HISTORICAL ACCURACY IN NOLLYWOOD COSTUME DESIGNS: APPROACHES CONSTRAINTS AND GAINS

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Abstract
In recent years, historical accuracy in costume design has attracted much attention based on the activities of many scholars, performing artists, and audiences. Accuracy of costumes in period films is an issue because modern productions of historical events can differ dramatically from the actual period in which the designer is striving to recreate. Essentially, the success or otherwise of a costume designer lies in her ability to accurately representing the historical setting and create convincing costumes and a visual, artistic, and audience satisfying aesthetics. But costumes as both signifiers of character and markers of history have hardly fulfilled these roles in Nigeria's Nollywood due to limitations of documentation. Based on a critical analysis of three period films, this paper anchoring on Gofman's dramaturgy theory, investigates historical accuracy in costume designs of Nollywood and seeks to determine if the costumes captured in these movies are historically accurate to the Nigerian dress culture from 1960-1970. The findings reveal that designers of Nollywood in a bid to create the right period look are encumbered by numerous factors including limitations in documented history, research, budget, material artifice, professional historians and so on. Consequently, the costume designs of the selected films are characterized by inadequate use of lines, colour, scenic background and hair styles. The paper therefore suggests a strategic approach to historically informed films for it is hoped that historical accuracy in costume design is a useful goal that can be attained by giving room for individual creativity.

Keywords: *Costume, Costume Design, Historical Accuracy, Nigerian Dress Culture, Nollywood Film.*

Introduction

Scholarly discussions concerning historically accurate costumes within the field of film studies have garnered much debates in recent times. The ability of costumes to create a connection between the present and the past using the dominant film meduim has generated discourses valued by Theatre and Film Scholars, performing artists, and even audiences. Hence, such disposition renders it a fertile art form for discussion in the popular media. Such discussion is particularly revealing when combined with artistic modes of display, for instance using cinema to create visual images and gives insight to people's world view over the years, through their dress culture. The age-old saying that "clothes make the character" is a truism. And this implies that the costume of a character does so much to communicate the psychological, cultural, geographical, religious and physical details of the character before us. When the actor first appears, the audience's feeling about the character will be based, to a great extent, on the information that guides all first impressions: clothing.

In Theatre therefore, there is a sharp distinction between theatrical and ordinary clothes. It is the "theatricalness" of costume that is the distinguishing factor between dress as 'ordinary' and dress as 'costume' (Dani, 2011:2). Also in films, such distinctions carefully selected by the designer to accurately represent clothes in contemporary productions and those in which the clothings replicate another age or place will begin to trigger questions about the character before the audience. Such questions as; what do the costumes say about them? What character do they portray, do other objects in the camera support the age and period of the year and does it match the overall vision of the film? Focusing on the film itself, and attempting to ignore any grand comparisons, do the costumes, inaccurate as they may be, contribute to the stories?

These questions were necessary in order for a costume designer to reflect on when designing historically informed films.

So films apparently give us the look of the historical environment in order that we may see and have a sense of historical antecedents. So it is important to stress that more than simply the look of colourful images, films ought to provide vividly how common objects appeared when they were in use. The world on the screen brings to light the world view of the actors/actress through such fundamental characteristics as; economics, politics, race, class, gender etc. All these are woven together in the lives and moments of individuals, groups, and nations to the outside audiences. Considering the connection between costuming and identity, Abone summarizes that film is therefore, a historical event, a cultural artifact, and a look into the lives and moment of individuals, groups, and nations to both inside and outside audiences. Based on this, she is of the opinion that film stands as one of the most important weapons by which the character of a nation, its image, identity, its culture, its peculiar sounds, politics, economy, its aspirations and achievements are impressed on the popular throughout the world (23).

Therefore, one of the nuances of costuming is to communicate meaning through culture. Most notably, people from diverse cultures have worn and displayed different styles of costumes during the history of the world. And as each community grew in size and wealth, people began to make remarkable progress in their ways of clothing and the significant meanings which may differ from one culture to another. And as such, cultural displays can be appreciated and enjoined by the outside world through the communicative essence of costumes. Based on this outlook, Schenone and Greg cited by (Douglas Anele) 2011, has this to say:

> Culture is from man, since man's actions are uniquely creative of it. Culture is also for man, since through culture, we come to know to a greater extent what we are

as creatures who are made for more than simply subsistence, and capable of knowing the true, the beautiful and the good. Man and his actions are thus the measure of culture, and consciousness of what man ought to be ensures that man does not become the prisoner of any culture…(113)

Clothes have had reason for their existence since the time when man was the only animal unprotected by nature from the weather. And man has used variety of materials in different shapes and colours so as to satisfy his physical wants (keep him warm), cover his body, and at the same time please his eyes.

Obviously in films, "clothes come to life when the director calls 'Action!'" (Landis, 2007: xxiv). Landis views costumes that transcend the limits of the narrative or the parameters of the film as saboteurs: "Costume is one of the director's most effective tools for telling a story—so powerful, in fact, that a distracting garment can ruin a scene (Landis, 2007). Apparently the communicative aspects of people's clothing have over the years been engaged in many cultures to give expression to the people's world view. Hence our Nigerian dress cultures have been utilized to embody human body, and all other forms of their socio-cultural existence. On that note, Tracie opines that;

There is an enormous wealth of meaning, stories, and tradition hidden away inside the pattern and designs of traditional clothes so much so that they become visual representations of history, philosophy, ethics, oral literature and moral orientation, social code of conduct, religious beliefs, political thought and aesthetic values (24).

Despite being a major visual component of cinema, the art of costuming have received scant recognition in the film narrative.

However, this 'undue marginalization of film costumes by film practitioners is marked enough to be diagnosed as a symptom' (Cook cited by Cousins J. 2008:7). Even in films set in the past, such as the Costume dramas, fashion finds a way to make an impact, for historical costumes are often subtly updated with trends of the contemporary period of production in mind. Through its links with fashion, costume design has often been overlooked as a viable area for analysis. On that note, Bruzzi asserts that "Costume dramas, despite their continuing popularity, have rarely elicited anything other than rather derogatory or cursory attention"(35). This is because costume design has been unfortunately addressed as a frivolous art being likened to the Fashion and Sartorial industries. Unfortunately, this frequent condemnation of costumes which in privileging aesthetics becomes accused of ideological vacuousness and vanity by its critics. For example, William Hazlitt has described costume as 'the abortive issue of vain ostentation and exclusive egotism' (Hazlitt cited by Breward 1998:4).

