

Traditional Nigerian Attires and Cultural Signifiers in Selected Nollywood Films

Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, PhD

t.utoh-ezeajugh@unizik.edu.ng

&

Faith Oziohu Salami

faithsal16@gmail.com

Abstract

Nigeria's thriving film industry, Nollywood, has long been praised for its vivid narrative and diverse cultural representations. Nollywood has grown to become a potent tool for introducing both local and foreign viewers to the country's rich cultural heritage. Traditional Nigerian costumes are potent cultural signifiers and symbols of national identity and they are central to the visual narratives of many Nollywood films. Thus, these costumes are powerful symbols of social standing, spirituality, and cultural identity. In this study, the several functions of traditional Nigerian clothing in Nollywood films are discussed, along with their historical background, artistic development, and socio-cultural ramifications. Through the content analysis and descriptive approaches of the qualitative research methodology, the study interrogates the costumes used in two Nollywood films titled *The Figurine* and *The Milkmaid*; and explores how traditional dresses function as visual languages in Nigerian films; noting that they express cultural heritage, social status, and personal identity. The study recommends a knowledgeable portrayal of Nigerian dress cultures through effective costuming in Nollywood films.

Keywords: Costumes, Nollywood, Culture, Identity, Clothing, Films

Introduction

Nigerian traditional clothing, which embodies century-old traditions, rituals, and values, are highly cherished in the nation's cultural identity. Traditional dress acts as more than just a means of subsistence in Nollywood films as it provides visual indicators of social standing, cultural legacy, and individual identity. However, it appears that some producers and designers of Nollywood costumes have not been able to come to terms with the importance of carefully portraying the nation's cultures through the effective application of costumes. This study examines the role that traditional Nigerian clothing plays in Nollywood films as cultural signifiers, providing insight into the industry's development, portrayal, and narrative effects. The study relies on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory of signs, which accounts for signification, representation, reference, and meaning. In the study of signs and meaning-making, semiotics explores the connections between speaking and text, as well as signs and their intended specific context. Semiotics examines how meaning is formed through the use of signs as well as how signs are utilized to express meaning. Peirce asserts, "I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former" (478). Semiotic theory, which focuses on the study of signals and symbols and their meanings, may be applied to the research as film costumes play an important part in communicating cultural themes, social standing, and character attributes. They are visual cues that assist the spectator in comprehending the film's plot, characters, and cultural background. The use of signs and symbols in communication is

emphasized in semiotic theory. Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh submits that, “usually, items of clothing and body designs are embodied with visual signs which communicate the socio-cultural context in which they are being paraded” (25). Costumes in films produced by Nollywood may be considered as symbols representing many cultural, social, and historical aspects of Nigerian culture. Costume incorporates a variety of cultural origins; therefore, costume's semiotic status is viewed as a collection of functionally connected and interdependent objects that have evolved over many ages. This is largely affected by the portrayal of these costumes in Nollywood films, which are meant to reveal the cultural identity of Nigeria as a whole. This communicative essence is very significant because members of the community usually possess the ability to read the language of the cultural attires such that African aesthetics of beauty are artistically expressed (Utoh-Ezeajugh, 15).

Concept of Traditional Nigerian Attire

Understanding the historical context of traditional Nigerian attire is essential for appreciating its significance, as it is deeply intertwined with the country's rich cultural heritage, diverse ethnic groups, and centuries-old traditions. Utoh-Ezeajugh avers that “traditional African dress, costumes and body designs refer to all forms of traditional attires, costumes, make-up and body designs utilised by Africans and non-Africans; and identified as belonging to African design repertoire; and embodying African stylistic idioms, and cultural heritage” (16). Therefore, it is ideal to say that Traditional Nigerian attire includes a wide range of clothing styles, fabrics, and adornments, each reflecting the unique cultural identity and heritage of different regions and communities. Before European colonialism, Nigerian communities relied on locally

obtained materials for clothing. Cotton, silk, and wool were spun and weaved into textiles using traditional methods. Different locations have access to particular natural resources, which resulted in the creation of distinct fabric traditions. For example, the Yoruba people in southern Nigeria are famous for their usage of *adire*, a resist-dyed cloth, whilst the Igbo people in the southeast are noted for their elaborate weaving designs. Nigeria's location at the centre of commercial routes encouraged the movement of products, particularly textiles and garment materials. Trade with North Africa, Europe, and the Middle East brought new textiles, dyes, and weaving methods to Nigerian communities and contact with Arab and European commerce affected dress designs and accessories. For example, connections with Arab traders led to the widespread adoption of turbans and hats in northern Nigeria. Traditional Nigerian apparel was more than simply clothes; it held cultural, social, and spiritual importance.

