket online for admission into the performance of *Don Pasquale* while thirty (30) audience out of forty-three (43) bought tickets online for the performance of *Guillaume Tell*. E-ticket system allows the audience buys tickets from the comfort of their homes online using phones. This management tools used for selling and buying of theatre tickets seems faster and more convenient for audience to use. One can then say that the e-ticketing is a great management tool that has contributed to the endearment of MUSON to the heart of its consumers (the audience).

Everyone loves to get things with ease and with less stress; and this is what MUSON gives to its consumers through the e-ticketing system. MUSON understands the power of technology and has explored and exploited this opportunity judiciously in the creation of mass publicity and advertisement. To reach its audience, performances are advertised using different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, among others. The Centre also has its website where information about the theatre can be accessed. Adverts are placed on these platforms to reach the existing and potential audiences. Table 6 below shows analysis of respondents’ response to how information about MUSON programme reaches them.



**Table 6: Respondents' means of getting information about MUSON programmes**

Performance	Advertising Tools					
	Flier	TV/ Radio	Website	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter
<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	5	2	9	10	6	8
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	7	4	10	15	9	2
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	4	3	12	16	8	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>7.7</b>

Findings in table 6 show that most audience (41 audience representing 31.5%) got announcement about MUSON Centre on Facebook. It was also observed that MUSON website is effective in reaching its targeted audience, 31 audience which represents 23.8% of the population of this study got information about programmes and performances on MUSON website. However, it is also observed that the taste and preference of MUSON Centre audience in terms of genre of music is quite different from the mission of establishing MUSON which is to promote the performance of serious music with emphasis on classical music. Findings in table 7 show that MUSON Centre audience prefers other genres of music to classical music. The audience' most preferred genre of music is contrary to reason behind the establishment of MUSON which is presentation of classical music. Table 7 below provides the breakdown of audience response to most preferred music form.

**Table 7: Breakdown of audience response to most preferred music form**

Performance	Music forms				
	Jazz	Rock	Classical	Folk Music	Hip Hop
<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	7	9	7	13	4
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	7	15	10	10	5
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	10	7	9	17	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>9</b>

The findings from table 7 show that audience prefers and enjoys other genre of theatre to classical music. The table shows that preference for folk music is higher than any other genre. One would have thought that classical music should take the lead; but that is not the case with the audience of MUSON Centre. The House and Operations Manager, Alabi Iwa, stated thus:

...this is the reason MUSON does other performance aside classical music.... However MUSON still present classical music productions despite having just a handful of classical music lovers and appreciators though we collaborate with individual producing outfits to present other genres of the theatre to suit our audience's needs.

To know the level of satisfaction of the audience about MUSON in terms of audience welfare and performance quality, respondents were asked to rate the performance and audience welfare at the three performances in this study by ticking either "Very Satisfied," "Somehow Satisfied," "Indifferent," "Somehow Dissatisfied," and "Very Dissatisfied." Table 8 shows analysis of the respondent's response to the rating of performance's quality.

**Table 8: Analysis of respondents' rating of performances' quality**

<b>Performance</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Somehow satisfied</b>	<b>Indifferent</b>	<b>Somehow dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very dissatisfied</b>
<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	30	9	1	-	-
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	40	7	-	-	-
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	43	-	-	-	-

Table 8 shows that audiences are very satisfied with the quality of performances presented at MUSON centre. One hundred and thirteen (113) audiences ticked the very satisfied option which indicates that MUSON Centre is intentional about productions they present. They ensure the mise-en-scene and every theatrical paraphernalia are well coordinated to give an exciting and interesting theatrical experience to the audience. The analysis attests to the reason for the repeat visit by audience to the theatre. Also, Alabi's submission during our interview session buttresses the respondents' response to the rating of performance quality of the MUSON Centre. When asked for his opinion on the factors that has kept audience coming back to the theatre after their first visit, Alabi stated thus:

Aside from the fact that MUSON has already built a reputation for itself as the foremost and biggest musical body in Nigeria, we usually present musicals that are well written, sung, delivered, so I

can say that our audience’s satisfaction comes from well written and sung music, delivery and poise (Personal Interview).

**Table 9: Analysis of respondents’ rating of audience’ welfare at MUSON Centre**

<b>Performance</b>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Somehow Satisfied</b>	<b>Indifferent</b>	<b>Somehow Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>
<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	35	5	-	-	-
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	43	4	-	-	-
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	40	2	1	-	-

Findings in table 9 shows that most of the audiences in this study are very satisfied with the way MUSON cater for its audience before, during, and after performance. Only one audience ticked indifferent i.e., he or she cannot say if the welfare is satisfactory or not.

### **Summary of Findings**

The result from the questionnaire survey indicates that the relationship between MUSON Centre and its audience is very interactive and symbiotic. The audiences have a kind of influence on the type of programmes presented by MUSON Centre; their preferences and tastes to some extent determines the Centre’s choice of play. This is not to say that the decision making on the type of theatrical programmes to be presented is one-way, such in which the audience state their needs and wants, and the producer rushes to meet the demands. No, that is not it. At MUSON Centre, feedbacks from audience are analysed and reviewed to understand their preference and taste; then decisions are further made to offer what the Centre thinks is best regardless of the results of the survey because sometimes the audience do not really know what they want, thus, there is a need for the theatre to take the lead, while paying close attention to audience comments and feedbacks which serve as guide and not final say.

Though MUSON Centre has carved a niche for itself in the performing arts market, the management still ensures that presentation of classical music isn't boring or monotonous. They keep offering new, different and unique forms of classical music to their audience and this invariably can be said to be contributory to the increase in the audiences' desire for the theatre. In spite of the fact that MUSON is established basically to present classical music to the public at an

amount they perceived affordable, they still present other shows through their collaborations with individual performing outfits in order to accommodate their audience needs and wants. MUSON presents drama, musicals, pop music, and visual arts among other forms of arts to accommodate the desire of the audience. MUSON knows its audience and what they want. The Centre employed different methods to lust different categories of audiences. MUSON gives approach classical music lovers with classical music while it equally creates room for other genres to accommodate their remaining audience.

The ticket grouping system also shows that MUSON is conscious of its environment. It is aware that all hands are not equal and to be able to gain popularity among people, there is a need to make theatre affordable to all. The admission fee grouping allows everyone participate in the theatre, no one is alienated as a result of lack of enough finance.

### **Conclusion**

MUSON Centre is aware that it is typically difficult to sell offers to total strangers (new audience) and lot of efforts is needed to convince the stranger. The theatre management style of MUSON Centre is strategically and deliberately targeted at attaining productive results in marketing, audience participation, continuity and survival of live theatre performances. MUSON Centre studies and analyses their prospective and existing audience to understand their needs and expectations, and the best language to communicate. Budding theatre marketers can learn from the MUSON management style and can even adopt this management model, and then gradually formulate their own by adjusting and infusing strategies that reflects social and modern trends of attracting and sustaining audience patronage.

To achieve robust audience participation at live theatre performances, theatre producers need to change their style of approaching the audience. To gather, satisfy and sustain live theatre audience, theatre managers need to understand the audience needs and expectations. Rushing at getting audience without doing the necessary homework will more often not yield the desired objectives of having full house and maximising profit. Ben Walmsley explains that, “many theatre marketers and event managers, therefore, miss the mark as they are unable to critically reflect on why their audiences engage with theatre, resulting in their marketing not connecting with their audiences and ticket sales suffering accordingly” (336). By understanding what is of significance for audience when they visit the theatre, theatre managers will be guided on how to give the audience worthwhile experience and encourage repeat visitations. Effective marketing, publicity, public relations activities enhance theatre image and brand, thus, send positive signals to audience and stimulate their interest in arts, motivate and encourage prospective audience visitation to the theatre.

Gone are those days when Nigerians viewed theatre as the only reliable relaxation and recreational centre. Today, Nigerian live theatre is battling with other entertainment genres for patronage from audience. Entertainment genres like stand-up comedy, sports, music shows among others now share audience with Nigerian live theatre, hence, the prevalence of survival of the fittest. Consequently, professional theatre practice needs theatre marketers to do things differently. Live theatre managers need to take deliberate actions to stand out in business. Development and exploration of management plans and strategies that reflect advertisement of audience motivating offers, creation of easy access to the offers, presentation of appealing performances that will satisfy audiences' motives for visiting the theatre, and creation of enabling atmosphere for the audience during visitation at the theatre have become necessary to attain the desired audience participation needed for a thriving live theatre. Consequently, this paper makes the following recommendations:

1. More attention should be given to theatre management practice because it is an important aspect of the theatre that is capable of stimulating more audience participation in the Nigerian live theatre; thus, restoring the lost glory of the live theatre and also enhance successful theatre business.
2. Theatre marketing should be taken as a serious business. Targeting the right audience with the right offer is key to sustainable audience patronage of the theatre, hence it is imperative for theatre marketers to know and understand their audience's needs and wants before rushing to offer.
3. Theatre managers should start working their theories. They should be encouraged to evolve and implement new management strategies that can stand world best practice.
4. Students offering theatre management as course in the theatre arts departments of the Nigerian Universities should be encouraged to go to theatre houses for internship programmes as this will give the students (potential theatre manager) first-hand information on what is expected of them after they leave the four walls of the university.
5. Workshops, seminars, symposiums and conferences should be organised frequently for theatre managers in order to enable them keep in touch with other theatre managers and producers and to be up to date with new developments in the theatre management parlance.

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# THE CLAXON AND TOCSINS OF CULTISM IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: LESSON IN FELIX AKINSIPE'S *NEVER AND NEVER*

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## **Abstract**

Many at times, institutions of higher learning in Nigeria come under intense pressure from secret cult activities. These activities have become a cankerworm not only to the students and leadership of various institutions but also the government across all tiers. Over time, corporate bodies, individuals and governments across board have adopted various approaches to sensitise the society about the looming danger that membership of a secret cult on campus poses and its consequences as a service to the community. Drama is one of the adopted medium being one of the most potent means of passing information for easy comprehension by every class of the society. This paper therefore examines the causes, effect and strategies for eradicating the menace of cultism in higher institutions in Nigeria as amplified by Felix Akinsipe in his play *Never and Never*. Using summative content analysis, the study x-rays cogent issues raised in the play *Never and Never* as projected by Felix Akinsipe. Higher institutions in Nigeria are saddled with the responsibility of producing strong and self-reliant graduates who will fit into a just and egalitarian society. The trepidatious activities of these secret cults have an adverse effect as it threatens to truncate the aims and objectives of the Nigerian higher institutions. This is because secret cults on campuses are groomed to engage in social disobedience. This paper recommends that to decimate every secret cult activities on campuses across the nation. The authorities must invest into intelligence gathering across institutions as these secret cults usually have strong base sponsorship on and off campuses. Also, timely and adequate prosecution of both the active and passive members will be a great deal to putting an end to cultism on university campuses in Nigeria.

**Key words:** Cultism, tertiary institutions, quality education

## **Introduction**

The Nigerian higher educational system is designed to provide accessible, relevant and holistic education by constantly attracting, developing and graduating

competent, knowledgeable, talented and morally upright individuals capable of enhancing Nigerian economic growth and global competitiveness. Higher education is known to provide people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical, social, economic, cultural and moral issues facing humanity. Its products are to proffer sustainable solution to various problems facing the world through dissemination of knowledge in areas of their specialisation.

Undeniably, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, cultism is one of the major vices in Nigerian higher institutions and it remains a step in the developmental throat of the Nigerian tertiary educational system. The acceleration and the aggressive growth and expansion of this menace has put Nigerian higher institution on the spotlight for negative reasons which obviously reflect on the learning quality and the integrity of graduate of Nigeria educational system. Abiodun Ajayi and Babatola Ayodele postulate that,

cultism can be defined as a ritual practice by a group of people whose membership, admission, policy and initiation formalities as well as their mode of operations are done in secret and kept secret with their activities having negative effects on both members and none members alike (27).

To conclude that cultism is the root of every criminal activity in Nigeria is to say the least as their operation has gone beyond campuses alone, it has spilled into the host communities and indeed beyond as they offer criminal services to the powers that be in the society. Such services include assassination of perceived opponents to their sponsors be it political or contractual oppositions. These cultists track down their targets either in the office, home or in transit. Most often, they perpetrate their evil plans and escape without them being tracked down because they play the pun for the sacred cows of the society. They determine their scores by intimidating lecturers; they rape ladies who do not fall within the bracket of their interest also. The most prominent act of these confraternities is the contest for supremacy between two or more cult groups on campus. These groups show supremacy by maiming or ultimately killing opposing members to use their language; it is called, “counting scores.” They carry out these gory acts not only on campus but also in hostels and on the streets.

The menace of cultism has been a problem every institution has been battling with since the 80s. Alison Akor submits that, “one of the earliest reported secret cult violence occurred at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1985 when a non-cult student incurred the wrath of another student, who was a cult leader for snatching the latter’s girlfriend” (*The Guardian* 1). Rotimi Adewale also reports that,



in 1991 a student of University of Port-Harcourt was beheaded during a feud between cult members; at Delta State University in Abraka, the activities of secret cult group resulted in the death of a principal assistant registrar and his wife.

He further states that, “on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 2002, a 300 Level economics student was shot dead and slaughtered at the Dallimore area of Ado Ekiti, the capital city of Ekiti State” (84). As the year goes by, the activities of cultists in our society becomes more biting and it calls for a definite action. These cultists have become so comfortable with sophisticated arms and ammunition at their disposal. The wards of the big wigs of the society are among them with unimaginable financial and logistic support base from the least expected members of the society who are well respected by the public. They have acquired fire power that has made them so comfortable that they now ambush or engage security agents in a shooting spree. This is why Jonathan Mbachaga submits that, “the varying degrees of horror that cult groups unleash, leads one to conclude that they can be equated to bandits and possibly tagged campus terrorists...” (40).

The terrorising and banditry activities of cultists have had its tolls on Nigeria population as far back as the early 90s. Oto Okwu also maintains that, “till September 2003, 5,000 students and lecturers have died on Nigerian Campuses as a result of cult-related violent clashes” (195). It is disheartening and distasteful that destinies of young and promising talents are being terminated in their primes. More disheartening it is that governments, administrations upon administrations have promised to put a stop to this menace but it turns out to either be lips service, lack of implementable laws and policies or lack of the political will to use all mechanism of government to put a permanent stop to all cult activities in Nigerian higher institutions.