Thus, within the work that does exist on the topic of film costumes, Moseley and Street overtly cite its close interweaving with fashion as a reason for its undervalued critical status, (Moseley, 2005:1), (Street, 2001:1). Christopher Breward suggests that such condemnation arises from a fear of how costume (fashion) does function ideologically. Also clothes unarguably articulate society in the most direct and revealing of ways distinctively.

In the world of Theatre and Cinema, one of the fundamental objectives of costume is to communicate to the audience. Costumes are intended to provide information about the traits of the character wearing them and to express larger themes and moods about the production as a whole (Jablon 2016:2). Costume design is so much more than dressing an actor: it's a subtle but powerful extension of the movie's central themes. Thus, Aggie Guerard Rodgers succinctly puts it this way: "the costume of the actor should not get in the way of the writer's words." (1). Designing contemporary costumes is a tough job but the pressure mounts when a designer

has to create costumes for a period film. This genre of films recreate a past era, one that may have little or no reference. So one of the most significant aspects of portraying this different period in time is the way people dressed and their costumes. The style of clothes, the fabrics, the embellishments and more, help us create a connection to the past. Ideally, a costumer should be knowledgeable in the history of fashion and dress of a given period, so that they can better replicate the styles of the clothing of the past. In other words, the costume designer should have the ability to identify who a character is, why the choice of the cloth; and then other possible means of developing a look that can be used to recreate a historically accurate period. However, the inability of the costume designer to carry out these duties accurately has become pertinent issue worthy of academic discourse.

          Scholarly concerns with authenticity and representing the real within the area of historic costuming are a thread valued by scholars, performing artists and even audiences. When it comes to historical film as vital part of the movie-making process, from scene-anchoring dresses, to narrative told through costumes, the art of costuming the characters within a film is pivotal and one of the major problems bothering on Nigeria's Nollywood Costumes. However, on a historical or period film, things are a lot more different. In historical films, costumes do not hang lifelessly on a dummy in a glass case, as it does in museums and fashion houses; rather, it confines, emphasizes, and expresses the moving body. Still in films, tools, utensils, weapons, and furniture are not items on display or images reproduced on the pages of books, but objects that people use and misuse, objects they depend upon and cherish, objects that can help to define their livelihoods, identities, lives and destinies. This capability of film slides into what might be called false historicity. Or the myth of facticity, a mode on which Hollywood has long depended. This is the mistaken notion that mimesis is all, that history is in fact no more than a period look, that

things themselves are history, rather than become history because of what they mean to people of a particular time and place.

However a major drawback of historical accuracy in costume designs of Nollywood is that oftentimes, some designers in their bid to recreate history tend to alter what we know authentically about some historical situations, characters, props, fabrics, etc. This alteration from a strict historical continuum diminishes verisimilitude in the film, thereby making it 'Nollywood', 'Fake', 'Inaccurate.' However, such criticism might be rational if the designer is working in an industry where there are no limitations in documented evidence, with as much time as was needed for the project, no expenses spared, among others. Historical accuracy in costuming became an issue because modern productions of historical events in the film narrative can differ dramatically from the actual period in which the director/designer is striving to recreate. This disconnects between film and reality, or what can be called anachronism in costuming forms the problem of this study.

Actually, the job of the designer in such films has grown with the industry and must respond to accurately representing the historical setting, illustrating the drama as written, creating convincing costumes and a visual, artistic, and audience satisfying aesthetics. But the worrisome issue is that costumes as both signifier of character and marker of history have hardly fulfilled these roles in Nigeria's Nollywood due to the limitations of documented evidence. Despite the genres popularity within and outside the country, issues bothering on historically accurate designs that are convincing and believable has become quite a challenging task to the overall success story of the Nigerian video film industtry. Besides being a popular genre, the realities of these video films centers more on the people's tradition, culture, wisdom, beliefs, and among many other peculiarities that truly distinguish Nigerians from other African countries. This has attracted more Nigerian audiences to becoming more interested in the video films as they relate to their religious beliefs and cultural practices.

However, it is a common thing in Nigeria's Nollywood, many Nigerian audiences enjoy video films not necessarily for visual and aesthetic purposes; but solely for entertainment. Most of the audiences are not paying attention to the visual mechanisms of the story; rather they seemed undeterred in the level of accuracy of costumes to a historically accurate character. Without doubt, some of these video films have proven that the overriding force that guides the making of video films in Nigeria is given to monetary gains which of course facilitated undue recycling of actors with familiar faces, recycling of costumes among characters, undue display of stylized clothing with little or no reference to the era in view. Based on this outlook, the Producers of these video films have made the audiences to believe that these video films were not actually meant to accurately represent reality. In view of that, many studies have revealed that although some costume designers of the Nigeria's Nollywood have made remarkable attempts in the suitable uses of costumes as tools for cultural sustenance, especially in costume dramas but in the area of marking historical events, the art of costuming has hardly fulfilled those roles due to limitation in documented history. It is against this backdrop of the foregoing problems that this study is set to fill the gap in knowledge. Consequently, this study is set to critically examine Nigerian dress culture from 1960-1970's in three select historic epic films for historical accuracy with a view to ascertain the level of accuracy of these costumes in Nollywood costume designs.

Conceptualizing Historical Accuracy in Costume Designs of Nollywood

Several philosophical issues arise from the discussion of historical accuracy in costume designs of period films and costume drama in cinematic productions. The first issue is therefore conceptual. Thus there is need to analyze the concept of historical accuracy in the costume designs of historic epic films and of costume dramas and decide what counts as a historically accurate

production. Once historical accuracy in costume design is defined, questions emerge about the value of such movies. Therefore, one need to ask whether reasons can be given for thinking that historically accurate productions are aesthetically superior to non-accurate ones. In the process of deciding the value of such movies, it is important to note that there are so many beautiful differences in these time periods and when you start to just abandon them, they all start to look the same. Based on this outlook, the study proposes that when production is historically set; it would be necessary to honor that time period in order to tell the story in such a way that the period films create the right period look to the audiences.