Clothing styles, colors, and accessories communicated information about a person's identity, social standing, and function in the community. Certain clothing, such as the *agbada* (robe) and *fila* (cap), were designated for formal events and rituals to represent dignity and power (Ibiwoye, 20). Other clothing, such as wraps and beads, had symbolic significance relating to fertility, spirituality, and ancestral ties. Nigeria's unique ethnic geography influenced the richness and variety of traditional dress. Geographical, climatic, and cultural variables have influenced the development of diverse clothing designs and techniques in different places. For example, the Hausa-Fulani people in the north are noted for their extensive needlework and use of brilliant colors in clothes, whilst the Edo people in the south are famous for their intricate beading and brass jewelry. Despite the effects of colonization, globalization, and

industrialization, traditional Nigerian dress has endured and evolved to meet changing circumstances. While certain dress traditions have developed or died out, others have been revived and recreated by modern designers and craftspeople. Today, traditional Nigerian attires are important elements of cultural festivities, ceremonies, and everyday life, acting as a link to the past and a source of pride for future generations.

Stylistic Evolution of Costumes in Nollywood Cinema

The artistic progression of Nollywood film reflects the industry's expansion, shifting audience tastes, and technical advances. From its early origins, which included low-budget films and improvised sets, Nollywood has grown into a viable film industry with growing worldwide reputation. This growth is obvious in several parts of filmmaking, including cinematography, storytelling tactics, and, more importantly, costume design. Productions in Nollywood's early years were frequently characterized by low budgets, limited resources, and technical difficulties. Filmmakers used modest equipment and makeshift settings, resulting in films of varying production quality. However, as the business expanded and technology became more widely available, Nollywood filmmakers began to invest in higher-quality equipment, professional crew members, and advanced production processes. This transition resulted in improvements to cinematography, lighting, and overall production value.

Nollywood storytelling has changed through time, progressing from basic plotlines and dramatic storylines to more intricate and subtle storytelling styles. Filmmakers have experimented with a variety of genres, subjects, and narrative structures in order to appeal to a wider range of audiences.

Furthermore, there has been a greater emphasis on character development, conversation, and social criticism, indicating Nollywood's maturing as an artistic and cultural institution. Melodramatic romances, family dramas, and moralistic themes dominated Nollywood throughout its early years. However, as the business grew, directors began to explore with a larger variety of genres, such as comedy, action, thriller, and science fiction. This genre diversity enabled more creative expression and innovation, attracting new audiences locally and globally. Filmmakers began investigating issues important to current Nigerian society, such as government corruption, social inequality, and youth empowerment.

Nollywood's stylistic growth has been affected by worldwide cinematic trends, as well as growing collaboration with international directors and production firms. Co-productions, film festivals, and distribution agreements have all aided cross-cultural interchange and exposure to new ideas and approaches. Additionally, Nollywood filmmakers have embraced digital platforms and social media to reach a larger audience and interact with fans all over the world. This enhanced connectedness has allowed Nollywood to transcend geographical borders and become a worldwide cultural phenomenon.

Costume design and aesthetic choices are among the most noticeable components of Nollywood's artistic progression. In this light, Anthony Duruaku opines that; "Costumes heightens the aesthetics values of the play, offering basic information and coordinate the entire interpretation" (16). Also, Utoh-Ezeajugh avers that; "Costumes have remained an integral part of characterization, so much so that performances would decidedly be incomplete without them" (84). As production costs have grown, directors have been able to expand their investment in costume

departments, paying expert designers and stylists to produce visually appealing outfits. Nollywood costume design has gotten increasingly intricate and diversified, with directors combining traditional Nigerian clothes with current fashion inspirations. This combination of genres portrays Nigerian society's dynamic and cosmopolitan characteristics, while also providing depth and realism to characters and themes. Over the years, Nollywood has had a significant impact on how traditional Nigerian dress is represented on the screen. Nollywood's approach to costume design has changed dramatically over time, from spontaneous costumes to professionally produced outfits. The producers and costume designers attempt for authenticity and cultural accuracy in their depictions of traditional clothing, seeking inspiration from historical sources, cultural specialists, and local craftspeople. In support of this assertion, Nkechi Asiegbu Bature-Uzor avers that;