The strength of secret cults in Nigerian higher institutions has gone beyond night operations. They have grown so sophisticated that they now operate in broad daylight. Mopelola Omoegun and Florence Akanle submit thus: “On 8<sup>th</sup> June 2006, some cult members invaded university of Ado Ekiti at 12 noon where they burnt the cadet’s office, killed three students and wounded many students and staff of the university” (83). Also, Alice Jekayinfa reports that, one Mr. Ileoje, a Head of Department at the Institute of Management Technology (IMT), Enugu, was shot in his office by a female cult member early in 1997. Jekayinfa states further that, “...at University of Ibadan, the Chief Security Officer was brutally beaten by cult members in the presence of his wife and children” (59).

The Federal Government of Nigeria, noticing the escalation of the ugly menace of cultism, has made concerted efforts at putting it to a permanent halt

through various laws. The first major effort came from the Federal Government under the military administration of General Ibrahim Babangida on 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1989, when he enacted the *Student Union Activities Control and Regulation Decree No. 47*. The *Decree* empowers the various governing council of each Nigerian University to control cultism. Also, in year 2000, the Federal Government under Chief Obasanjo issued a three month ultimatum to all vice chancellors of Nigerian Universities, Rectors of Polytechnics and Provosts of colleges of Education to eradicate cultism on their various campuses. As at today, there is no state in Nigeria including the FCT that does not have legislated anti-cultism laws enacted, each placing a jail term while others recommending death penalty for cultism culprit. These efforts to say the least remain impotent as cultism activities on our campuses gets northwards day in day out.

### **Cultism in Nigerian Schools: An Appraisal**

In Nigeria, cultism dates back to the pre-colonial era where people of same ideology come together in unison to seek protection from their ancestors through offerings of sacrifice. I.O.A. Adeola is of the opinion that secret cults have “always existed in many parts of the country. The Ogboni secret cult is notable among the Yorubas, Ekpe secret cult among the Efiks, Ekine cult in the Delta region and Owegbe cult among the Edos” (56). In 1953, the first cult on Nigerian campus was established at the University College, Ibadan, now the University of Ibadan. Oyemwinmina and Aibieyi report that, “seven idealist young students namely Wole Soyinka (now professor), Pius Oleghe, Raph Opara, Tunji Tubi, Daign Imokhuede, Olu Agunloye and Muiyiwa Awe (now emeritus professor of physics), formed the Seadogs Confraternity aka Pyrates” (223). The idea was for oneness, solidarity and comradeship. Jide Orintusin expatiates further:

The ideas behind the formation of the confraternity were both patriotic and altruistic as it was not imagined as a secret cult. The main objectives of the Seadogs were to be non-violent but intellectually and effectively be against the imposition of foreign conventions; to revive the age of chivalry; and to find a lasting solution to the problems of tribalism and elitism (73).

In 1965, an association of friends who usually converge at Nnamdi Hall of the school transformed into the Eiye Confraternity; while in 1972, some of the members of the seadog confraternity were expelled from the cult for contradicting its objectives and they immediately formed a rival organisation called the Buccaneers Confraternity. The Seadog, Eiye and Buccaneers Confraternities were all in existence at the University of Ibadan. In 1962, the Federal Government of

Nigeria created additional four universities namely The University of Nigeria Nsukka, the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile-Ife, University of Lagos and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. As more universities were created, the three confraternities were spreading into the newly created ones. Muyiwa Awe avers that, “in the early 1990s, female students started their own cults” (56).

As at present, the early confraternity which was designed as a pressure group and a positive force has obviously lost the track as it has now become a group of terrors, bandits, rapists and armed robbers. Cultism has overwhelmed almost all Nigerian higher institutions with an unimaginable gravity. As at today, there are above forty brands of secret cults across Nigerian higher institutions. Most prominent among them are Eiyé Confraternity, Black Axe Confraternity (aka Ayee), Buccaneers Confraternity (aka Alora), The Vikings, Pyrates Confraternity, the Soirees Fraternity and Vipers. The popular ladies cults include Daughters of Jezebel, Black Bra, Pink Ladies and White Angels. It is regrettable to note that what started in an institution as a group of intellectuals has now proliferated into all government higher institutions as a killer squad and its now mushrooming into private institutions.

### **Synopsis of the Play**

*Never and Never* is a satire that takes a critical but indicting look at secret cult activities on campuses of the Nigerian tertiary institutions. Abu, a very brilliant final year medical student, is the protagonist of the play. He is persuaded to join the Animals secret cult, but refuses insisting on his unwavering commitment to academic excellence, the cult members intimidate him into joining but Abu is determined to renounce his 'duress' membership and expose the cultists. A professor in his Department and the Dean of Students' Affairs become his confidants and vital instrument of panacea, who design strategies for the arrest of the cultists hence the freedom of Abu, other innocent students and the campus became cult free.

### **A Back to Back Exploration of Akinsipe's *Never and Never***

The fight against the menace of cultism in Nigerian higher institutions should be a collective responsibility of all. The negative effect it has on the educational reputation of Nigerian tertiary institutions as well as the image of the nation at large cannot be overemphasised. Hence, everyone is affected by the ugly face of cultism at different level and degree. Abiodun Ajayi and Babatola Ayodele, as well as Alice Jekayinfa, establish that majority of people who join secret cults are of the adolescent age (15-22 years) majority of whom are intimidated into it while a few join on personal volition. The strategies that cultists use to lure and recruit new members include set-up, cajoling, intimidation and talent hunting. Felix Akinsipe's

*Never and Never* contributes its quota to the society in the fight against cultism on Nigerian campuses by x-raying the totality of campus cultism. The play establishes the specie of personality the Animal Fraternity is interested in recruiting. They include students who dress irresponsibly, students who are interested in getting their goals through shortcut, students who seek protection against the authorities, students who love extravagant life, students who are from wealthy and influential background and indeed the most brilliant students on campus. Abu who is a leading medical student on campus becomes a target for the cultists. Tiger, the capon of the confraternity wants him to join them at all costs. They both dialogue thus:

**Abu:** Why can't you people leave me alone? This is not fair, I told you am the only child of my parents and I am seating for my final medical examinations next semester. I am looking forward to becoming a medical doctor. I cannot risk my profession and the number of years I have put in on campus.

**Tiger:** We also want the best medical student in our group. You will take care of our medical problems when you graduate. So you have to corporate with us (*Never and Never* 28-29).

The expression here shows that secret cults are departmentalised. They are particularly interested in expertise and competence in specific areas, while they initiate some for combatant purpose; others are recruited for specific and strategic reason of intellect in terms of planning and playing advisory roles. In the case of Abu, his medical expertise is what they need to handle their medical challenges. Secret cult members go the extra miles to get their target member into their fold. After all strategies used in trying to convince Abu into joining the Animal Fraternity hit the brick wall, they noticed he was a social drinker and they set him up by making sure he drinks to stupor to the point of unconsciousness. He later got conscious in the groove of the cultists where he was brutalised and intimidated into being a member. A keen look at the behaviour of a newly initiated cultist, there is always a sharp change from their normal self in terms of friends they keep, decline in academics zeal and interest, and their mode of dressing especially in terms of colour combination among others. In Abu's case in the world of the play, he became extremely secretive even to his beloved girlfriend. All efforts to get words from him about his attackers proved abortive after spending a week in the hospital. Bunmi, his girlfriend expresses worries thus:

**Bunmi:** Chika, I need your help.

**Chika:** In what way?

**Bunmi:** Let's find out what is going on. Abu has changed. (*Never and Never* 37-38).

The worry expressed in the picture above emphasises how conspicuous and noticeable the change of a new secret cult initiate can be. A young eloquent, vibrant and focused young medical student is now a shadow of himself. He now acts so roguishly that the two closest people to him on campus, Chika, his roommate and his best friend, as well as Bunmi, his girlfriend, no longer understand anything about him as he now prefers new set of friends.

The world of the play establishes that, the life of a cultist is indeed a frustrated life as majority of them either get expelled from school, drug addicts, or become prostitutes in the case of ladies. In one of the meetings of Animal Confraternity, one of the cultists, Joyce expresses her frustrations. In her words:

**Joyce:** It's no joke, Dog. It's reality. See Shola the Frog. We were initiated the same day but he is now mentally deranged. He is running the street and there is nothing we can do about that. And many cases like that.

**Dog:** He drank too much of the mixture. It was nobody's fault.

**Joyce:** Why did he drink so much? Frustration. He told me he no longer fits the society. What of you, Dog, by the time we were initiated were you lame? (*Never and Never* 44).

The lines above show how frustrated cultists who joined under the promise and guarantee for protection against the school authority or other students, monetary gains and unmerited academic excellence can be. The promises are used as bait to lure and recruit new members.

Suffice it to mention, the attendant effect of cultism on Nigerian students can be seen in both inter and intra-cult clashes negatively affect the students in a very high proportion. Beyond incarceration, rustication or expulsion, students pay the ultimate price as destinies of tomorrow leaders are cut short in cold blood. An intra-cult clash in the world of the play generates the following dialogue:

**Cobra:** What was that?

**Dog:** It's Joyce.

**Bird:** What is it with her?

**Dog:** She said she is quitting.

**Umar:** Quitting? Why? To where?

**Dog:** I have silenced her.

**Abu:** Was it Joyce you shot?

**Dog:** Oh yes. The idiot is gone (*Never and Never* 45).

The atmosphere created above is that of horror. It depicts that joining a secret cult on campus can be a journey of no return as some renouncing members pay with their lives. The confraternities on Nigerian campuses are not only brutal with none initiates, they are also brutal with their members as forgiveness becomes forbidding to them.

Cultists leave in perpetual fear of the unknown. No matter how intimate they get to one another, the trust factor is always missing. They neither trust non-initiates nor themselves. They send one another on criminal errands, they bestow position of trust to their members, yet the trust is conspicuously missing. Members of secret cults live in fear; they suspect everyone around them including themselves. In the play, Abu who upon return from an inter-cult operation felt uncomfortable with his health, he took permission to go and take care of himself. In his words:

**Abu:** Just for today, I am feeling bad.

**Tiger:** Ok, go and take care of yourself, we cannot afford to miss you.

**Abu:** Thank you. By the authority of the Capon, I take my leave (*He departs*).

**Tiger:** Cobra and Dog, keep a close watch on that boy, I suspect him. (*Never and Never* 47).

The lines above explicitly present the level of sensitivity of cult members to happenings at different level. Every move a member makes is followed up for the fear of the unknown. Intelligence gathering is one of the main tools of continuous survival of secret cult groups on Nigerian campuses. They go the extra miles to find out what steps the school authority wants to take against them, what the government has in plan for them, the police and other security agencies are well penetrated as well. Hence their unwavering comfort on campus. They have information ahead even before the authorities hatch its plans they have adequately prepared. It therefore remains a difficult task to decimate cultism not to talk of completely eradicating them.

Adequate information and a high level of risk is a major solution to the problem of campus terrorism. Akinsipe's resolution of the play *Never and Never* suggests that as much members and godfathers the cultists have in our institutions for the purpose of feeding them with information, the authorities of different higher institutions need as much adequate and timely information to arrest these cultists and make our campuses safe and cult free. Abu in the play haven known the level at which the Animal Fraternity trails every contact of its members with the dean of students affairs who is championing the fight against cultism intelligently informed

a professor who in turn informed the appropriate body and they round them up. The interaction below aptly captures this:

**Prof:** Where is Abu?

**Abu:** Here, Prof., I thought you were not going to come.

**Prof:** As soon as you told me after the class, I went straight to the Dean of Students' Affairs. Since then we have been working with the police and SSS.

**DSA:** Well done, Abu. (*Never and Never* 53)

The terror and horror that different cult groups have unleashed on Nigerian higher institutions has not only given these institutions bad names, it has also affected the academic output of the students as no meaningful learning can take place in an environment where peace is not maintained, sustained and perpetuated. The existence of our campuses in fear and daily uncertainty can only produce graduates that are half-baked or grossly incompetent.

The playwright set forth in emphatic terms various reasons why students become members of secret cults. Across the play, in the lines of the members of the Animal Fraternity students who love to be respected and recognised on campus, students who are tough-looking, tough-talking and tough-thinking, students who want short cuts to everything. Short cut to reading, short cut to reading, short cut to learning, short cut to passing examinations, those who love to wear the best dresses, the best shoes, carry the best handsets and the latest of everything in town, students who are from wealthy and influential families or background and the students who for no reason feel insecure on campus. They want protection against the authority, protection against lecturers, and protection against fellow students. They seek protection even against their own shadow. Students whose mentality falls within this bracket of thinking are referred to as 'cultables.'

In the world of the play, secret cults on campuses, seek to acquire and exercise a great deal of power so as to compel and coerce the school administrations, lecturers and fellow students to do their will in criminal and immoral circumstances (*Never and Never* 12-13). This includes monopoly of girl/boyfriends, extortion of money and properties from fellow students, rigging of student's union elections in their favour, manipulation of disciplinary offences, examination malpractices and fraud. The courage with which cultists disseminate information about university authorities, the manner they harass principal officers, the courage with which they kidnap lecturers and coerce or threaten him or her to sign forged documents or give their members undeserving grades in their courses and most recently, cultists use ladies to set up male lecturers, they in turn use the

evidence of his sexual escapade which could be inform of audio or audio-visual to threaten him into favouring them in all fronts within his capacity in the institution.

The aims and objectives of these secret cults for over three decades of its existence on Nigerian campuses remains impossibility. The establishment Nigerian higher institutions make students subjects to the authority and powers of the authorities of each institution. This relationship is created by the laws establishing these institutions and the reverse is impossible. To corroborate this, Dzurgba Akpenpuun submits that,

the students' loyalty to the University authorities is lawfully compulsive and coercive. Therefore, their loyalty is not an optional matter and it is to the best of their own good in terms of their academic achievements and general well-being. This is why the law has given the University Senate the powers to suspend and expel the students who are found guilty of gross misconduct. In contradiction, the students' union leaders do not have legal powers to suspend or expel University Authorities at all (23).

It is therefore share ignorance for students through membership of secret cult to be of the opinion that authorities of their institutions can be at their mercy. Studies remain the primary duty of students on campus and it is in their own interest to concentrate on studies which is their topmost priority in the University and other tertiary institutions. An understanding of the distinction or difference between them and the authorities, as well as concentration on studying is in their best interest. In doing this, they will appreciate the importance of peace, sanity, decency, obedience and self-discipline to their academic success.