However, this research paper does not wish to insist on a stipulative definition of historical accuracy in such a manner that historically informed films may or may not be achieved within the concept of costume design. Going by such definition that a "historically accurate costume is one in which historically accurate articles are made using historically accurate materials and processes are assembled about a historically accurate body." Thus such expression invariably implies that historical accuracy is a dual proposition that is either achieved or it is not. It is therefore expected that the analysis of the concept of historical accuracy within costume designs of period films/costume dramas, starts by identifying the desiderata a good definition of the concept will satisfy. Also, a good definition will capture and refine what informed members of both theatre and filmmakers mean when they talk about historical accuracy in costume design.

Oftentimes, film makers tend to brace up historical accuracy in costume dramas with personal authenticity. Nevertheless, a personally authentic film is only faithful to the individual's intelligence, i.e. a production characterized by personal authenticity is not a slavish reproduction of an author's text; rather, it is the product of a producer/director/ designer's personal interpretation. Therefore, by contrast, historical authenticity only involves fidelity to something historical. Bearing that in mind, filmic productions

can be both personally and historically authentic, for there is no necessary incompatibility. Based on this outlook, it is obvious that every performance of an existing work of art, even the most personally authentic, is historically authentic to some degree. Even a high level of historical accuracy is, however, compatible with some level of personal authenticity. Going by this exposition, the two sorts of authenticity are only incompatible if historical authenticity demands complete, strict and total fidelity to the past. In that regard, historical accuracy should, however, be defined in such a way that it is a valuable goal in performances of all valuable works.

For the purpose of this research study, historical accuracy in costume design can therefore be defined in such a manner that performing artists have the capacity for individual creativity. Therefore, going by such definition that a historically accurate film production is one which has been set in its historic era with the spectacle characterized by visual expressions of that period such as the kind of architecture, costumes, makeup, hairs, accessories, among others which are used as the film unfolds. Based on this outlook, scholarly concerns on the subject of historical accuracy in costume designs of costume dramas primarily focus on the period look in the dominant film medium. Nevertheless, costume drama as a broad type is somewhat unclear in its definition due to the number of different filmic approaches that may incorporate historical costume (such as the historical film, the period film, the experimental film, etc.). However, following Hayward and Pidduck; they take costume drama to be a film set in a historical period but which may not faithfully reproduce historical events. Rather, costume dramas refer to their historical setting predominantly by means of their costume (Hayward, 2000: 75; and Pidduck, 2004: 4). Thus in costume drama's historical framing, frequent sidestepping and historical manipulation/or reworking of the past occurs, and then posing the question of historical fidelity.

Hence in defining historical accuracy in costume design, implies that period films are faithful to the zeitgeist of the year in view, most especially in their mode of dressing; makeup, hair, accessories, architecture, etc. which is typical to that era. Historical authenticity within the context of costume design therefore does not imply a strict and complete recreation of the past, but definite representation of a historical past, characterized by visual expressions of that period in view. In this regard, a historically-informed film within the context of costume design involves past events that are carefully framed in such a way to suit the narrative. Obviously, costumes have to allow for today's different body shapes and ways of moving and as well, enhance the actor's breathing or the performer's movement as well.

However, Theatre as a contemporary art has a contemporary audience with a contemporary eye and must be of its time. So a designer does not create an accurate reconstruction of a historical dress but retains within it, its essential attributes while reinterpreting it for today. Often only in retrospect can a film production be seen as a creation of the period in which it is screened - by the way it reflects current fashion, its cut, the selected fabrics and trimmings, make-up and hair. This entails that the designer has to integrate into the production a 20th-century visual style. Unlike the 19th century theatre, costumes and sets were devised by different craftsmen working independently. This didn't matter since the primary focus was on the performer/actor and realism was the prevailing style, so sets and costumes blended. However, the idea of visual unity and a production as a total concept was established in the early 1900s, and the director evolved to fuse the disparate elements - text, concept, performance, design, lighting, etc- into a seamless whole.

As the past that the costume designer recreates often has no recourse to the exact reproduction of actual historical events, history thus becomes subverted, modified to suit narrative needs. Adaptation in relation to the costume drama therefore, is not just

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limited to that which frequently takes place from novel to screen, for an adaptation of time, space and place also occurs. For example, take Half of a Yellow Sun, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2010), a prose chronicling the historical events of 1960 in Nigeria and adapted by Chiwetel Ejiofor as a costume drama (appraised in the subsequent chapter of this thesis). The novel written and based on Nigeria's Civil war makes it a socio-historical fabulation set in the twentieth century. The textual source text is 'authentic' in terms of time and space. However, the adaptation, in this case the costume drama, cannot replicate the authenticity of this moment for it is already past/passed. In this regard, it is expected that the adaptation must also contend with its own present moment in time and space, than that of the 1960s.

　　　Consequently, a movie therefore can be completely historically authentic and personally authentic, to the extent that creativity in performance is an aesthetic goal. Thus, a satisfactory definition of historical authenticity in costume design will therefore not demand complete fidelity to past events. However, the key to defining historical authenticity is specifying the sort of things to which a historical drama or performance is faithful to. Thus the concept of historical accuracy within the concept of costume design whether on stage/screen will also represent it as a goal that performing artists can attain, at least some of the time.

　　　It is therefore the purpose of this study to critically analyze these strategies deployed by the designer with the aim to communicate historic costuming to the audience. It could be noted that communicating film costumes can be oftentimes more important than complete recreation of costumes from a historical era. This invariably implies that strict and complete historical accuracy in costume designs of costume dramas most times can be a communication problem. This is because contemporary audiences oftentimes have certain associations that are hard to discard. For instance; if a designer wants to costume a princess to feel sweet and feminine, the idea is that a modern eye demands pink or light blue,

though the costume-historian knows pale colors coded poverty. Also if the designer wants to costume a woman to portray the fact that she's a sexy seductress, again the audience needs the bodice and sleeves to expose some bits of her chest region which contemporary audiences associate with sexy, regardless of which bits would plausibly have been exposed at the time.