Nollywood, films that represent the culture of each ethnic group are presented as narratives whose storylines are embellished in the lifestyle of members of the particular ethnic group. Costumes, make-up and props provide the cultural aesthetics for these narratives situating them within particular ethnic groups and these films up until recent times have been applauded for representing the different cultures found in the Nigerian society through their narrative context and content. These representations are not achieved through speech alone. The communication process involves using artifacts and other forms of non-verbal communication systems peculiar to the film medium. (341)

Cultural Signifiers and Identity Formation

In Nollywood films, costumes are an important element for communicating characters' histories, social standings, and cultural affinities. Filmmakers in Nollywood use wardrobe choices to convey ideas about identity, tradition, culture and social dynamics, enriching storytelling and increasing viewer participation. In this vein, Utoh-Ezeajugh observes that;

Cultural Symbolism is the hallmark of the Nigerian traditional dress. It is consciously or unconsciously evolved to bear emblems unique to its owner. Such emblems may be derived from common features in the environment, it may also be persistent contact of an ethnic group with some other; it may be a feature borrowed, appropriated and seemingly endorsed by widespread acceptance and use as one of its ethnic symbols. (23)

Traditional Nigerian dress is frequently employed in Nollywood films to represent characters' ethnic and regional identities. Different ethnic groups in Nigeria have unique dress designs, textiles, and accessories that reflect their cultural history. For example, Yoruba figures may be represented wearing lavish agbada robes and gele headwraps, whereas Hausa characters may be depicted wearing babban riga and turbans. Nollywood filmmakers emphasize cultural variety and authenticity by clothing characters in ethnic group-specific costumes, helping spectators to recognize and relate with characters from various regions of Nigeria.

Costume choices in Nollywood films frequently represent the characters' socio-economic positions and class divisions within Nigerian culture. Characters with rich backgrounds or high social status may be represented wearing expensive, beautifully made attire and accessories like embroidered agbada robes, beaded jewelry, and exquisite gele headwraps. Characters from lesser socioeconomic origins, on the other hand, may dress more simply and modestly to reflect their economic situation and social position. These wardrobe choices assist to visually underline social hierarchies and class tensions in the story. Nollywood costume designers also contribute to the perpetuation of cultural norms and gender roles in their works. Traditional gender-specific clothing expresses cultural norms and expectations surrounding look and dress, such as wrapper skirts and blouses for ladies and agbada robes for males. Nollywood filmmakers have the ability to disrupt or question conventional gender roles by dressing characters up as people who do not fit in with society's expectations. For example, to express their independence and subvert gender preconceptions, female characters may be portrayed wearing typically masculine clothing.

In Nollywood films, costumes linked to customs and ceremonies are often portrayed, acting as markers of cultural continuity and legacy. Clothing worn at customary events, such as marriages, celebrations, and rites of passage, communicate the significance of cultural customs and practices in forming a person's identity and sense of community. Nollywood filmmakers promote Nigeria's unique cultural history and emphasize the importance of cultural traditions in identity -development by exhibiting traditional clothes in the setting of cultural festivities and events. Nollywood costume designers frequently use cultural symbols in their costumes

to draw attention to certain ethnic or geographic identities. Traditional clothing acts as visual shorthand for a character's history and cultural allegiance. Kosy Anulika Okafor submits that;

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. (93)

Nollywood films include costumes that combine global influences and contemporary fashion trends with traditional garb. Characters may be seen dressed in suits, jeans, and t-shirts, which would represent the impact of urbanization and globalization on Nigerian culture. The characters' transitions between traditional cultural beliefs and modern lives are reflected in their outfit choices, which highlight the complexity of current Nigerian identity. Nollywood filmmakers investigate issues of identity negotiation, cultural hybridity, and the effects of globalization on cultural expression through costume design.

Synopsis of *The Figurine*

Kunle Afolayan produced and directed *The Figurine*, a 2009 Nigerian supernatural suspense thriller written by Kemi Adesoye. The film tells the story of two friends who discover a mysterious sculpture in an abandoned shrine in the forest while working at a National Youth Service Corps camp, and one of them chooses to take it home. Unknown to them, the sculpture is from the goddess 'Araromire', who bestows seven years of good luck on anybody who

comes into contact with it, followed by seven years of terrible luck. The two friends' lives begin to turn for the better as they become great and affluent company owners. However, after seven years, things begin to turn for the worst.