Over the past three decades, various attempts have been made to deal with the problem of cultism across tertiary Institutions in Nigeria, various measures taken, by government, non-governmental organisations and individuals to halt the menace throughout the cardinal points of Nigeria educational system. Governments at various levels have legislated different anti-cultism laws to deter its continuous existence. First is *Decree 47* of the federal government of Nigeria in 1989 that pronounced a number of year jail term for anyone found guilty of being cultist. State governments across the country have also enacted anti-cultism laws. Emmanuel Ibeh stipulated that, "Rivers State Government made a law stipulating a ten-year jail term sentence without an option of fine for culprits of cultism" (38). Noticing that the menace persists, some states enacted laws that condemn anyone guilty of being a cultist while others who consider their law against it as not being potent enough reviewed such laws. In Ekiti State for instance, Rotimi Ojomoyele submits that:



the original bill was said to have been promulgated during the first term of Governor Ayodele Fayose, was amended from the previous seven-year imprisonment for convicted cultists to death penalty, while the punishment for people who aid or abet the crime rose from five-year imprisonment to life imprisonment (*Vanguard* 1).

Beyond the efforts of the federal and state governments, the authorities of some higher institutions set up anti-cult groups consisting of student body itself and some security agents on and off campus to monitor and check secret cult activities on campus. Corroborating these efforts, scholars across various disciplines have written academic publication to warn about the imminent danger of cultism. They include but not limited to Dzurgba Akpenpuun's *Violence and bloodshed in Nigerian Universities: A search for Peace and Academic Excellence*, Eneh Cyprian's *Cultism in the Nigerian Educational Institutions: Incidence, Causes, Effects and Solution*, Dramatic play texts include Charity Angya's *Gone Sailing* and Felix Akinsipe's *Never and Never*, among others. The collective campaigns and machineries set in motion by government, corporate bodies and individual using various means, secret cults on campuses across the nation rather than eradication are hibernated as it often raise its ugly head again after a perceived major success against it.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Cultism is a problem that has affected the growth of Nigerian educational system and its output. The emergence of this vice has put the nation Nigeria on the centre stage in the comity of nations for the negative reasons. Youths, who are trusted to be the leaders of tomorrow and the future of the nation, are trained with the expectation of proffering sustainable solution to the various challenges facing the nation through dissemination of knowledge in relevant areas of their strength. Unfortunately, a sizable number of our leaders of tomorrow have abandoned themselves to all kinds of debauchery and treachery. All spheres of Nigerian educational system are affected by cultism as those who are not initiated are intimidated.

This paper therefore recommends that vigorous reorientation, sensitisation and education of youths through useful programme and workshop, seminar on the danger of cultism, the use of mass media, billboards, sign post, road shows and other means of campaign in the tertiary institutions and secondary schools against cultism will help to ornament the reasoning of youths about the avoidable tragedy of being a cultist. The campaign should be extended to parents alike as it will help

them to remain vigilant and sensitive about the behaviour or behavioural change in their wards and the friends they keep.

Expulsion of cultists alone is not sufficient; authorities of higher institutions of learning should collaborate with state and federal governments of Nigeria to give amnesty to cultists on various campuses. This will afford a number of them to reflect and retrace their steps. At the expiration of a specified timeframe, those who refuse to renounce their membership should be declared terrorists and dealt with in the way and manner the government deals with terrorists.

It is also of high importance for government and institutions to invest in intelligence gathering to halt the accelerating menace of cultism. Schools are admonished to build internal security intelligent units. Membership of these units is to be strategically recruited, student based and anonymous, they should be adequately trained in the field of digital intelligence gathering and the use of computer to investigate and generate information. This unit should liaise with government security agencies in intelligence gathering within the school environment.

Corruption and weakness of our institutions especially the legal system in Nigeria contributes a great deal to the reason why cultism persists on our campuses. Government must therefore show strong political will to put an emphatic stop to the untold tolls it wrecks on the lives of the citizens, especially the youth and indeed the future yet unborn. The matter has to be addressed from the political class, our judiciary must be made to operate without undue interference, our laws must be potent and timely and its full weight must come upon culprits, perpetrators, facilitators as well as those who aid and abet cultism and its activities. As the legal maxim goes: “justice delayed is justice denied”.

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# **FROM PRIMARY ORALITY TO SECONDARY ORALITY: INTERNATIONALISING EGGON *TA ERKOR* PERFORMANCE IN THE AGE OF GLOBALISATION**

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## **Abstract**

In this paper, the researcher tries to examine the possibility of internationalising *Ta Erkor* indigenous performance of the Eggon people of Nasarawa State, North Central Nigeria, in order to promote and showcase its theatricality across the world through the indices of globalisation such as the television, video film format and the internet. This paper also explores the proposition for a paradigm shift from primary orality to secondary orality; that is, from its original face-to-face format into the digital format. It examines how this performance and the indices of globalisation could be adapted to each other and harnessed in the service of development objectives of the Eggon people. *Ta Erkor* means to wage a war. It is a kind of traditional performance in Eggonland that is usually performed by able-bodied men between the ages of 18-40 years. The performance mode falls within the category of the traditional popular theatre of the Eggon people which is derived from their theatre tradition. The aim of this performance is to produce an individual who is skilful and protective and one who could conform to the social order of the community. The performance is largely secular, eclectic and dynamic in form and content. This paper is anchored on the theories of intermediality and globalisation. The paper concludes that, despite the challenges, losses and treat inherent in globalisation, there are also significant gains, opportunities and benefits the advent of globalisation has offered. It therefore becomes imperative for the Eggon people to key into these numerous benefits and opportunities provided to internationalise and promote their culture and indigenous performances across the global.

**Keywords:** Orality, internationalising, Eggon *Ta Erkor*, performance, globalisation

## **Introduction**

In contemporary times, especially with the on-going globalisation agenda of world powers, the need to project indigenous identities and performances in Nigeria has taken many alternative patterns to enhance the glory of the Nigerian culture, pride and heritage, and to seek to discover and re-establish Nigerian civilisation and promote Nigerian dignity, self-assertion and consciousness. Often times, programmes, such as, *Tales by Moonlight*, *African Pot*, *Goge Africa*, among others showcased through the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and other television stations always recapture the unique mood of our indigenous society. Consequently, what these stations are doing is internationalising, selling or marketing the rich indigenous cultures, values and performances of the Nigerian people on the global scale. By internationalising, we mean the act of globalising, marketing and projecting the culture and tradition of a people to the global community. This projection and promotion over the years has tremendously attracted tourists, investors and enthusiasts from different parts of the world to Nigeria.

Today, globalisation has made it increasingly inexpensive for people to produce and distribute to a global audience their indigenous arts. It has made it easier for people to access people, products and places around the world. Indigenous performances continue to thrive in the face of technological advancement. For instance, many television dramas in Nigeria draw their materials from folktales, legends, myths and oral traditions of the people. In the rural areas of Eggon land, the ordinary man's life has been immensely influenced by globalisation. Cinema houses have been built; football viewing centres established, internet sources are accessed, opening up new vistas for rural community development and connection with the rest of the world. For instance, the internet has made most indigenous performances to come alive and accessible. It has no doubt resulted in many positive impacts, including increasing access to limitless information and entertainment as well as facilitating the production of new information and entertainment. While surfing the internet sites such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook, among others, children and adults alike are exposed to new ideas and information that may increase their knowledge and perhaps spark of their own creativity and innovation. Unarguably, Facebook helps members to communicate and stay in touch with their friends. Once one joins Facebook, one will be able to share photos, videos, plan events, keep-in-touch with friends wherever you are, and stream events online, among others.

It is evident that globalisation and its indices have come to stay. People now live in an integrated world characterised by changes of different magnitudes, uncertainties and competitions. The threat to indigenous cultures in the globalising world of today is to a considerable extent inescapable because the process itself shows no sign of stopping. There is hardly any continent of the world that has not had its share of the influence either negatively or positively. For instance, people in local settings might view globalisation as “Westernisation” or “Americanisation”. Others may resist globalising processes as foreign or even evil. Still others may change or adapt globalising processes to fit their own needs. In other words, globalisation is a fact of life because all are affected by it in terms of its benefits or losses. Hence, the one solution that is not available is that of stopping its spread to the entire world system in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Thomas Friedman submits that, “the last ten years demonstrates a dramatic increase in the reach and integration of this new/old process that has revolutionised the world” (44). Currently, we eat modern food, use modern dress, speak modern language and use modern tools. As such, our thought patterns have become globalised and modern.

Marvin Carlson posits that, “the recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behaviour raises the possibility that all human activities could potentially be considered as performance, or at least, all activities carried out with a consciousness of itself” (4). He defines performance as, “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (37). In this definition, Carlson stresses the fact that certain behaviour has an audience and an effect on the audience. His definition addresses what seems to be an essential quality of performance, which is based upon a relationship between a performer and an audience. This is because; we play roles, occupy statuses, and play games with one another in a designated area or space (5). In Eggon traditional society, everyday life is framed up and performed. Their Performances have been integral to their existence. In other words, every performance of the people springs from their cultural patterns exposing both the material and non-material heritage.

Eggon means, ‘to hear’; and it is also used to refer to those who are native speakers of Eggon language. They are made up of three clans: *Anzo*, *Eholo* and *Ehro*, a broad categorisation that incorporates several dialectical groups, similarity of eclectic settlement, values, customs and religious practices with autonomous social structures peculiar to their existential philosophy. The Eggon people of North Central Nigeria are spread across the entire Nasarawa State consisting of Keffi, Kokona, Nasarawa, Akwanga, Nasarawa-Eggon, Lafia, Doma, Obi and Awe Local Government Areas. Nasarawa-Eggon is their nucleus settlement and the seat of their traditional stool (Dugga 29). Nasarawa-Eggon is a town on the flat plain that

flanks the *Akun* Eggon hills. These hills located along the gateway between Northern and Eastern Nigeria on the Makurdi-Jos and Abuja Highway, historically served as a shelter for the Eggon during early periods and offered protections against their enemies.

### **Conceptualising and Historicising Globalisation**

Globalisation has become a buzz word; a buzz word that has become hegemonic in almost every sphere of human endeavour. It is an octopus with several tentacles created by dominant social forces, the powers that be in the world to serve specific interests. In the course of its emergence, various challenges, opportunities, losses and changes had taken place. These developments had, in most cases affected the systematic existence of human kind both positively and negatively regardless of the geo-political location within the universe. The term has been defined variously by different scholars from different points of view. According to Anthony Giddens:

Globalisation can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa... (64).

For Roland Robertson, one of the leading scholars of globalisation, it is “the compression of the world and intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole” (8). It means that, globalisation has to do with increasing interaction and integration of diverse human societies in all important dimensions of their activities – economic, social, political, cultural and religious, among others. Therefore, it is quite clear that globalisation is about deconstructing and restructuring the social geographies of the world into a single place.

Globalisation as a concept is not particularly new to the world. It is arguable that the concept dates back to pre-Neolithic times. In a sense, the potential for a single global human society has always existed; but the occasion has not arisen perhaps until now. Human beings have always seen themselves as one single species, capable of interbreeding, communicating and learning from one another. In recent times, however, the single human species adapted itself to widely varying conditions on earth by means not of biological order but of cultural differentiation (Mennell 359). To Tor Iorapuu, “scholars believe there has been three major phases of globalisation: 1870-1914, 1945-1980, and from 1980 till now” (2). He further argues that, “the continent of Africa since the era of trans-Atlantic slave trade experienced more than any other continent the changing faces of globalisation in several ways: economic, political, social, cultural and religious” (2).

Iorapuu's view firmly acknowledges that globalisation has both the good and the bad sides; there can be losers as well as gainers. Globalisation in this context is considered as a process and not a means to an end. It is a process in which states of the world interconnect and interact at multi-continental distances. Robertson posits that one element no doubt has been the driving instrument of globalisation which is technology. According to him, technology and globalisation go hand-in-hand. Globalisation unleashes technology which in turn drives firms to plan production and sales on a global basis. Technology changes the work we do (Iorapuu xii).

A development scholar, Layi Erinosh, argues that,

the various theoretical strands on globalisation can be grouped into two broad areas. There are on the one hand theories about the historicity of the process and on the other those that are anchored on its benefits to human kind from the standpoints of the economic including the revolution in information and communication (8).

Erinosh posits further that what he regards as the historicity of the process is explored in the context of the debate on the origin of globalisation. He asks if globalisation is a new or old process. It is evident that there are those that are of the views that globalisation is a new process because of the revolution in information and communication technology that has brought human beings and societies closer to one another than at any other time in world history. While some others share the opposite view, points out that it is not a new process. Globalisation has been a part of humanity from time immemorial (Erinosh 8). Moreover, the process gained more momentum when the Europeans came into contact and colonised the new world, and it seems to have reached some kind of climax in recent times due to the revolution in information and communication technology that has revolutionised the world.

The second theoretical strand, according to Erinosh, is deduced from an appraisal of the impact of globalisation on humankind. There is no doubt that it has engendered various reactions and it is believed by a significant number of people that it is the best thing that has happened to humankind. Yet, to others, it is a threat or curse or tool for the exploitation of third world countries or for engendering unequal relations among nation states. There is no doubt that globalisation is one of the most challenging developments in the world history. The system, in its more generic and broad sense is part of the movement of history.

Researchers working in the field of intermediality in theatre and performance, such as, Freda Chapple, Chiel Kattenbelt, Sarah Bay-Cheng, Andy Lavender and Robin Nelson, examine theatre and performance in the context of



other media. They probe the aggregate inter-relatedness of digital media and the performing arts. Coming from a perspective that theatre offers the staging space for inter medial performances. The researchers' study the proliferation of texts, medial spaces and inter-medial relationships created when the live medium of theatre and performance intersects with digital technology. Kattenbelt defines intermediality as, "the co-relation of media in the sense of mutual influences between media" (31). She continues that the concept of intermediality assumes a co-relation in the actual sense of the word, that is to say, a mutual affect; taken together the redefinition of media co-relationships and a refreshed perception. Co-relationship of media means that previously existing medium's specific conventions are changed, which allows for new dimensions of perception and experience to be explored. It is those co-relations between different media that result in a redefinition of the media that are influencing each other, which in turn leads to a refreshed perception.