Obviously, it is expected that the basic objective of the designer is to communicate with the audience having in mind that the idea of historical authenticity demands that costume designers achieve a useful goal and costumes are realizable. So in designing historic costumes of costume dramas for either stage/screen productions, emphasis is geared towards achieving a useful goal. The fact that authenticity is not always achievable should not be taken to establish that the concept of historically accurate productions in the dominant film medium has no application. Based on this outlook, for a costume designer to successfully reproduce a historically accurate production, the designer has to consider necessary approaches to the actualization of a historically accurate period movie. These approaches are thus considered by designers as the preliminary stage to actualizing historically accurate costumes. As Gregory Gale (2016) summarized that the designer should try to respond to the following pertinent questions and also come up with the best solution:

> The designer should try to look at each production, what is the writing, what is the director, what is the set, is it for stage/screen? What is this budget, what are we, how are we trying to do this? What is available for me to use? What assistants do I have? How am I going to make this happen? What am I going to do? So he/she tends to try to take all these variables into consideration in other to make a show."

However, a costume designer's approach to a historically set production begins with consideration of the basic requirements

related to the individual production, which leads to four iterative strategies. The strategies include incubation, research, role-playing, and historical manipulation (see Figure 1), each of which is often re-engaged in an iterative process that ends when the designs have been rendered and are ready for actualization. The figure analysis also revealed minor subjects incorporated within the strategies of research (i.e., the use of textual, visual, and artifactual sources) and role-playing, which is used by designers to imagine the perspectives of others. In this case, the "others" are the characters, audience, director, and performers/actors. The result of the use of these strategies is the unique act of costume design displaying a level of historical accuracy appropriate to the individual production.
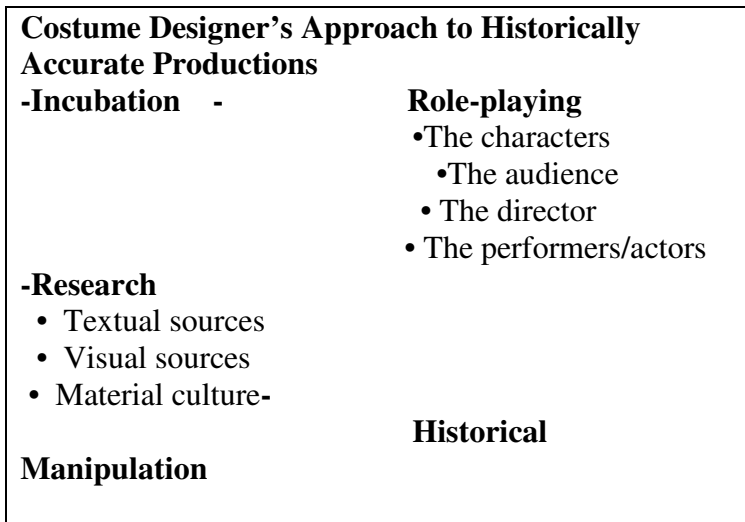
Costume Designer's Approach to Historically Accurate Productions

-Incubation   -   **Role-playing**
                                        •The characters
                                          •The audience   .
                                        • The director
                                        • The performers/actors

-Research
  • Textual sources
  • Visual sources
 • Material culture**-**
                            Historical
Manipulation

Figure1. Costume Designer's Approach to Historically Accurate Productions: Category, themes, and minor themes

Incubation-Applying this approach, Costume designers often points to the necessity of simply thinking. The production factors must have the opportunity to incubate in order to spur the designer's

imagination. At the start of the process, when the text/script has been read and the production concept conveyed, the designer can then start dreaming. This stage actually gives to sit and ponder over tons of information and allow the design ideas to marinate in the designer's head. However, for creativity to flourish, time must be allotted for incubation.

Research- Following an initial incubation period, the next step for costume designers approach to historically accurate production is research. In other words, this is a time to have an in-depth thinking and a thorough look at pictures, magazines, period albums, etc. Instantly, ideas like; "what is, how a designer feel about the period will begin to thrust in". At this stage, approximation of the volume of the designer's research demands a vast insight into extensive research from all sources. In this, it is expected of the designers to consider research as the basis for creativity, a platform for exploration and imagination. As Tracy Christensen observed, "even if it's going to be totally outside the realm of reality, there has to be some foundation of research"; she deemed it to be "the genesis of the ideas." In this stage, the designers overarching objective is to research as deeply and as broadly as he/she can.

This research stage is often described as a multi-stage process, commencing with the general and narrowing to more specialized subject matters. General research however include as much information as possible – cultural, historical, religious, political, sociological, philosophical, on top of art history and costume history. In fact, an in-depth research into historic costuming oftentimes rarely starts with the clothes specifically. It usually starts with the vibe and spirit of the time period, the place, and the people. These other minor subjects (such as; textual, visual and material culture), are integrated by the designers to a historically accurate production, which is used to view the perspective of others.

Textual research- Quite a bit of this initial research is done through textual sources. This stage of research actually involves an enormous amount of reading, about a period, about a writer or author, about the world in which the historical piece is created, that the designer finds essential. Even before clothing research has begun, reading is an integral technique of gathering costume information and inspiration. This involves extensive reading such as tailoring books relating to that period, and catalogs are essential sources for historic costume design research. The designers ought to have a reading culture and of course have a lot of books that relates to all aspects of life such as; books about fashion, books about places, etc. Essentially, the idea is to get inspired by the styles, colour palette, silhouette, or in fact get to know something specific about a time and place.

Visual research- Books are considered valuable tools because they are tangible. There is no doubt that costume designers equally like visual resources that they can touch. They want to handle their pictorial research, arranging it and rearranging it to spur creativity. They also relish that the images inside books have been edited, curated and presented in an adjacency. Though for some designers, books are no longer useful since the emergent of Pinterest app on the internet. One can easily access the Pinterest app instead of piling up books in the closet. For this group of designers, books are quite redundant.

However, for pictorial research, the Internet was both lauded and lamented. It can open other avenues that we might not have found. Also, other sites that are recommended for photography includes Corbis, Photofest, and Flickr. Unfortunately, there are a lot of specific interesting research that may not be online that can be found in these period books and magazines. This is because they are so few that exist. So it is advisable that a costume designer makes use of both.