What is notable also is that, in the discipline of theatre studies, a change of paradigm is taking place. One contributing factor to the change in paradigm might be that our contemporary culture has become a globalised culture, with all the performative features that it entails. When an indigenous performance undergoes a paradigm shift from its primary orality to secondary orality owing to the incorporation of digital technology such as film, television and the internet, we can say that intermediality has taken place. This is because of the interplay and the incorporation of the two media. For example, the advent of information and communication technology today has created a platform for intermediality. This technology has so compressed space and time by its virtual presence that people have plunged in headlong.

What the above means is that, the growth of internet facility has led to exponential experimentation in the production, processing, transmission and reception of indigenous performances. For instance, these days a song or music rendered and transmitted on social media such as YouTube, Facebook and others, can reach millions and billions of listeners across geographical and linguistic barriers in the world. The audio-visual facilities are even more tantalising in their reach and effect. The development of satellite television has opened new frontiers for performers. They can now perform from a single spot and expect to be heard, seen and appreciated in all continents of the world. The beauty is that Nigerian satellite television stations are very active in this global communication revolution. These stations are patronised by Nigerians, Africans and global audiences, thus, adapting and recycling the images of Nigerian popular theatre of indigenous performances to fit into the expectation of the target culture and people.

Often times live performances are performed in their primary or original format then transmuted and sold to television stations as secondary contents. When these stations showcase or broadcast these contents as secondary contents, because

of the shift in paradigm and transmutation that has taken place in a digital format, millions of people around the world that have access to the vehicles of globalisation can have access to the performances. Intermediality describes the introduction or the interplay of digital technology and its functions within the context of traditional locality. It discusses the confluence of media, medial spaces and art forms involved in performance.

Sociologist Robertson has coined an expression, “glocalisation” to identify how globalisation has created conditions to promote and address local issues. This concept is used to describe the introduction of digital communication and its functions in the context of the application of technology within the traditional locality. Here, technology of the web is used to adapt indigenous performances into the digital format for digital audiences. In this way, indigenous theatre and the indices of modern mass media are adapted to each other and harnessed for the development objective of the people the theatre or performances are meant for. This is what the researcher calls “cultural convergence” or better still, “cultural hybridisation”. This theory places theatre and performance at the heart of the new media debate anchored by globalisation. It provides an overview of the discourse on the relationships or interface between the indigenous arts and globalised media.

### **Eggon Theatre Tradition**

A discourse of the theatre tradition of the Eggon people ultimately comes with the question of functionality and aesthetics. Eggon theatre, like any other African theatre experience is functional to the extent that it refurbishes their belief system and reinforces their socio-cultural values. It is engaged with similarity to other Nigerian cultures as originating from deep religious, economic and social activities of the people but defining its uniqueness. However, it is important to note that theatre, whether Western or African, is first and foremost an experience. Every experience is best appreciated within a socio-cultural context. Even though, there may be a cross cultural persuasions, the final shape, content and value of a theatrical experience are determined by the cultural perception and expectations of the participants in the experience and the owners of the core culture (Ododo 121). This is why Dauda Enna contends that, “every society conceives, establishes and sustains a theatre tradition peculiar to the society’s need, existential philosophy and aspiration” (30). This implies that every community or culture purchases a theatre that is unique to the need and aspiration of that community or culture.

For the Eggon, *Ta Erkor* as theatre satisfies the unique need and aspiration of the Eggon people. Their very existence is tied to it because it is through it that they most times experience a communal renewal which strengthens them to face the challenges of life afresh. This simply shows that a study of Eggon traditional theatre largely depends on indigenous cultural antecedents that are peculiar to their

environment, experience, existential need, aspiration and philosophy. The Eggon people have a theatre tradition which is found in their cultures and exhibited through their varied songs, music, dances, festival, rites, rituals, storytelling among others. This form of theatre can be traced to the activities of the early man where he re-enacted his hunting experiences to his peer or when a ritual priest held a sacred communication with the gods through chants and incantations in the presence of the people.

However, two significant issues usually confront the attempt at classifying most Eggon traditional theatrical practices. The first is what looks like the imprecision of the term, "Theatre;" while the second is the debate as to whether Eggon people can actually lay claim to having had a traditional theatre at all. This study shares the view of the relativist school which sees theatre as an ethno-cultural experience and activity. Eggon traditional theatre has been categorised into five sub-units though, the list is by no means exhaustive. These are: Psycho Drama (*Asherjege* and *Gbedur*); Occupational or Occasional Theatre (*Ekpa* and *Likya*); Storytelling Theatre (*Nyum Onzho* – folktales, storytelling, riddles and jokes, proverbs and other tongue twisters); Popular Theatre (*Ta Erkor* and *Gbu Ewa*) and Ritual Theatre (*Adaga Aha* and *Kyen-Eku*) among others (Embu 54). Added to the above, Embu still submits that, they also include "hunting re-enactment and children's theatre performed usually at relaxation times". He continues that, some emerging theatre forms include modern festivals organised yearly at village and clan levels by youths and community-based societies as a form of cultural revival where cultural performances such as masquerades also feature". This statement presupposes that, traditional Eggon society which is the hallmark of this study has a rich and potent theatre tradition which through the ages has flourished into a unique specimen of scholarly resourcefulness. This is evident in the religion, traditional functional rituals and festivals of the Eggon people. For instance, the *Likya* festival which is an annual festival to mark the harvest season in Eggon *Enro* is celebrated with intensive activities such as dances, music and feasting as a mark of jubilation and thanksgiving to the gods over bountiful harvest. On the other hand, Dugga notes that,

there are two distinct periods of importance in the study of Eggon theatre: the pre and post colonisation eras. These refer to the factor of social interaction with a wider world community and the attendant changes they introduced into the Eggon societies. While the earlier contact was not successful in fully introducing Islam or the Hausa social system, colonisation helped to entrench both the Hausa and Western systems. Each of these has modulated the

people's perceptions and social life which in turn redefined their arts (33).

Eggon theatre provides a performance tradition that operates from and still retains the indigenous base from which current practices are drawn. Like many other African traditional performances, the fundamentals in Eggon traditional theatre are not somewhat different. Most African traditional theatres are characterised by dances, songs, drumming, fluting, rich costumes among others, so the Eggon. These aesthetics and functional qualities are also common denominators in the performance under study. Hence, one can hardly imagine a theatre tradition of the Eggon people whether secular or sacred without the presence of one or all of the above elements. The popular and communal nature of most of the theatre traditions is highly participatory and engaging.

### *Ta Erkor* Performance

This performance mode falls among the traditional popular theatre of the Eggon people. It is derived from the initiation rite of the Eggon people. *Ta Erkor* which means to “wage a war” is a kind of traditional performance in Eggonland that is usually performed by able-bodied men between the ages of 18-40. The performance is a simulation of warfare in which the skilful wielding of the *Ombyli* (extra-large cow-hide shield) is used with stylised movement creating spectacles. *Ta Erkor* is shrouded in chants with stylised movement and display of the warriors' paraphernalia (bow, arrow and shield made from elephant's skin or cow hide). It is this stylised display of the paraphernalia by the warriors that creates spectacles. This performance is also participatory because the audience also contributes by clapping their hands, singing using the language of the environment and cheering the performers up.

*Ta Erkor* is masculine in nature. It is a performance where men in the community meet to exhibit their prowess and dexterity. One of the skills a person is expected to acquire is how to manipulate his bow, arrow, knife and elephant skin (*Ombyli*) which are regarded and considered the major weapons and shield in traditional warfare. One of the ways this special skill is acquired is during harvest season when guinea corn has been harvested; male adolescents will prepare bow and arrow made from the corn stalks and use as weapons. In trying to acquire the necessary skills for the performance, or during rehearsals, they usually aim at a pawpaw fruit or mango. These fruits symbolise the visualised enemies they will battle with in the future. If the targeted fruit is hit with the arrow, the person is praised. This special skill acquisition contest is performed not just for the purpose of competition, but to make the would-be warriors acquire important skills (Interview with Ugulu).

In the early 1904, specifically before the British contact with the Eggon in 1907 such performances in peace times were used as rehearsals and trainings for real battle (Enna 42). In Eggonland, it is believed that those that fall within these age bracket belong to the warrior group of the society and are often referred to as *Moa-okola*. This crop of community youths usually maintain and sustain internal and external security by executing any directive by the *Moa-Adakopo Ashum* (Cult custodians). It is imperative to note that all Eggon performative arts are rooted in the *Ashum* cult society. The *Ashum* cult “directs and controls Eggon collective expression towards maintaining harmony and peaceful co-existence within the society as a condition for a favourable relationship between the people and the supernatural being” (Enna 30). Performances are therefore geared towards the maintenance of order and social cohesion. An interview conducted with Ugulu who happens to be the *Ashum* Cult Custodian (*Andakopo Ashum*) of *Wakama* clan in Nasarawa-Eggon Local Government Area during a field work research indicates that, in Eggonland, once a person reaches the ages of 20-40, he is expected to have acquired diverse skills in traditional warfare which if harnessed properly, will make him a warrior and a protector of his community (13 May, 2016).

During this performance, the *Moa-okola* has the leverage of wooing young maidens around through the dramatic display of their chants, paraphernalia and valour. Enna states thus:

What usually calls for this performance mode is simply because in pre-colonial Eggon society, it was often regarded an insult to the boys in a particular Eggon village to allow a maiden to marry in another village, particularly if the girl is beautiful and is already betrothed to any of the young *Moa-okola* or men. Unfortunately, the girl herself has very little choice, as most of the marriages were by eloping with the girls. Usually, if it is between hostile villages, it is the case of eloping with the girls during market days the two villages usually attend (43).

The writer went further to say that, even young married women are not spared. The aggrieved *Moa-okola* will either demand the release of the girl peacefully or challenge the *Moa-okola* of the other village to an *Erkor*. Furthermore, before the appointed day for the battle in which elders of the villages will be present, the captured girl will be kept under very strict surveillance (Enna 44).

The performance starts with the blowing of the *Gbaru* – a trumpet made from cow horn that usually signals the beginning of the offensive. Drumming, war song and dance steps stimulate their beautifully costumed armed warriors and lead them to the venue. As the *Moa-okola* test their skills, the combination of praise

songs celebrating great ancestral warriors captures the air and gives it a festive mood. There is usually an accepted time to break the battle which serves as a period for instruction. If it is discovered that one of the *Moa-okola* is injured, the *Erkor* is usually called off using a signal from the *Gbaru*, while the successful side goes home chanting victory songs. When all participants in the battle have returned to their respective villages, the women and girls continue to sing praise songs to the warriors who demonstrate war dance steps and pose stylishly with their weapons. Once the aggrieved village is unable to recover the abducted woman during *Ta Erkor*, she will legally belong to the captor's village. One of the aims is to test the battle readiness, prowess and dexterity of the *Moa-okola* of the two villages who in future might come together to fight a common enemy. It is highly pedagogical, entertaining and instructional.

Below is a pictorial representation of *Moa-kola* (two Eggon warriors) in performance, skilfully manipulating and displaying their war paraphernalia.



*Pix: An organised simulation by the Eggon warriors (Moa-okola) in Ta Erkor performance*

### **Internationalising *Ta Erkor* Performance**

One innovation that has greatly revolutionised the world today is the advent of the internet technology. This technology has so compressed space and time by its virtual presence that people have plunged in headlong. It has no doubt resulted in many positive impacts, including increasing access to limitless information and

entertainment as well as facilitating the production of new information and entertainment. While surfing the internet sites such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook, among others, children and adults alike are exposed to new ideas and information that may increase their knowledge and perhaps spark their own creativity and innovation. For example, Facebook helps members to communicate and stay in touch with their friends. Ultimately, once you join Facebook, you will be able to share photos, videos, plan events, keep-in-touch with friends wherever you are, stream events online among others. Often times, videos and programmes showcased through the internet always recapture the unique mood of our indigenous society. Today, people can view the world as well as happenings in the world through their handset which has become television and window to the world.

Since the internet has provided the people with an opportunity to share photos and post different events online for the cyber community via their handsets, the same platform can be used by the Eggon people to internationalise *Ta Erkor* performance across the world. The Eggon people can take advantage of this technological driven platform to even sell, market and globalise not only *Ta Erkor* performance but their cultures, tradition and other indigenous performances globally. Again, this performance could be used as content for revenue generation that can expand the economic base of the Eggon sons and daughters as well as improve their living standard.

Secondly, video film as a creative cum communicative art can also absorb an entirely indigenous performance and improve upon its potentials to bring social changes by projecting the mediated messages farther and wider. It is one mode in which people can record images, events, organise them to imply meaning and through them communicate to others. The Nigerian video film industry has emerged as a medium of popular culture carrying with it popularity that cuts across the broad spectrum of societies. It has creatively and extensively borrowed from the oral texts and literary form of indigenous performances and this, has contributed to its popularity and acceptability. Today, an increasing amount of video films are produced in many Nigerian languages projecting, documenting and preserving the culture of the Nigerian people. Most of them draw inspirations from indigenous and historical archetypes to inculcate the core values of our society on the people.

Films can also help us know more about our cultures and even become better in our understanding of cultures from other lands. Since this unique platform is available for everyone to utilise today, the Eggon people cannot be left out. It is an onus on the Eggon people to package *Ta Erkor* theatre from its primary orality and adapt it through the medium of the video film which is the secondary orality, and internationalise across the world. This interface of media also provides a yardstick for the Eggon people to also project and promote the Eggon world view – their culture, religious practices and theatre traditions to the outside world.

## Conclusion

The paper examines the significance, role and value of *Ta Erkor* performance of the Eggon people of Nasarawa State, central Nigeria. It hinges its precepts on the gains and benefits of globalisation in internationalising and marketing *Ta Erkor* performance toward the growth and development of the Eggon people. It is evident in the paper that globalisation whether the Eggon people like it or not has come to stay. Hence, it beholds on them to key into the many benefits it has provided in order to internationalise, promote and market not only *Ta Erkor* but other of their indigenous performances across the globe.

The paper affirms that indigenous theatre aesthetics are very resourceful and amenable to contemporary theatre utilisation especially in the area of their functionalities. It also demonstrates that revolution in information and communication technology has facilitated the rapid production and dissemination of cultures and indigenous performances across the world. It is glaring that 21<sup>st</sup> century is an age of rapid transition. Post-colonial societies have seemingly become changing societies as a result of cultural diffusion through the process of globalisation. What this means is that globalisation is inescapable, inevitable and unstoppable today, it therefore beholds on the Eggon people to now key into those significant gains, benefits and opportunities it has offered to promote and propagate their cultures and cultural performances across the world. They should think locally and act globally as well as think globally and act locally.

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# **FEMALE MUSICIANSHIP IN AFRICAN MUSIC STUDIES: BALUU AND KENGBE MUSIC OF ILORIN PEOPLE AS PARADIGMS**

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## **Abstract**

Over time, scholars and researchers in African music, culture and performance studies have raised opinions on the dearth of research and marginalisation of the female gender in African musicology. Hence, this study finds the need to fill this lacuna and bring studies on female musicianship in African music to the fore, using indigenous Baluu and Kengbe music of the Ilorin people as paradigms. Through the descriptive method, field observation of the performances of Iyabo Awero, a Baluu musician in Ilorin, Egbe Onikengbe of Magaji Nda family house in Ilorin, Kwara State and review of literatures, this study discovered that Baluu and Kengbe music are female oral musical arts unique to the cultural and social life of the Ilorin people. Through music, history is documented in their song texts and transferred orally to generations. These indigenous forms are entertaining yet didactic as they are used to chastise immoralities, indecency, indiscipline and other sociocultural issues. This study concludes that indigenous music is pivotal to the growth and development of a society. Women who are key players in indigenous African music performance such as Baluu and Kengbe musicians contribute a lot to the knowledge of indigenous cultural and social values.

**Keywords:** Musicianship, female gender, African music, Baluu, Kengbe

## **Introduction**

Various scholars and researchers (Duran 142; Idamoyibo 19; Marshall 2; Scharfenberger 224) have raised the question on the lack of “in-depth musicological studies and documentation of the contributions of female musicians to the growth and development of African music” (Samuel 339). There is a view that women in West Africa are marginalised as professional musicians. Katherine Marshall noted that, “there is need for more research to be conducted in the area of women and music in West Africa” (2). According to Marshall, the lack of research in this area can be attributed to “both the combination of male dominated field of African

studies, as well as the patriarchal structures of communities usually being studied in Africa as a whole” (2).

Duran opines that, “studying gender in West African music is of central importance in studying West African culture to redress the prevailing view that women in West Africa play marginal roles as professional music makers” (142). Lucy Duran concludes that, “not only does more research need to be done on women and music in West Africa, but also on the gender roles within West African musical performances” (142). In fact, Isaac Idamoyibo stressed that, “women reserve rights to participate in, and possibly dominate the scene” (19).

There are two possible explanations for this lack in the scholarship on women in West African music. First is “the interests and gender of the scholar or ethnographer certainly affect the choices of topics studied” (Scharfenberger 224). The inaccessibility of certain women’s rituals is a second possible reason for a lack of West African music scholarship that considers gender. The activities of women’s associations and secret societies are often closed to men and cultural outsiders. Women are the central performers in certain rites of passage and initiation rituals. Angela Scharfenberger notes that, “there may be public performances during some aspects of the ritual, such as, the common practice of reintroducing girls back into society as women following initiation; but the majority of the ritual is performed to the exclusion of men and outsiders” (224). Thus, few researchers have been able to study these performances.

Furthermore, Marcia Herndon and Suzanne Zeigler maintain that, “a prominence of stereotypes from ethnographers regarding women’s participation in music has created a narrow perspective” (5). Thus, this study x-rays the indigenous music performances of Baluu and Kengbe music in the context of Ilorin culture where it emanated and developed. Both styles are secular music forms performed at different social gatherings in Ilorin metropolis. Both being female oral musical arts, this study uncovers the origin of these styles, stylistic features, music ensembles, similarities and distinctive differences in Baluu and Kengbe music.

### **Discourses on the Female gender in African music**

Music in the African context exists with reference to the female gender. Meki Nzewi (cited in Scherzinger 90) advances the thesis that all music in Africa is gendered female: “Music is a Woman.” The female gender represents the woman, femininity and mother-figure in African music performance. Looking at African musical performances which can be in vocal or instrumental or a combination of both, the mother-figure is usually and visibly evident in either way. Concisely, it is not that traditional music in Africa is performed only or even mainly by women but rather that music’s philosophical import is intricately associated with the social

power of women. The effect of music on humans operates in a subtle nature similar to the woman's exercise of power in the affairs of traditional African society.

The African woman possesses the power that binds a society together. Oseni Afisi states that, "the African woman played a key role in the education and the teaching of children social, ethical and moral values which were part of the cultural standards for evaluating proper societal behaviour" (229). This is why Sylvia Leith-Ross emphasised that culturally,

African women were the transmitters of the language, the history and the oral culture, the music, the dance, the habits and the artisanal knowledge. They were the teachers and were responsible for instilling traditional values and knowledge in children (34).

Martin Scherzinger rightly posits that, "the three concentric circles of participants in a Kiba performance of the Pedi people in South Africa for instance, symbolise a trinity of power, or energy domains, which are associated with gendered aspects of traditional life" (90). He explains further that:

The inner circle of women drummers, symbolising the womb, is the foundation ("the source and crucible") of the performance; the middle circle of men *dinaka* (pipe) players, symbolising the male role in society, is the active, yet "ephemeral" dimension of the performance; and the outer circle of women members, symbolising the female guardians of the community, is the critically observant aspect of the performance (90).

In different African musical instruments ensemble, reference is usually made to the female or mother-figure. For instance, in different drum ensembles such as Bata drum ensemble, Dundun drum ensemble and Gangan drum ensemble amongst the Yoruba in the South-western Nigeria, there is a lead drum called, "Iya Ilu", that is, mother drum. There is also Omele Abo (Female backing drum) in these ensembles. These drums are named Iya/abo (mother/female) because of the essential and functional roles they play in the ensemble. In fact, in Igbini drums ensemble which is usually associated to Orisa Obatala, the four drums in the ensemble "are named after his four wives – Iya Nla, Iya Agan, Afere and Keke" (Akpabot 97). The tones they produce represent the seniority of the wives. This implies that, Iya Nla is the most senior wife and the largest drum in the ensemble.

In Okpe Igoru music in Delta State, for instance, the three drums of the ensemble are named 'mother ukiri' (*izu-ukiri*), 'baby ukiri' (*omo-ukiri*) and 'varied ukiri' (*ukiri evwarien*) (Idamoyibo 20). The leadership roles the mother drum plays

in an ensemble, the fundamental foreground, and the layer which other drums in the ensemble build on is symbolic and similitude to the key roles of a woman in an African society. In several African cultures, the drum that has the deepest tones in the ensemble is called, the mother drum.

Eunice Ibekwe avers that, “gender has a strong force on the type of musical performances of any ethnic group or society” (141). This is because of the gender roles in a given society. In her own opinion, Ibekwe stressed that, “women excel in musical activities which focus mainly on the rites of passage due to their gender role.” Evident examples are Kengbe music among the Ilorin people, which is the crux of our study, also Shao Awonga mass wedding musical activities among the Shao people in Kwara state, and Obitun in Ondo State. Ibekwe's point of view corroborates Nketia's position in his discourse on women in Ghana music that, “exclusively, women's music was performed at only two occasions: girls' puberty rites and recreational forms such as maiden songs” (Nketia 107).

There are several female oral musical arts across Africa. Among them are, Baluu and Kengbe of the Ilorin people in Kwara state, Nigeria which is the focus of our study. Another female musical art among these people is Ere-Olomoba, Ilorin-Fulani Royal nuptial performance. Similar to Kengbe music of the Ilorin people is Adenkum, female band music of the Akan people in Ghana. Adenkum is the word for the hollowed gourds played percussively against the palms and lap, which are accompanied by call-and-response singing and performed at community events. Surano people in the west of Kumasi perform Dansuom, which means, “Lying in Water.”

This style of music is named as such for the large gourd that is placed upside down in a large metal tub full of water while singing in call and response. As the music gets moving, several of the women dance in the circle (Scharfenberger 227).

Also, Akùnyùngbà, Apíntí and Igbá-títí, the three prominent female court music in the Alaafin of Oyo's palace with the sole aim goal of praising the Obas, the chiefs and some other people connected with the Alaafin's palace. Nnwonkor of the Akan people in Ghana which is usually performed by women informally in the evenings is another example from western Africa. During their performance, women commented on social issues, often criticising men's behaviour and commenting on other local concerns. The songs are accompanied by hand clapping and idiophonic percussion. Girls' nubility rite in Ashanti, Ghana is a performance of initiation rites, which includes music and dance performances. Another women's musical performance is found among the Limba in Northern Sierra Leone. Here, women sing and lament at funerals and work songs in the field and accompany

themselves with drums for the girls' initiation society, Bondo. At second funerals, groups of women dress as the deceased person, and behave as they remember what he or she did in life, with peculiarities of speech and movement (Ottenberg 85).

Worthy of note, however, is the fact that, there are musical activities in some African societies which excludes the female to a large extent. That is, women are forbidden to even watch, let alone play or perform such music. For instance, in Egwu Omaba of Nsukka – (xylophone music) women are strictly banned from watching or taking part. Though, Idamoyibo explains that, “this restriction and restraints on the part of the women in some musical activities are for protection” (22). In his words:

When our forefathers restricted women from being close or from participating in some rituals and ritual music, or from playing some musical instruments, it is not for evil but for protection. It is for the fact that women are specially created with certain spiritual powers to procreate and to defy; thus her touch in any form is capable of defying the potency certain traditional medicine, particularly when she is in her period (22).

### **Juxtaposing *Baluu* and *Kengbe* Music**

Baluu and Kengbe music are female oral musical arts in the Ilorin culture. These two styles of music being indigenous secular music genres are meant for entertainment at social gatherings. They are unique to the cultural and social life in Ilorin. Though, the historical evolution of Kengbe can be traced to Igbá-títí court music in Alaafin of Oyo's palace, Kengbe and Baluu music developed in the Ilorin Socio-cultural environment. The name 'Baluu' is a Yoruba word from the English word, 'Aeroplane.' Ibitoye asserts that, “the music was named 'Baluu' as a product of the type of dance movement that opens the musical performance which is synonymous to the aeroplane's taxiing movement on taxiways and runways before flying” (335).

It is noteworthy that, Kengbe and Baluu music styles have Islamic religious import in their music as they cannot be separated from the religion of the people among which it is popular. They fall within Olatunji Vidal's categorisation of Islamised music as they are influenced by the ideology and doctrines of Islam. Using Agu's classification of traditional music in Nigeria, the Baluu and Kengbe music fall under the, 'occasional music' category as performance is usually occasional and strictly serve entertainment purposes. Also, both styles adopt the Ilorin sociolectal variant of Yoruba language known as Yorùbá Ilorin.

Kengbe is significant to wedding/marriage entertainment music and symbolic to marital context in performance, Baluu is dynamic to various social

gatherings in performance context. In marriage context, Kengbe music rise to frenzy on the second day of the marriage ceremony during the night party before the bride's traditional bath. As noted earlier, the two genres are predominantly female musical arts, though, the musical instruments section of Baluu music comprises of men. But, the musical instruments, dancers and singers' sections in Kengbe music are made of females, usually, matured and married women. Dance is pivotal to these musical performances; in some cases, however, dance can be excluded in a Kengbe music performance. This is because, it can be seen as seductive and contrary to the religious notions on maintaining morality But, Baluu dance is so important to if there is any Baluu music performance without the dance, the music performance cannot start or be said to have held. Baluu dance is the opening glee at any Baluu music performance. In Baluu music band, the dance section is different from the chorus section, however, in Kengbe music, the dance section sometimes serves the dual purpose of the chorus and dancers. That is, as they are dancing in choreography, they are also singing the choruses and responses to the leader's calls.

The texture of Kengbe and Baluu music is homophonic texture. As the band leader establishes melodic lines, the chorus repeats the melody. The nature of rhythm is a typical example of the complex rhythmic nature of an African music. Baluu songs are usually anacrustic as the first note is not accented and the songs start on a weak beat, but Kengbe songs are accented and they start on a strong beat. The simple binary form is common to Baluu and Kengbe music. Slight variations of the first section are observed in the second section of the melodic compositions. While Baluu music favours the five-tone pentatonic scale, Kengbe music songs are more of the four-tone tetratonic scale. Melodies in Baluu and Kengbe music are established and built on poetic rhymes, proverbs, cultural values, traditions, historical documentation, religious beliefs, philosophical expressions and exaggerations, a symbolic pointer of African music. Evidently, larger percentage of melodic lines in the Baluu and Kengbe music are used for speech surrogacy, which is a popular feature of African indigenous music. Melodies are performed in Chorus or sometimes in call and response form. It is also worthy to note that, in some of the songs gathered on the field, use of triplets was observed.

### **Language and Structure in Baluu Music**

As observed in Iyawo Awero's Baluu music band, Baluu music uses the Yorùbá language as its medium of communication and expression. The typical Ilorin sociolectal variant of the Yorùbá dialect called Yorùbá Ilorin is the language used. The Yoruba Ilorin is different from the conventional Oyo – Yoruba in the South Western Nigeria. This is because there are elements of Fulani and other indigenous languages like Hausa, Nupe and Bariba in it. Hence, there are differences in the

intonation and pronunciation of some Yoruba words in Ilorin (Adeola 247). For instance, when Oyo Yoruba says, “Mo,” Yoruba Ilorin will say, “Hin.” In the song below by Iyabo Awero, the Oyo Yoruba, “to,” is replaced with “tii” in the Yoruba Ilorin:

*Call: At'orin Atilu*

*Response: O dowo're*

As for the songs and the instruments  
They are committed in your (Allah)  
hands

*Call: Oro mi dowomuhammadutij'onsenla*

I commit my case into the hands of  
Muhammad who is the great  
messenger

*Response: O dowoo're*

They are committed in your hands

**Ó do wó ò re**

Voice

A - to-rin a ti-lu o do wo-o re O-ro mi do-wo o mu-ha-ma-du

ti j'on se'n la o do wo - o re!

Compositions are built and arranged on the premise of poetic rhymes, proverbs, philosophical expressions and exaggerations. The language use in the music serves the efficient purpose of entertainment. However, idiolectal peculiarities may be noticed in an artiste’s singing which can be distinguished from another artiste’s singing.