Artifactual research- In addition to textual and visual sources, the third major source of research for historically set productions is artifacts, especially the surviving garments of the period. Artifacts provide a connection to the overarching narrative of culture, but also to actual people, living and working in the past. And if a designer perhaps gets in contact with such clothes, it will be far much better than just imagining. On that note, Constance Hoffman professed that;

> I'm incredibly moved by extant garments and moved by historical craft, by the sense of what the hands could do and what the mind was doing. When I'm looking at an old garment, I'm often very touched by the human contact with the past. (2008)

Material culture also offers an opportunity to recognize how garments have changed in terms of silhouettes, and textiles, the way the light reflects off the fabric, and how insights on body movement are reworked through such clothes. However, the idea of seeing the wear and having a feel of how the lightness of construction, and getting a sense of the magic of textiles as they were used in different periods and the folks that wore them and the artists that made them. Designers desiring to recreate a historical event or period film will benefit a lot from material culture. In fact, for the designers, the use of material culture, textual sources, and visual images emerged as a three-pronged strategy of research for a historically set production, a strategy that was revisited continually. Similarly, the incubation strategy was often re-employed as the focus of research decreases from general to specific. This according to Hoffman is actually the point of "reshuffling marked by careful meditation that demands continuous organizing and reorganizing research"(Constance Hoffman 2008). After sufficient incubation and research has been made, the designer having fulfilled the requirements of the period that is- making sure that the design is

properly rooted in the period, in the place, in the time, politically speaking and everything else, the designer now progresses to the role-playing strategy, the next stage in the approach to historically set productions.

Role-playing- Role-playing, or role-taking as Mead (2016) called it, is "placing one's self in the attitude of the other"(89). Analysis of the data showed that designers approached historically set productions by anticipating the attitudes of others, and used those conjectures to guide their decisions about costumes. This role-playing was both explicit, as when designers acknowledged imagining themselves in various different positions, and implicit, as when they professed to know what others wanted, which they could only do by imagining their perspectives.

The characters- The first role designers stepped into was that of the characters for whom they were designing. So it is expected that the designers to adequately research about the character's role, live-in the roles of the character he/she is designing for smooth and complete process. When assuming the role of a character, the designer should be able to identify a character with the following questions such as; what kind of clothes she would wear? Where she bought them? What she paid for them? How she found them? Who washes them? Who irons them? How many times a week does she change or make her hair? Where are those clothes when she goes to bed at night? What does she care about? etc. This approach simply aids the designer in understanding in totality what this character wanted to become.

The audience- Role-playing extended to the audience as well, as designers take the place of observers of the production. This is because it is obvious that whenever somebody, anything is put on stage or appears before a camera, people tend to read more meaning into the personality as the story or action enfolds. So it is expected

that designers place themselves in the position of the audience to attempt to deduce what their conclusions might be. Based on this outlook, costume designers venturing in historic costuming will start by creating a parallel first exposure to the production. With any production, the first step for a designer is reading the text/script and reading it like they are seeing it. So a designer reads a script in such a way like he/she is experiencing it or seeing it. Designers in this way visualize what the audience expects and wants. Being a costume designer demands that he/she should be in a position to know who the audiences are and what they really love, whether they prefer shows that are set in period or contemporary piece. Being in the audience place, the designer should know that it is inappropriate to present period shows that are set in modern clothes. Therefore for costume designers to facilitate meaningful connection with the audience, they must make it easier for the audience to understand who these people are. However, it is important as a designer not to underestimate the audience because an audience can feel when something is on the nose or if it's not.

The director- In addition to the characters and the audience, the next approach for designers is assuming the attitude of the director in role-play aids to communicate historically accurate productions. Designers of costume dramas believed that oftentimes the way people might have acted, moved, and spoken historically might not be the way the director wants. Usually they want an immediacy and intimacy with the audience. As such, some designers taking the role of the directors just don't like it when a historical piece get into those really freaky period details and in that wise they discard some historically accurate elements to appease the director's anticipated response. Interestingly, the director is kind of a stand-in for the audience's reaction. So for the designer, role-playing as the director is role-playing as the audience as well.

The performers- Further, the performers' anticipated responses were considered as designers took on their roles. Here, it is expected that a very good costume designer is someone who can also think like the actors. The designers have to merge and meld together with the actors, into one. Historically speaking, for the performers/actors, they have different expectations such as; they want to be assured of looking nice in the costume; they are usually thinking they're going to look awkward. But most importantly, they (actors) really, want to know that they can move in it. By taking the role of character, audience, director, and performer/actor, designers advance their understanding of the production's parameters in preparation for the next and last strategy in their approach to historically set productions- historical manipulation.

Historical manipulation- Historical manipulation is the approach by which costume designers create a design inspired by, but not identical to the original material source. To manipulate is to "take an original form and to change it, to alter it. It's to craft, to change the look of" the source material (Constance Hoffman 2008). For designers every costume design is manipulated to some degree. Even in a production purporting to be historically accurate, certain design elements are manipulated, because the designer is selecting which historically accurate elements to include. A historically accurate dress would have existed in that time period or that color but the designer's role is to control all the things that are happening together

        For more extreme versions of manipulation, demands incorporating inspiration from a variety of subjects, but only if they support the applicability of the production factors (e.g., the text, the production concept, and the scenic design). Hence a production in which there might be perhaps something animalistic about these characters. The designer might decide to research a bunch of animals that can be integrated into the design process, or those ideas generated from other sources that may be layered into the historical

research. It also implies, combining historical and contemporary elements to create a manipulated design. The process is geared towards something either close to the reality, or to the historical reality or even closer to modern aesthetics. However, the designer should know how to manipulate these aesthetics for a better comprehension.

This procedure is what costume scholars like (Cunningham, 1989; Gillette, 1992; Russell, 1985) called stylization. However, for some designers, this may appear bad or negative because to them, the term signifies making something up due to inadequate research. Also to the stakeholders in the Aristotelian theatrical model, in honoring the creation of an authentic world, the term stylization indicates deception. Besides manipulation, other terms used by designers to refer to this strategy were extrapolation, theatricalization, and distortion. So a designer may choose to riff on, morph, tweak, and take a bit liberty with the historical research. No matter the word that was used by the designer; it is of utmost important that whenever a designer choose to manipulate anything, he/she has to understand what it was in its origin and in its first existence. A costume designer do not just tear apart or build on historical material, but should understand that there are reasons something existed previously.