The texture of the music is homophonic. The leader of the band takes the melodic lead while the chorus accompanies. However, the chorus does not have harmonic implication of any kind. Usually, chorus sings in Unison. Variations of the same melody are repeated simultaneously by the chorus as the leader of the band elaborates on the established melody. Melodic sections may be repeated before another melody is raised. Melodic lines are usually anhemitonic pentatonic scale.



The rhythmic pattern is polyrhythmic in nature. Baluu being an indigenous African music, the polyrhythmic nature would be naturally expected. As noted earlier, the instrumental section is dominated by male drummers (lead and supportive drums) who play underlying rhythms and accompaniment to the music. The number of the drummers in a band depends on how large the band is, usually between 3 and 8 drummers. In Iyabo Awero's Band, there are 8 drummers. The lead drummer (Iyaa'lu) leads and does the talking while other drums play rhythmic accompaniment creating a complex rhythm interplay.

### **An Overview of the Kengbe Ensemble**

The Kengbe is an instrument made from carved calabash and could be seen as water pitcher. It is carved in varying sizes from bowl shaped to gourd shaped and pot shaped. These varying sizes are used in the ensemble to produce variety of sounds and rhythms. The smaller Kengbe produces higher pitch while the big Kengbe is low-pitched. Kengbe has dual mechanism for sound production which is triggered either by a mallet (padded or unpadded) or simply by direct application of the hand. This dual mechanism is used to create complex rhythm which African music is hinged on. While one hand covers the hollow part of the Kengbe playing intermittently, the other hand strikes the body of the Kengbe. The lead player strikes the body with a mallet which may be padded or unpadded; other back-up players hit the body with the palm or the fist (fingers of the hand curled inwards). In some cases, the Kengbe could be filled with some small stones as an effect to the resonance of the instrument. During performance, Kengbe players place the instrument in-between the two legs as support. From the foregoing, Kengbe falls under the directly-struck idiophone category of the African musical instruments classification.



*Fig 1: Picture taken after a Kengbe music performance at Queen's Secondary School Ilorin. Two girls pose with the Kengbe while they squat in front of other performers.  
Picture Credit: Researcher.*



*Fig 2: A variant of the Kengbe instrument  
Picture Credit: Researcher*



*Fig 3: A woman playing the Kengbe instrument at a band performance. She placed it between her legs as support. The palm of the right hand covers the hollow body, while the left hand hits the body of the instrument.  
Picture Credit: Researcher*



*Fig 4: The Kengbe player striking the body of the Kengbe with an unpadded mallet.  
Picture Credit: Researcher*

Kengbe music primarily employs variants of the calabash in different shapes and sizes as its instruments without any other instrument outside the context of Kengbe itself. The Kengbe is used to produce the metronome, dance punctuations and rhythmic accompaniments to the songs and the dances. For every Kengbe music performance, the band leader takes the melodic lead as she sings most of the solo songs. For instance, the song below is an introductory song which usually opens their performances and serves as exposition:

*Bisimilahi pel'ogo oluwa lawa fi'nkorin  
Bi moto tin lo, ni keke tin bo niwaju Alimi*

With the help of God we sing  
as vehicles pass in front of  
Alimi, so do bicycles

*K'ato mi a b'orin wa lo*

Before we proceed with the  
songs

*K'ato mi a b'orin wa lo*

Before we proceed with the  
songs

*K'asadura fun Iya'yawo kori ma sheyi lashemo*

Let's pray that hers would not  
be the last one

**Bisimilahi**

Voice

Bi-si-mi-i la-hi pe-'lo-go o-lu-wa la-wa fi-n ko-rin Ka-to mi a-a bo

'rin wa lo-o ka-to mi a-a bo 'rin wa lo-o ka sha-a du-ra fun-I-ya ya-a wo

ko-ri ma shey e yi la shey mo-o

Usually, the chorus repeats the established melodic lines by the leader. Hence, the texture of the music can be called homophonic.





*Fig 5: The researcher and Kengbe musicians in a pose after a Kengbe music performance at Magaji Nda family house, Ilorin on 11 June, 2019.*



*Fig 6: The researcher, Kengbe musicians and young trainees after a Kengbe music performance at Magaji Nda family house, Ilorin on 11 June, 2019.*

*Picture Credit: Researcher*

## **Conclusion**

This study is a response to the argument that women in West African music are marginalised as professional music makers and contributors to the growth and

development of African music as Baluu and Kengbe music are indigenous secular and female oral musical arts peculiar to the people of Ilorin, Kwara state Nigeria. This study discussed the music in the context of gender and cultural functionalism among the people it originated and developed. Composition and production of music is a conscious art; hence, Baluu and Kengbe musicians used their cultural and social consciousness to drive the fulcrum of their music performance. Indigenous music as a performance art is pivotal to the growth and development of a society. However, unlike some other indigenous music and arts of the Ilorin people, there is need for more to be done on the documentation and preservation of these musical arts, especially Kengbe music, as only little has been done in the area of research, documentation and preservation of the Kengbe music. Also, a comparative research on Kengbe music in Ilorin and Igbá-títí court music in the Alaafin of Oyo's palace is highly recommended.

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# ASPECTS OF POST-MODERNISM AND MARXIST THEORY IN THE HIP-HOP MUSIC OF NAIRA MARLEY AND FALZ

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## **Abstract**

One point of intersection between Post-Modernism and Marxism is the quest to undermine structures, thoughts and ideologies which are taken to be universal, grand and inherent. In Marxist thought, there is the quest to undermine bourgeoisie/proletariat divide, while Post Modernism focuses on unsettling traditional notions of grand and Meta structures and narratives, including language, identity and even writing. In Marxist thought, the conflicting relations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat binary create tensions and ills – oppression, class discrimination, selective poverty, and social vices, in the society. In contemporary Nigerian society, several forms of discourse on the bourgeoisie/proletariat binary have emerged. One of such is the medium of music which is used to engage with the unequal class structure both as critical and corrective mechanism. It must be noted, however, that the medium of music as manifested in songs, which while they serve as the music artiste's social responsibility are also texts – multi-dimensional space in which a myriad of strands of culture blend and clash, and as observed in Post-modernism, are fraught with contradictions and *aporias*; the artiste engages in a language whose proper system he cannot control. This paper investigates selected musical practices (Naira Marley's *Am I Yahoo boy* and *Japa*; and Falz's *This is Nigeria* and *Wehdone Sir*) to discover how the music artiste, despite their attempts at constructively critiquing the weaknesses in the society, actively venerates the same binary he seeks to undermine. The paper concludes that due to the irreducible chain of signifiers which words are associated with, the selected musical practices (*This is Nigeria*, *Wehdone Sir*, *Am I Yahoo boy* and *Japa*) cannot bridge the gulf between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie rather, it upholds the binary.

**Key Words:** Post-modernism, Marxism, musical practice, social responsibility



## **Introduction**

The emergence of post-modernism in the late 1950s and early 1960s marks a pragmatic shift in cultural studies. Postmodernism has been designated as a new philosophical and literary movement, a new sensibility, a new aesthetic value. Commenting on the “new sensibility,” the American cultural critic, Susan Sontag maintains that, “one important consequences of the new sensibility is that the distinction between “high” and “low” culture seems less and less meaningful” (302). That is, this new sensibility thwarts the whole idea of modernist cultural elitism. The rejection of elitism could be situated against the backdrop of popular culture. In other words, one of the undisputable facts that signalled the “end” of modernism is the production of hip-hop music. Hip-hop music is a form of popular music which sprung up in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and distinguished itself in form and content with varieties of multimedia instrument.

This paper attempts to engage in textual analysis of selected music in order to put pressure on the diverse socio-political and economical predicament pervading the entire terrain of 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigerian society in particular and African society in general. Hip-hop as a popular culture is a political and ideological movement that reveals the relation of power and resistance in the society. In Tejumola Olaniyan’s words, a political musician is “a musician who devotes his or her musical resources to evoking, interrogating and pronouncing judgements on the partisan political arrangements and attendant social relations of his or her context” (3). If Olaniyan is to be believed, hip-hop artistes have used their music in different contexts to articulate the day-to-day social and political struggle between the elite and masses. In similar manner, Douglas Kellner in argues that, “media culture is a contest of representations that produce existing social struggles and transcode the political discourses of the era” (56). Furthermore, Monica Miller et al. argue that:

Hip Hop has become an astute public teacher to those who cared to listen to its weighty messages and learn from its many lessons. That is, Hip Hop necessitates anything but “easy” listening and passive consumption. Moreover, its messages of resistance, social awareness, personal consciousness, activism, pleasure and power, and community engagement have transcended its early days of locality in the Bronx and West Coast cities against the turmoil of post-industrialism (cited in Sciallo 3).

Away from the focus on the didactic functions of music in Nigeria, worthy of note is the fact that Africa and indeed Nigeria had pop music long before contact with Europe and America; consequently, the pop style that is popular in Nigeria

today is a blend of European and indigenous models of pop music. Ikenna Onwuegbuna maintains that:

Often, when African pop music is discussed, attention is riveted on those styles with overt elements borrowed from the Euro-American practices; such elements as triadic harmonic principles, diatonic and chromatic scales, as well as foreign musical instruments like the guitar, the brass and the reed families, the keyboard, and the trap drums. But it remains a fact that African pop music has existed ages before the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the Portuguese seamen forayed into Africa for the prospects of commerce (163).

This entails that the pop style is a hybrid form of pop that combines local elements of indigenous culture and foreign elements of pop, rock, and jazz from foreign countries. It is worth emphasising, then, that in spite of the difference in the mode of expression by the political Hip-hop artistes (that is, those who see hip-hop music as a viable medium to challenge, question and critique the socio-political happenings in their immediate societies); they have a unified purpose of brash and aggression against the political system. On this note, they might be referred to as, “Political Satirists.”

Political satire is an abusive and aggressive art that deploys wit or witticism as a weapon of attack. Thus, a political satirist is one who attacks the excesses of the political class in a witty and creative manner. Wit, to be sure, can be seen as an extended form of humour which artistes use to express their emotional feelings, and personal and communal experience as a corrective measure against the hegemonic political system stifling life out of the populace thereby beckoning on the general public to bear witness. Sigmund Freud argues that wit becomes an effective means, “by belittling and humbling our enemy, by scoring and ridiculing him, we directly obtain the pleasure of his defeat by the laughter of the third person, the inactive spectator” (5). However, not all political satirists openly attack the system that oppresses them. Some project rage and disgust (for instance, Idris Abdulkareem’s *Nigeria dey Jagajaga*, Falz’s *This is Nigeria*, and Naira Marley’s *Am I a Yahoo boy?*), while others censor themselves in a euphemistic mode (for instance, Olamide’s *Oil and Gas*).

In most cases, the ruling government uses his power (in spite of the democratic system of government) to either ban works or punish the former with imprisonment, fines, exile, molestation or death as the case may be. Arguably, the foible characteristics of politicians could also be found among doctors, lawyers, academics, journalists, business tycoons and artistes. Although, politics might be said to be the source of social vices not only because of the embezzlement of public

fund but, most importantly, its policy determines the fate of the nation as a whole and that of individual who made up and inhabit the society. Leonard Freedman observes that political satire is more predominate in democratic states because it is made up of flaw and façade: “there exists more political satire in democracies than in any other system. For one thing, there is so much to ridicule in democracies” (49). Satirists of every stripe find rich material in elections, political parties, interest groups, and so on – all of which prove to be rife with imperfections. Nor is democracy a guarantee against corruption, abuse of power, vast inequalities of income and status, or military and economic expansionism – all perennial subject of angry satire.

Contrarily, it is not only in democratic system, as Freedman wants us to believe, that we find flaws in government. Therefore, the focus of this paper is to problematise, from the theoretical discourse of Post-modernism and Marxism, the discourse of Nigerian Hip-Hop music from the sheer pleasure of entertainment and relaxation, and to position it within the context of its social function through a critical scrutiny of both form (figural elements) and content. That is, the paper will be engaged in the discourse of both theoretical value-laden of musical practice and musical texts in order to examine the socio-political issues that have shaped the Nigerian political system from the inception of democratic system of government in 1999 to date, and how these issues have affected individuals and the nation in general.

### **Post-Modernism and Popular Culture**

There are vast of literature on Postmodernism, this paper reviews some selected literature which are related to its argument through a forward and sideways movement of discourse. Post-modernism is, as Andreas Huyssen puts it, is “the great divide... a discourse which insists on the categorical distinction between high art and mass culture” (viii). Huyssen pushes further his point, noting that, “to a large extent, it is by the distance we have travelled from this great divide between mass culture and modernism that we measure our own cultural post-modernity” (57). Iain Chambers accounts for the intellectual crises and controversies that signal the advent of Post-modernism as: “the symptom of the disruptive ingression of popular networks of cultural production and knowledge. The intellectual’s privilege to explain and distribute knowledge is threaten” (216).

For Angela McRobbie, Post-modernism is a platform where the downtrodden, subaltern, less privileged gain voice and carves a niche for themselves. Therefore, post-modernism, as a “democracy to come”, legitimates our understanding of, as McRobbie notes, “the coming into being of those whose voices were historically drowned out by the (modernist) meta-narrative of mastery, which were in turn both patriarchal and imperialist” (15). Flowing from this, Kobena

Mercer centres her theoretical discourse within the praxis of group identities in which Post-modernism serves as “the emerging voices, practices and identities of dispersed African, Caribbean and Asian peoples (who have) crept in from the margins of post-imperial Britain to dislocate commonplace certainties and consensual “truths” and thus open up new ways of seeing and understanding” (2). The point of both McRobbie’s and Mercer’s assertions is to illustrate how Post-modernism brings forth and lends voice to the question of race, gender and sexuality in the field of literary studies in general and cultural studies in particular.

American Marxist critic, Fredric Jameson argues that post-modern is a culture of pastiche, distorted by the “complacent play of historical allusion” (105). Post-modern culture is, Jameson avers, “a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum” (115). Contrary to popular opinion, Jameson rejects post-modern culture as a mere allusion to past culture rather than a culture of new sensibility. Instead of a new aesthetic value, post-modernists are confronted with a clap-trap of esoteric discourse; to simplify: it is a discourse “of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense” (Jameson “Post-modernism and Consumer Society” 60). Thus, Jameson maintains that whereas modernism also alluded to old style with proper reference, post-modernism, on the other hand, is nothing but a chain of quotations without definable quotation marks.

One of the critics of Fredric Jameson is David Chaney. David Chaney affirms that what Jameson Fredric termed as pastiche in post-modern culture could be traced back to modern culture of the nineteenth century:

The privileged qualities of post-modernism – parody/pastiche, depthlessness, allegory, spectacular show, and an ironic celebration of artifice- hence all been central to the submerged traditions of popular culture. One has only to think of the traditions of music and vaudeville, the fair-ground, the circus and pantomime, the melodrama theatre and the literatures of crime and romance to find all these qualities clearly displayed (204).

On this theory, Chaney succinctly demonstrates that,

popular entertainment may be structured by the reiteration of certain formulas and genres which provide staple narrative form, and there may be endless nostalgic regression in re-cycling previous eras and styles, but even so there will be an overwhelming need for novelty in performance, styles and manners. The history of popular music

since the development of cheap recordings as a medium of mass entertainment specifically targeted at youth audience has shown clearly (210).

In essence, the 21<sup>st</sup> century popular music is a problematic shift in that it does not only disrupt the hierarchical oppositions between high and popular culture, but also explores the forward and sideways movement of discourse between the high and popular music. That is to say none of the forces of signification is identical with itself. The world of text (oral and written), for Post-modernism, is not a place where meaning is given ontologically prior to the text, rather it is a *space* (not a *place*) where meaning is progressively discovered ad infinitum. Post-modernism engagement with theoretical word games is captured in the words of John Fekete:

The prospect of learning to be at ease with limited warranties, and with the responsibility of issue them, without the false security of inherited guarantees, is promising for a livelier, more colourful, more alert, and one hopes, more tolerant culture draws enjoyment from the dappled relations between meaning and value (17).

However, there is a significant point which needs to be explored. Post-modernism is not an abdication of critical effort, or a refusal of meaning in music. Thus, the argument is not to menace the context of meaning rather legitimates our understanding that there is no simple or universal rule that could serve as a methodological reform for a proper meaning.

### **Musical Practice as an Interface between Text and History**



**Naira Marley**

**Source: [www.google.com/search?q=Naira+Marley](http://www.google.com/search?q=Naira+Marley)**

The musical practice of Naira Marley exemplifies the complex interrelationship between text and history, and positions song as functional components of social and political structure. This is not to view songs as a mere transparent cultural media recollecting historical events and situation, contrarily, it is a constitutive agent of historical context. It is in this regard that Jean Howard argues that, “literature is an agent in constructing a culture’s sense of reality” (25). This means literary discourse should not only demonstrate texts as objective apprehension of historical account but a study of texts as social, political and cultural formation. His songs under focus illustrate how music serves as a medium and reflection of politics, and how the rhetoric of language (fabrication) unveils the inherent contradictions of history.

Traditionally, hip-hop music has been criticised in different social institutions (the church, society) as a popular culture with profound corrupt influence, especially on the youths in the society. In other words, the popularity of hip-hop songs has enshrined illegal and immoral actions in the mind of youths. As argued by Onyeji and Ekwueme, the morally corruptive tendencies of pop music has led to it being dismissed in the academia because “the socio-cultural integrity of popular music and musicians is synonymous with waywardness, prostitution, illicit sex, drug abuse, broken homes and unwanted pregnancies” (cited in Ojukwu, Obielozie, and Esimone 117). Conversely, Ojukwu, Obielozie, and Esimone contend that, “Nigeria popular musicians have, at one time or the other, been invested with prestigious international and national honours in recognition of their contributions to the society as cultural ambassadors of the nation” (118). Therefore, the discourse of Naira Marley’s hip-hop music is an attempt to demonstrate and critique the critical practice of cultural materialism as a viable analytical framework in the evaluation of the songs under study, one in which music has radical social implications within contemporary power struggles. These implications are appropriately demonstrated in the songs titled, *Am I Yahoo Boy?* and *Japa* in which the speakers depict and utilise the iconoclastic roles of cultural figures, and accentuate the plights of sensitive artistes within contemporary political and cultural power structures.

The controversial song, titled, *Am I Yahoo Boy?*, is situated against the backdrop of the economic and political system of post-colonial African society and within the contexts of cultural and political productions (the State and the “Yahoo boys”). The listeners (or readers) are presented the issue of power despotism and resistance in the society. There are two speakers in the song, each trying to resist power of the domineering culture. In the opening and in the first stanza of the song, the first speaker’s tone smacks of someone who is at loggerhead (“trouble”) with government agents. Presumably, the speaker has been accused as “a yahoo boy” by established authorities known as “SARS” (crime enforcement agents) and “Olopa” (police officers). So, the speaker calls on his fans, who follow his blog (“*Eyin*

blogger blogger”) to come to his rescue and examine if his facial attributes depict him as, “omo yahoo.” It is important to note that the repetitive word “blogger” also represents the internet fraudsters or “yahoo boy”. Then, the speaker can be said to be, paradoxically, a “yahoo boy”. As a musical artiste, the speaker satirically notes that his occupation is only attached to the musical producer, named, “Sarz on the beat,” rather than criminal agents; and fans can “contact” his “hotmail” at “Naira Marley” at yahoo dot com.” Using pun as a literary ingredient, he defiantly resists the authorities from arresting him:

*Introduction:*

See me see trouble

Am I a Yahoo boy?

E ra mi egba mi o

(Listen to me come to my rescue o)

Shey mo joomo yahoo?

(Do I look like a yahoo boy?)

Emi o mo Sars

(I don’t know Sars)

Sarst’emi mo is Sarz on the beat

(Sars I know is Sarz on the beat)

Olopakole mu wa, Tani Sars femulo nibi

(Police officer cannot catch us. Who does Sars want to take away here?)

*Stanza One:*

Eyin blogger blogger

(All blogger blogger)

Shey mo joomo yahoo

(Do I look like a yahoo boy?)

Shey won ko yahoo si mi lorini

(Do they write yahoo on my head)

Am I a yahoo boy

Emi hotmail mo fine gan

(Me hotmail am very fine)

Am not a yahoo boy?

But contact me

Naira Marley at Yahoo dot com

The song, on another level, exemplifies the question of autobiography (“Life Writing”), or what Jacques Derrida describes as “Thanatography” (“Death

Writing”). Jacques Derrida discursively argues that the moment a writer signs the story of his past life, he enters into his “death”. “Death” here means that no appreciation or criticism can ever be ascribed or return to the bearer of the name. Only the name can inherit; this is why the name, as distinguished from the bearer, is always a dead man’s name – a name of death. On this basis, the textual Naira Marley should not be mistaken with the Naira Marley of flesh and blood. The Naira Marley of flesh and blood, like most autobiographical writers, inscribes his body and his name in the song (or text) even though he puts on the mask of metonyms or pseudonyms without proper name. He hides under the plurality of identity that can be reproduced and repeated infinitely within different contexts. Then, the identity which the writer inscribes on the page is not identifiable with what the listeners or readers know about his name. The identity of the textual self comes to the readers through “the ear-of-the-other” (language) he draws up with himself.

Then, the task of the readers is to depersonalise him under the “false name” of Naira Marley. Frequently, a writer always imposes the identity of him [her] self, but in the name of another. Derrida rightly writes:

If the life that he lives and tells to himself (“autobiography,” they call it) cannot be his life in the first place excepts as effect of a secret contract... then as long as the contrast has not been honoured – and it cannot be honoured except by another, for example, by you (9).

On this theory, the attempt to draw meaning outside the free play of language within the text is a risky literary endeavour which makes meaning exists ontologically prior to text and, by implication, stops the free play of identity. The free play of identity can only be achieved the very moment the bearer of name (the one whom the readers indiscriminately refer to as Naira Marley) enter figuratively into his “death.” What returns to the textual Naira Marley, roughly speaking, never comes back to the flesh and blood Naira Marley.

Hence, for listeners to be abreast of his present predicament, the speaker, in the first stanza, alludes to some cultural and historical figures of the twentieth century within the continent of Africa and America: “Fela,” “Mandela,” “President Kennedy,” and MKO Abiola. These historically figure took part in the fight against neo-colonialist-imperialist culture of post-independence Nigerian society in particular and Africa in general: “Fela Anikulapo Kuti,” he initiated and brought about Afrobeat, and used his music, as Tejumola Olaniyan puts it in *Arrest the Music!*, to

successfully cultivated and made hegemonic in global consciousness an image of himself as quintessentially ‘political



musician... by ‘political musician’ he means a musician who devoted his or her musical resources to evoking, interrogating, and pronouncing judgements on the partisan political arrangements and attendant social relations of his or her context (16).

The policy of racial segregation (Apartheid) within South African society, “Mandela” was imprisoned in 1962-1990 and president-elect in 1994-1999 (cited in Clark and Worger xvi, xix); racial inequality, disenfranchisement and political and economic struggles between black and white in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s in the American society, President Kennedy, assassinated in 1963 (cited in Menson-Furr 10); and the totalitarian military regime of the late 1980s and early 1990s, MKO Abiola, supposed president-elect in 1993, imprisoned in 1993 under the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida, and killed in the prison in 1998 under the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha (cited in Wole Soyinka’s *The Open Sore of a Continent*). The iconoclastic tendency of these geniuses can be grasped in what they stand for within different historical epochs. The allusion to these historical icons illustrates them as the representative of a nostalgic sensibility of change, resistance and freedom in society generally in order to demonstrates the political tension between the State and the speaker (artiste).

Therefore, these icons act as symbolic figures of intelligentsias contending ideas of social injustice against the downtrodden in the society, and exposing the power relations stifling life out of the powerless. The concern of the speaker is not the historical personalities of the master figures, but the consequences of the aftermaths of power struggles. The moral standings of the cultural icons stand in contrast to the notorious actions of the speaker. Thus, the traumatic experiences of speaker of *Am I Yahoo boy* serve as a context to re-interpret the historical personalities of these icons in the twentieth century African and American societies. This, by implication, enables the listeners to grasp the irresolvable conflicts between history and music, and the significance of such discrepancies; that is opening up the ideological and political concerns inherent in the music:

Won feshey mi bi Fela  
(They want to treat me like Fela)  
Won feshey mi bi Mandela  
(They want to treat me like Mandela)  
Won feshey mi bi President Kennedy  
(They want to treat me like President Kennedy)  
Won feshey mi bi MKO Abiola  
(They want to treat me like MKO Abiola)

The speaker uncompromisingly exposes the social vices within the social institutions – the state, youths, and religion settings. The “Government” is referred to addicted (“Ibile”) criminals (“barawo”) who exploit the wealth of the nation for their own selfish interests; “Bloggers” (internet fraudsters) in turn are “armed robbers” who hackers into the personal accounts of government officials; the religious leaders of the two major religions exploit their hungry and helpless congregation for their personal “enjoyment” (“gbadun”) while their members lavish in abject poverty. All these suggest that the contemporary society has lost its moral and spiritual essence; they are agents of decadence and disruption in the contemporary society. The speaker’s attack on the social institution is not just to expose the ills and vices inherent in it, but a call for sensible and meaningful actions that could be used as corrective measures against contemporary politics and culture:

Government na barawo (Ibile)  
(Government is thief) (Original)  
Bloggers na armed robber  
(Bloggers is armed robber)  
Imam dey gbadun  
(Imam is enjoyment)  
Pastor na enjoyment  
(Pastor is enjoyment)

In the second stanza of the song, the speaker explicitly addresses himself as a “Yahoo Yahoo.” The tone and mood of the speaker demonstrates someone whose societal problems push him into criminal activities such as internet fraud. The affinity of the speaker with internet crime is succinctly captured in his choice of words: “Yahoo Yahoo,” and “Maga.” His physical appearance has made him a suspect before the law enforcement agents. While his friends fully commit themselves to fraud activities, he has decided to disguise himself as a music artiste. This affirms the fact that the first speaker and the second speaker are men of the same skill: “Yahoo Yahoo.” As an addicted and cruel “Yahoo Yahoo,” he prays that nothing (including God) should disrupt the relationship between him and his regular victims. Like the first speaker, the second speaker maintains that religious belief and value has been thinned out of human existence and pushed to the backwater side of the society:

*Stanza Two:*  
Ah!  
Oya Yahoo Yahoo  
(Now Yahoo Yahoo)

K'oloun ma je ka damu  
 (God don't let us suffer)  
 Maga to sanwo mi se  
 (Fool that pay my money)  
 Karin wako ma daru (Ibile)  
 (Our relationship should not scatter)  
 Yahoo yahoo  
 Kóloun ma je ka damu  
 (God don't let us suffer)  
 Maga to fun mi lowo steady se  
 (Fool that give me money steady)  
 Karin wako ma daru  
 (Our relationship should not scatter)  
 Oya  
 (Now)  
 Torimo'n fresh mo'ndan  
 (Because I am fresh am fresh)  
 Won ni mo ti'nshey yahoo  
 (They said am doing yahoo)  
 Yahoo lawon ore mi se  
 (Yahoo are my friends)  
 Shebi music lemifi n gawu  
 (Is music am using to show [or disguise])  
 Eyan abracadabra  
 (Family of abracadabra)  
 Iyenaburonakamora eh eh  
 (That is younger brother of nakamora eh eh)  
 Eni to walayeyiti o se Oloun se elowawa  
 (The person in this world that do not offend God go and search for  
 him [or her]).

The song, titled, *Soapy*, is a follow up on and aftermath of the conflicts between the first speaker and the law enforcement agencies (“Olopa” and “SARS”) as demonstrated in the song, *Am I a Yahoo Boy*. The song revolves around the technique of call and response (the speaker and his fans, the “Marlians”) with the use of symbolic-imagery drawn from religious setting. The music resources are appropriately drawn from two local languages (Yoruba and Hausa languages). The speaker laments that the social stratification has become so obvious to the extent whereby some people wallow in poverty (“je’ya”) and others merry in abundant wealth (“chop life”). This can easily be grasped in the facial look of individuals in

the society, as the speaker argued metaphorically; that is to say those who are well-nourished with balanced diets in the same proportion of an exotic juice, named, “Five Alive” (a combination of five different fruits), and those who live an impoverished life style akin to a religious sect called “Deeper Life”:

**Call:** Inside life, l’ootiri Five Alive

(Inside life, that you will see Five Alive)

**Response:** L’ootiri Five Alive

(That you will see Five Alive)

**Call:** Inside life, l’ootiri Deeper Life

(Inside life, that you will see Deeper Life)

**Response:** L’ootiri Deeper Life

(That you will see Deeper Life)

**Call:** Inside life awonkan n je’ya, awonkan n chop life

(Inside life some people suffer, some people chop life)

**Response:** Inside life

**Call:** Inside life awonkan n s’epe, awonkan n j’ewa

(Inside life some people curse, some people chop beans).