In restating the importance of proficiency in historical accuracy, designers may oftentimes go through the process over and over again for constructive costume design process. When reaching the stage of historical manipulation, if the designer has reached an impasse and can't figure it out… then he/she is expected to do more research. Sometimes that additional research is historical in nature, and other times it focuses on alternate inspirations, elements that are not historically accurate but that aid in the development of a manipulated design. For historical manipulation is properly developed through costume renderings. Ultimately, designers produce an illustration of each costume as a tool to communicate their ideas to directors, performers, and costume manufacturers.

Costume renderings are the primary method by which designers manipulate historical and inspirational research.

However, historical manipulation is the final strategy of a costume designer's approach to a historically set production, an approach that begins with consideration of the many production factors and incorporates incubation, research, and role-playing (see Figure1). Based on these many influences and inspirations, designers manipulate historical accuracy to the degree best suited to the individual production. Through data analysis, the level of historical accuracy was determined to be highly variable and specific to each production. It became clear that for a historically accurate production, costume design would be situated along a continuum, being closer to or farther from an artifact's reproduction.

Consequently, rather than judge a historical piece by its way of displaying costumes in antiquity; it is important to look at how successfully the creators of historical piece have chosen wisely from what history offered them in order to make a good period piece. Also the historical materials need to communicate to the audience and the period pieces are ought to be used in a lively way. Thus, the designer needs to start by changing whatever needs to be changed and keep whatever that appeals to the period in view. That truthfully means that if some events, clothes, props, etc., are changed or simplified to help the audience follow the production; that would be a right decision. This also implies that some costumes could be twisted a bit and made into making the story attainable, so that the story doesn't lose its entertainment value. This view is to a certain extent validated by practitioners of costume design, such as Deborah Nadoolman Landis, who define costume within the boundaries of the film frame and the narrative vision of the director, with the image of the costume onscreen being the ultimate expression and experience of the designed garment—the costume was created for the dominant medium, and is a unique storytelling device that is bound by and exists for the narrative.

Mainstream Film Industry and Historical Accuracy in Costume Design

In order to achieve an appealing and believable historically accurate production, requires in-depth research in order to come up with authentic period costumes, makeup and scenery. This invariably requires trained professionals that know what to do and can effectively and convincingly create the right atmosphere for the film. But on a sad note, it is disheartening to say that most of the Nigerian video films are technically distressed and lacks indepth research in the area of costume historicity, coupled with undocumented history. Unfortunately, the bulk of Filmmakers we have in Nigerian Film Industry today had not really had time to sit in a film school/class (Lancelot Imaseun). Most of them, he noted, were largely passion driven. Thus, the required skills were often hard to come by.

According to Imaseun, the genre of the epic film is common world-wide, but the term is largely misrepresented in many of Nigerian video films. Most movie makers erroneously see it as just "a style of filmmaking with large scale, sweeping scope and spectacle, often transporting the viewer to settings of old." Those that hold this view consequently equate the epic to a showing of mud houses, large crowds, and people dressed in raffia palm skirts. But the true historically epic movie is not just limited to this; rather, it deals with themes that are historical, national, religious, or of legendary importance and uses an elevated style to celebrate heroic accomplishments. In the same vein, Imaseun indicated thus; "my desire to make epic style films is motivated by the wish to draw out important events from the past, and to relate the problems and solutions of the past to present realities (Interview 2018). Unlike the productions of advanced film industries where films are made by core artists, but in Nigeria film industry for instance; majority of these video films were simply produced by entrepreneurs whose major interest is just to maximize profit. This is because the Nigerian film industry is yet to rise up to the challenges of

recreating credible and imaginative visual effect. There is therefore very little concern with costume authenticity.

Also in Nigeria however, the funding of film productions is largely rough handled by the auto parts dealers in allied products who control and direct productions as director-producer. And while acting as director-producer, "they dictate and decide what project gets attention, who works on them and how much will be disbursed" (33). Lancelot then went on to speak about the challenges of making a historically accurate film in Nigeria. In talking about such challenges, he said; "one must begin by considering the general problems of the country and the common problems that face the Nigerian filmmaker. On that note, Balogun affirms that; "there are no producers in Nigeria in the real sense of the word, just as there are no record companies today in the music industry in Nigeria… "there are no producers to whom one can take a film project and say: This is my vision of the film I wish to make" (5). It is against this backdrop that Akinbola laments that in the Nollywood film jungle, money talks. The producer who calls the shots dominates artistic and creative influence. He provides the money upfront, paying a one-off fee to the scriptwriters, actors and takes all the profit… (33).Most of these deficiencies in the area of historically accurate costumes have made the video films to appear as mere concerts and things not to be taken seriously. In an assessment of the industry, Ekwuazi however posits that the industry is grappling with a number of problems among which are:

> A high preponderance of debutante production i.e., many people who are making their first video thereby creating a lot of dilation in the production subsection.
> An indifference to professionals/specialization i.e. it is an all-comers affair in which anyone could play just about any role on whatever side of the camera.
> Rather than fund productions through producers the marketers themselves assume the role of producers thereby

determining the story line, the actors and the scenery. Nothing in their backgrounds prepared them for the roles they are assuming so glibly (7-8).

However, in the video film industry, a lot of work needs to be done in the overall design application. The essence is to increase the believability of historic epic movies, and as well as the standard respectively. Apart from traditional costume designs used in epic films, there seems not to be much differences created by their designs. Most times we witness the same items of clothing already seen in video film A and B. This is to say that in epic films, the costumes are repeatedly over used which show lack of originality. In this wise facial features are expressed more visibly and actions are more desirable. Most times, it is easier to identify that some designs (particularly in costuming of monstrous character or wild animal character) used in the video films, do not completely give clues to the number of years spent in the forest, the freshness of the wounds, the change in clothes colour, texture, etc. A perfect example is in *Egwonga...* where a woman (Ngozi Ezeonu) who was banished from the village for over 24years, reappears with neat clothes, fresh walking stick, neat skin, neat nails, and of course a well-kept hair. These discrepancies range from same kind of hair style from one season of film to another; the transfer of shoes from one character to another. Sometimes, transforming a young woman to look and act ninety years old in most of these movies are not done appropriately.

However, the costume designers of the epic genres have made credible attempts towards achieving perfection in some of the epic based video films; nevertheless, more effort should be put to work most especially in the contemporary genres. This is because most of our modern epic movies encourage indecent dress styles in their bid to make more sales and most of our actresses do not like to conform with the costumiers; they choose to go to locations with their personal clothing and most times tend to appear nude on the

screen in their bid to appear sexy and on point. The producers/directors of these movies portray women as sex objects who can be manipulated at any time.

Based on this outlook, it is pertinent to examine the standard of the Nigerian film industry and the advanced film industry most especially in the area of historically accurate costumes. This is because if we actually want to equate the Nigerian video films with Hollywood to be precise, we will notice that most of Hollywood films are made with so much hard work needed to enhance the believability of the film. This is because technically, visual effect remains one of the most integral aspects of storytelling and it helps to boost the artistic credibility of movie content.

However, the reason for the above deficiencies entails lack of professionalism, lack of documented evidence and negligence to in depth research in the entertainment industry. It is not surprising however that the producers of most of these Nigerian video films ventured into the industry with the idea of making profit; hence no attention is paid to the visual imagery. They choose to hire the services of moon-lighters in their bid to cut cost. There is no room for collaboration among the crew members; hence all the technical departments are disjointed during the pre-production process. Nwadigwe also observes that in recent times, the unavailability of equipment for practical demonstrations has contributed in making costume and make-up courses appear "abstract", "less empirical" and "less attractive". The major constraint is that in Nigeria, there is no standard or established theatrical make-up shop apart from cosmetic shops where few make-up materials can be bought when there is need for them (198). Hence, most practitioners in these areas spend huge amounts of money in buying all these materials and equipment from foreign countries, thereby making the practice very expensive to venture into. Thus, many costume designers in these fields cannot acquire their own make-up kits considering the cost implication, leading to an imbalance in the practical understanding of these courses.

Nevertheless, majority of Nigerian audience watch video films in the quest for entertainment. Therefore they seem undeterred with the visual aesthetic satisfaction and the connection of the costumes to a historical past time for historical accuracy. They have little or no interest in the treatment of the story. Despite all these challenges the industry is facing, the Nigerian video films is contributing enormously its own quota to the growth of the nation's economy boom.

Costume design illustrations in the selected three films and Pictorial images of Nigerian Dress Culture from 1960 and above for Historical Accuracy. (October 1, Half of a Yellow Sun and Invasion 1897).

Plate1
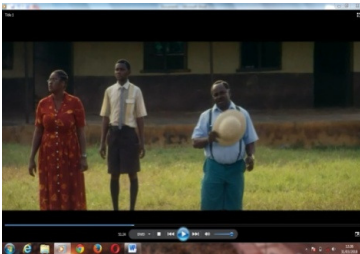
Fig. A   Fig. B

The Principal and teachers at the assembly. Note that the Principal and the male teacher have the same hair cut in figures A&B reflecting the true hair cut in Nigeria 1963.

Plate 2   Fig.C Uniform and Non-tribal costumes from 1960and above

Captain Winterbuttom addressing the officers. Note the irregularity in the stockings of the uniformed men.

Plate 3   Fig.D

Akoya taking his farm produce to the market. Note that his costume is an accurate reflection of the men in Fig.D

Plate 4   Fig E

Note that her costume, makeup, hair-do and jewelries do not come close to true reflection of a typical Kanuri woman in the sixties.
Pictoral analysis captured in plates in the video film Half of a Yellow Sun

Plate 5   Fig.F

Fig. F-Modern western wedding gown worn by an Igbo bride 1960. Nylon lace and veil with a flat white shoe to match. Note that the

wedding gown in plate 5 has no recourse to the dress made in the sixties.

Fig.G   Plate 6

Here the Queen is being received by some political dignitaries on the Independence day. Note that the costumes of Olanna and Kainene in Plate 6 do not fit into the line, colour, and fabric of the period in view.

Pictorial analysis captured in plates in the video film Invasion 1897
   **The character of Igie Ehanire (plate 1)**
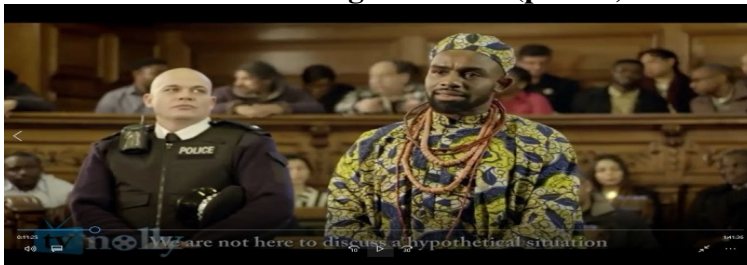
As a strong historian of African Art and culture, the character of Igie reflects a young Nigerian student in his early thirties whose love for his culture and tradition reflected in his costumes. Being a Benin man by ancestry, the costumes design of Igie during the court trial captures the clothes ethics of a typical Benin man. In order to have recourse to royalty and affluence, he was costumed in a colourful traditional attire with gorgeous coral beads tied around his neck and wrists. Also of points to note is the costumes of other members of the jury in the court that came to support Igie, through their costumes also reflected the clothes ethic of Benin kingdom. See plate 2 and 3 for pictorial illustration.

plate2

plate3

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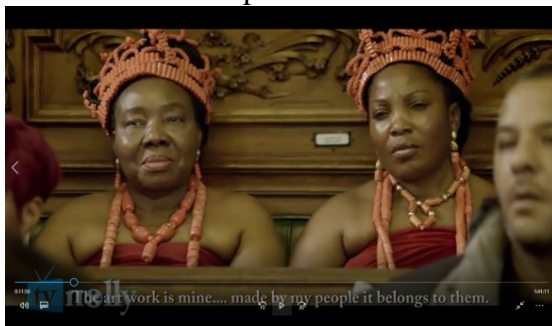
Igie's wife and supporters. Notice her dress giving clues to a typical Benin bride. Also in plate 2 is a typical Benin titled women. Note their beaded crown, beads matching with the gorgeous Swedish fabric tied around the chest down to the ankle region.