Again, the speaker brings to the fore the issue of spiritual and moral decadence in the society. Most youths seek diabolic intervention for money ritual from traditional herbalists:

**Call:** O t’ese’lebo

(He seeks traditional help)

**Response:** O t’ese’lebo

(He seeks traditional help)

**Call:** Yahoo ni Babalawo

(Yahoo is Babalawo)

**Response:** Yahoo ni Babalawo

(Yahoo is Babalawo)

Traditionalists are expected, in real sense, to be custodians of cultural values and norms in the society; ironically, they have notoriously engineered undesirable actions among youths. On the other hand, it might be argued that the social institutions in the society are the agents of corrupting influence rather than the cultural media. Indeed, the speaker maintains that individuals, social institutions, and the society in general are caught up in the web of corruption; although only those caught red handed are charged with criminal offence and punished under the law. Since the law enforcement agencies are owned and controlled by the

government, the minority tyranny is likely to escape the consequences of the corruptive actions while majority downtrodden are suspected and convicted for any slight of offence in the society:

**Call:** Ole l’everybody  
(Thief is everybody)  
Eniile mo basanibarawo  
(The person caught is the thief)  
O fese’ka fun mi  
(He wants to hurt me)  
**Response:** O fese’ka fun mi  
(He wants to hurt me)

This is a typical example of contemporary power struggles within the violent hierarchical oppositions between the dominant culture and the subaltern. Despite the religious degradation in the society, the speaker finds faith and solemn in “Allah” (God) and, religious belief (“Kurani” [Quran]) and practices (“adura” [prayer]):

**Call:** Mi o l’ogun mo niKurani  
(I don’t have charm I have Kurani)  
**Response:** Mo niKurani  
(I have Kurani)  
**Call:** Mo de n s’adura mi  
(I am doing prayer)  
Bi n se n s’adura mi, Allah n gba’dura mi  
(As am doing prayer, Allah is answering my prayer)  
**Response:** Allah n gba’dura mi  
(Allah is answering my prayer)

Like some of the historical figures alluded to in *Am I a Yahoo Boy*, the speaker’s loggerheads with the authority eventually landed him in the goal. It is in this regard that the listeners are ushered into the inner experience of individuals detained by the constituted authorities. Conventionally, the prison is supposed to be a secluded place of reshaping and remoulding the undesirable behaviours and actions of maladjusted individuals. The experience of the speaker at “Kirikiri,” “Ikoyi” Prison and “EFCC cell” is that of torture and traumatic experience. Like “Fela” who became popular among his fans both at home and abroad, after severe torture in the prison the speaker became not only a heroic figure among fans (the “Marlians”) but was crowned as the head (or king) of the group after the order of

“Mandela.” For the speaker, being detained in the prison is an honour as he together aforementioned historical icons are now heroes to many people. Arguably, the heroic stands of these cultural figures could only be evaluated within different contexts; the iconoclastic tendency proffered by the speaker is a matter of *perspective*:

**Call:** A ti lo a ti de

(We have gone and came back)

**Response:** A ti lo a ti de

(We have gone and came back)

**Call:** Enioriyo o dile

(Only the survival that reach home)

**Response:** Enioriyo o dile

**Call:** Eniba lo l’oba de

(Only the person who goes that meet crown)

Igbati n pada de n’sel’on de mi l’ade

(By the time I came back immediately they crowned me)

**Response:** N’sel’on de mi l’ade

(Immediately they crowned me)

**Call:** K’adekopel’ori

(May crown stay long on the head)

**Response:** K’adekopel’ori

(May crown stay long on the head)

**Call:** Kibatakopel’ese

(May shoe stay long in the leg)

**Response:** Kibatakopel’ese

(May shoe stay long in the leg)

**Call:** K’awonota mi kanl’ese

(May my enemies have broken leg)

K’awon [?] ki won kanl’ese

(May my [?] should have broken leg).

### **Musical Practice and the Fluidity of Social Responsibility**

The social responsibility of the musical artiste, it must be noted transcends beyond the veneration of socio-political and socio-historical milieu as exemplified in the musical practices of Naira Marley. It also traverses the oppressed/oppressor discourse in the society and should also plunge into espousing the intricacies within one side of the binary – the oppressed. In Marxist thought, proletariats do not adequately perceive the inequality and oppression that is structured against them due to the presence of what Louis Althusser, in his text titled, “Ideological and State

Apparatuses,” calls the repressive state apparatus and ideological state apparatus. For Althusser, “the State is a ‘machine’ of repression, which enables the ruling classes (in the nineteenth century the bourgeois class and the ‘class’ of big landowners) to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion” (9). The repressive state apparatuses includes the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, and so on; while the ideological state apparatuses refer to the religious ISA (the system of the different churches); the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private ‘schools’); the family ISA; the legal ISA; the political ISA (the political system, including the different parties); the trade union ISA; the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.); and the cultural ISA (literature, the arts, sports, etc.) (Althusser 15). These ideological apparatuses do not involve the use of force compared to the repressive state apparatuses.

While these apparatuses undermine the notion of unequal class structure being an inherent part of the society, it buttresses the idea of false consciousness expounded by Georg Lukacs. This false consciousness stems from the inability of the oppressed class to organise itself into a force capable of hegemony. In *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, Lukacs argues that,

all classes ripe for hegemony have a class consciousness with the same inner structure. Everything hinges on the extent to which they can become conscious of the actions they need to perform in order to obtain and organise power. The question then becomes: how far does the class concerned perform the actions history has imposed on it ‘consciously’ or ‘unconsciously’ (53).

Due to the apparatuses conditioned on the oppressed class, it becomes difficult for such class to consciously make out inequality, oppression, and exploitation in a capitalist society thus naturalising and legitimising an unequal class structure. Thus, rather than become a class for itself, the oppressed majority consciously deny their class to appear like the bourgeoisie. It is more like a classic case of oppressed class with a burgeoning bourgeoisie face. This is exemplified in the musical practice of Falz.



**Falz**

**Source: [www.google.com/search?q=Falz](http://www.google.com/search?q=Falz)**

In the musical text, *Wehone Sir*, the speaker reveals how the oppressed class hide under the banal of false capital to escape from the reality of oppression prevalent in the society. The title, *Wehone sir*, is a sarcastic veneration of this escape from reality. The speaker expresses of an imaginary proletariat:

You dey pop bottle when you dey club  
(You consume much beer in a bar)  
But your rent dey hard you to pay  
(But it is difficult for you to pay your rent)

In addition to the above, the speaker decries the falsity of the live that the majority in the society lives. In the face of unemployment and biting economic hardship, the proletariat frolic and call to consciousness the fact that they are being oppressed. This explains why the speaker recounts about a lecherous character who fiddles with seven women, who claims to be rich and who is an internet fraud star. To such denial attitude put up by the majority in the society, the speaker disparages:

But who am I to take a action  
So I say Wehone sir!  
Wehone sir



The above reveals that the sarcasm inherent in the musical practice. The speaker can be read to be implicated in the same inaction that bedevils the oppressed class. This is evident in the rhetoricity of the question: “Who am I to take a action?” Thus, rather than undermine the inaction of the oppressed class, the speaker ends up illuminating his inability to properly tame the state apparatuses put in place which serve the interest of the bourgeoisie. In the second stanza of *Wehdone Sir*, the ideological apparatus of religion appears to come under criticism by the speaker:

Your pastor dey go on holiday abroad  
(Your pastor goes abroad on holiday)  
but you still dey pray in the name of God  
(But you still pray in the name of God)  
make you see food oh  
(So that you see food)  
make you no fail God  
(So that you don’t fail God)  
man of god dey chop Him dey robust  
(The man of God feeds well and is healthy)  
in your small salary you will pay your tithe  
(From your little salary, you will pay your tithe)  
fellowship in the day crusade for night  
(Attend fellowship in the day and crusade at night)

The above excerpt reveals that the idea of class stratification being an inherent pre-civilisation feature of the human society is fluid. This is based on the premise that it is a construct meant to serve the interest of a selected few. For example, as seen above, the “man of God” is symbolic of the privileged class that enjoys the “tithe” of the masses which comes from their “small salary.” The speaker, having exposed the social ills, rather than propose solution to crippling this apparatus maintains:

Oga this your story no dey add up gan  
(Sir, this your story lacks credibility)  
This your fabu e dey mad gan  
(This fable is outrageous)  
But who am I to take action  
So I say wehdone sir  
(So I say well done sir)

Wehdone sir  
(Well done sir)

It becomes therefore a matter of expounding on the challenge without proposing the solutions. Aside exposing the ills in the society, the speaker of *Wehdone Sir* also explicates on waning moral values in the society. For instance, rather than embrace the values and virtue of hard work and chastity, the characters in the text engage in vices. While the idea of morality is largely relative, a culturally oriented society like Nigeria frowns at such vices of laziness and immorality. This is represented in the lines of the *Wehdon Sir* thus:

You are into yahoo yahoo activity  
And you say out to your friend  
I'm a self-employed businessman  
Wehdon sir  
You are a member of the night  
But you still call yourself an entrepreneur  
Wehdon ma

The words, “yahoo yahoo” and “member of the night”, are implicit of the illicit acts defrauding people on the internet and prostitution respectively. This is because individuals who engage in these acts desire to change their social class. In Falz’s *This is Nigeria*, the menace of moral decadence is emphasised. The central preoccupation is the corruption that is manifest in nearly all institutions in the country. The song opens with an imaginary activist character recounting the paucity of good moral standing across several institutions in Nigeria in addition to the poverty of infrastructure and facilities. This is recounted thus: “extremely poor. The medical facilities are poor. We operate a predatory, neo-colonial capitalist system, which is founded on fraud and exploitation...” Building upon the words of the imaginary activist, the speaker of *This is Nigeria* carefully alludes to several cases of corruption and mismanagement. On an occasion:

This is Nigeria  
Wey da madam Philomena  
(Where Madam Philomena)  
Money vanish from your office  
(Money got missing from your office)  
36 milli you say na animal  
(36 million and you accused an animal of the theft)

The hyperbole employed above reveals the wanton loot that most individuals in position of authority. The theft alluded to in the lines above is the hoaxical statement issued by an official of the Joint Admissions Matriculation Board (JAMB), who claimed that a spiritual snake swallowed colossal amount of money from her office. If that record occurred in the secular setting, the speaker further recounts of the immorality that trails the institution of religion:

This is Nigeria  
Praise and worship we singing now [*sic*]  
Pastor put his hands on the breast of his members  
He is pulling the demons out

The above satirically lays bare the waning moral standards as one (pastor) who is supposed to be a model “puts his hands on the breast of his members.” This could be interpreted as laying hold on the resources of others. It could also be seen as using the office of religion to perpetrate immoral acts. *This is Nigeria* also chronicles the insecurity in Nigeria as evident in the lines:

Fulani Herdsmen still dey slaughter  
(Fulani Herdsmen are still killing)  
Carry people dey massacre  
(They massacre many people)

On a whole, the musical practice of Falz in the song, *This is Nigeria*, is realist in nature as it opens up the several identifiable issues bothering the Nigerian society. However, rather than truly present the issues ravaging the lower class and express means on how to end the unequal class structure since it has been earlier argued that the idea of unequal class structure is not a given but a construct, the speaker of *This is Nigeria* undermines the very proletariat that he seeks to elevate. First, the speaker observes that “This is Nigeria/ everybody be criminal” (everybody is a criminal). This implicates the speaker and the same oppressed class that he called the “poor” in the opening line of the song. It thus portends that the idea of being oppressed is relative. Take the case of the allusion to the missing ₦36million in the song. Would it fair to call the “Madam Philomena” a member of the bourgeoisie or proletariat or in Marxist term, “working class”? Who does “Philomena” oppress by claiming that that chunk of money was swallowed by a snake? Thus, the speaker belongs to a “Nigeria” where “everybody be criminal.” In this case, the musical practice itself is criminal and cannot claim to bridge the economic divide between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

## **Conclusion**

The paper has demonstrated how media culture, using the selected musical texts of Naira Marley and Falz as illustrations, serves as a fundamental medium in which the populace is imbued with the awareness of the ideological and social practices that shape contemporary power struggles in the society. The uniqueness of media culture, to be sure, could be traced to the laudable interest of youth and its accessibility to both the high and low classes. Thus, the speakers of the musical texts express their democratic rights to question, to criticise, to challenge the discrepancies, the imperfections inherent in the political and social system. The preceding discourse, therefore, illustrates how the speakers engage a problematic initiative to open up a concrete space for a dialogue and exchange, without violence and force, between the different socio-political institutions and the downtrodden of the society.

On the one hand, the musical texts may be said to open up a revolutionary action among the proletariats, on the other side, they generate the perpetuity of peaceful coexistence of the warring forces of signification. In addition, the paper throws into question the notions of authorial authenticity, originality, and ownership, and the orthodoxy assumption of the composers as the ultimate presence or truth within and behind their music. The intentions of the composers, strictly speaking, are not standards for the overall evaluation of the musical texts. Texts are performance rather than connotative act. The “hyper reality” invented in the texts is discovered by the listeners or readers through words. Word is not a stable body of signifiers furnished with a transcendental signified; far from it, word is a chain of irreducible performative signifiers which open up illimitable contexts of discourse. The paper, then, concludes on the argument that the critique of musical texts of Naira Marley and Falz explores the socio-political constituted values of their songs in which they are not definitive but rather open up a chain of infinite discourse. It is recommendable that the teaching and learning of Nigerian Hip-hop music should put pressure on the didactic essence of musical texts, rather than reducing them to mere the status of ‘art-for-art sake’ or as just mere creations for pleasure and entertainment. In addition, discourse on music texts should focus on the performative act of language; that is, how the figural elements employed in the music serve as generator (not container) of meaning.

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