The character Oba Ovonramwen (Plate 4 and 5)

Traditionally, the Oba Ovonramwen wore complete attire made up of coral beads. This includes beaded head bands, numerous rows of beads, forming the choker collar, which did not rise above the chin, crossed chest beads for the purposes of different ceremonial occasions. Traditionally, the Oba's neck was not exposed, many rows of beads and charms hung round the neck and often supported by handkerchief, with a large red velvet wrapper to match.

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Benin Palace Chiefs (Plate 6)

In order to depict the affluence associated with royalty in ancient Benin Kingdom, the palace Chiefs are costumed in gorgeous and elegant wears of the period. As can be seen in the above plate, the palace Chiefs were costumed in white wrappers tied around the waists. They also have beds tied around their necks and writs. However, the use of the white wrapper by the designer does not recourse to historical accuracy. This is because a typical 19th century clothe for the palace chiefs would have been hand woven and not the 20th century white linen. However, this use of modern fabric may be explained within the context that getting the original costumes may be rare or very expensive to procure and that's why the designer resorted to costume manipulation.

## Titled Women Cult/ Royal wives (Plate 7 and 8)
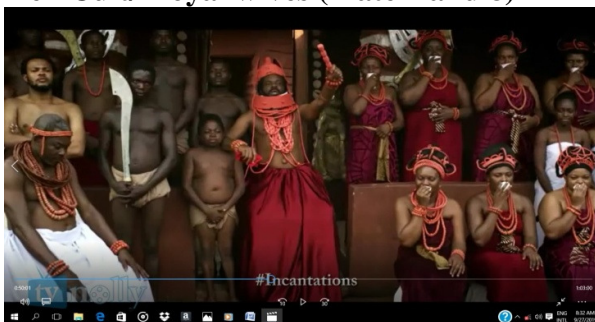
Note the titled women/ royal wives in Benin Kingdom.

Titled women in ancient Benin kingdom are distinguished by the nature of their costume. With bare shoulders, the titled women wear heavy velvety wrappers tied above the bust falling to the ankles. A most unique element of the attire of the royal wives is the tradition of wearing elaborate human-hair wigs. These wigs are neatly embellished with coral beads. This is then enhanced with coral floral shaped ornaments. Also, of important to note is the use of large circular beads used to adorn the neck, while the bracelets and anklets are used to encircle the wrists and ankles.

Evbakhavbokun-Princess of Umugun. (Plate 9 and 10)
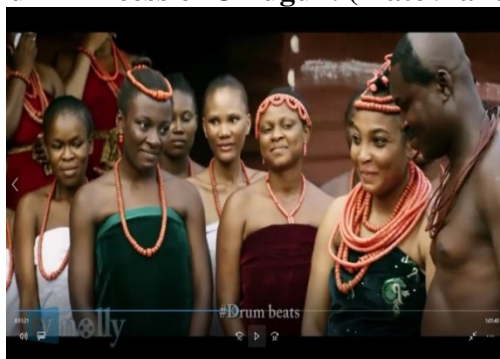
Evbakhavbokun's costume depicting her royal status and royal position as a princess.

The costume design of Evbakhavbokun as the eldest daughter of Oba Ovonramwen give clues to her social status. She is dressed in a big wrapper tied from above the breasts down to the ankle level. Apart from using neck and wrist beads, her hair is also decorated with beads. For her royal wedding costume, she ties a gorgeous embroidered green velvety wrapper, with large circular beads to adorn her neck, hair and wrists.

Costume design of Royal Court Bard (Plate 11)

The Royal Court Bard paying obeisance to the Oba.
For the Royal Court Bard, he is dressed in a large white shirt, and a white wrapper tied around his waist, and the head covered with a white colonial helmet to match. His accessories include a bag made of white cloth, a big native hand fan and a cowry strap.

Costume Design of Itsekiri people (Plate 12 and 13)
   **Fig.G (Itsekiri man 1960)**

Itsekiri people bestowing their gifts to Oba Ovonramwen.

For the Itsekiri people, their costume design is made up of lace blouses, George wrappers, bowler hats, a string of neck and wrist bead, with a working stick. The cultural affinity between the people of Benin and Itsekiri can equally be expressed in the similarity of their costumes. But in a sharp contrast, the Itsekiri

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people were costumed in assorted wrappers although the accessories of neck and wrist beads, like those of the people of Benin.

Other Characters (14 and 15)
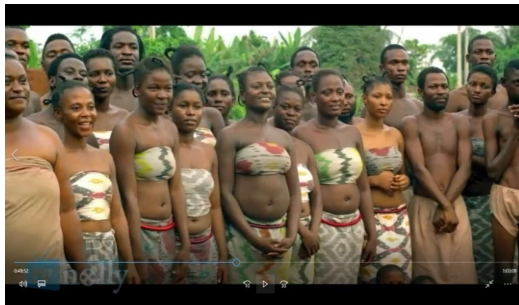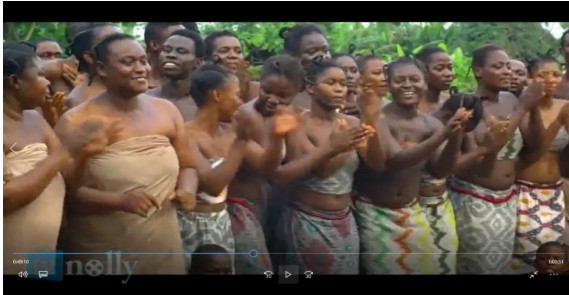
All the minor characters in the film are given similar and simple costumes used to reflect their lowly estate. The elderly women tie local and colourless wrapper around their bust down to the ankle point. The young girls were costumed in adire material; with a bare stomach. The upper and the lower region were covered. For the accessories, they wear a string of waist bead (jigida) around the waist. For the young men, they were dressed bare-chested in either a wrapper or cloth tied around the loins or bagging depending on the age.

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