Interpretative Analysis of Costumes in *The Figurine*



Fig.1 Period costumes: the Priest and People of Araromire in 1908

The film introduces us through a flash back to the people of Araromire, revealing the history of how the priest carved out the figurine – goddess. This period was said to be in 1908, long before the spread of colonization. The priest is costumed in a white sack wrapper that runs from his waist to the ankle with a sack sleeveless shirt, ornamented with cowries, brown beads, and different sizes of sea shells and wooden carved out piece. This reveals the ancient culture being practiced by the priest. In view of this, Utoh-Ezeajugh observes that “Indigenous traditional African costumes, make-up and body designs were initially made with materials derived from plants, animals and mineral deposits, as well as feathers, quills, fronds and the teeth and skin of animals. Indigenous attire consisted of bark cloth, grass or raffia skirts, animal skins, furs and hides” (17). The ornaments on the shirt are mostly linked with spirituality – protection, power from the spiritual realm and connected to femininity customary to the Yoruba festivities and rituals, such as the yearly Osun celebration. Characters wear ornate garments that are embellished with beads, cowries, and other traditional decorations during these ritualistic sequences. These ceremonial costumes play a symbolic role in the film, representing the characters' connection to their cultural heritage and spirituality. Beads, necklaces, bracelets, and earrings are utilized to complete the garments and increase their symbolic value. These items frequently incorporate traditional themes and designs that have cultural and spiritual significance for the characters. Characters may also be shown carrying symbolic things such as staffs, fans, or ceremonial items, which serve to reinforce their cultural identity and position within the story.

The community members are costumed in sack clothes of different styles. The young ladies had sack cloth tied from the chest level to the knee, women had a sack open - neck sleeved shirt with long sack skirt worn from their waist downwards and a sack placed on /tied on the head. While the men tie the sack from the loins to the knee, and are bare-chested, while the leaders had a sack wrapped around them from the back covering the chest area and a sack tied from the loins to below-the –knee level. This kind of dressing was noted to have existed in some parts of the country in the early years of Nigeria, and was notable with the Benin (Adeeso,2).



Fig. ii. Casual native costumes worn by a Professor of History

The professor of History in the university who loves artifacts and relics was always costumed in African traditional wears. In the first scene, he is dressed in a hand woven aso-oke shirt and an aso-oke cap, which reflect a typical elderly Yoruba man. The weaving of aso-oke or otherwise called aso-ofi is an old craft, that existed in different parts of Nigeria, but majorly an artifact that links generations to the Yoruba race. The aso-oke was basically gotten from locally or imported cotton yarns. The second scene has him dressed in an ankra print shirt with a collar. The shirt is a combination of the African print and contemporary style, which is a representation of African modern fashion. The overall costume presentation of Prof, tells of a man who is a lover of his root and though enlightened, only modifies the 'Africanness' with a style of modernization. The Aso-oke came to be when the Yoruba people had a striving textile industry that produced fabrics such as Adire, aso-oke, and Alaari. These fabrics were used to create a wide variety of clothing, including wrappers, buba, agbada, and fila. The designs and symbols on these fabrics often had cultural and religious significance (Ibiwoye, 3). The Yoruba elderly men were often known with the use of the aso-ofi (cap made from Aso-oke). The style of wearing the cap was often determined by the ceremony or occasion.

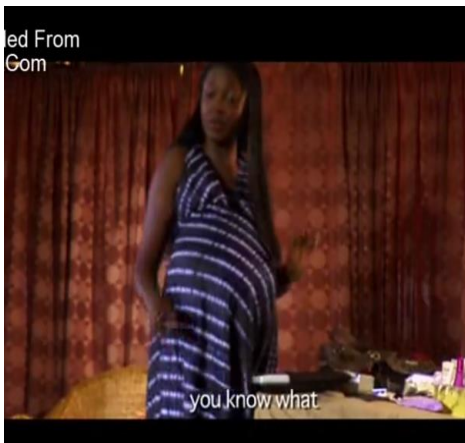




Fig. iii. Mona seen in various scenes costumed in different prints of Adire and Ankara styles.

Mona is a reserved wife whose fashion sense reflects in her clothing and matching accessories. Though she is from Delta, but married to Sola who is Yoruba, her clothing were majorly the African tradition adire and Ankara prints. The adire is a Yoruba made reverse-dyed cloth. In is gotten from the word (adi) “to tie” and (re) “to dye”. Though the technique started in the 1800s, but the name sprang up in the early 20th century. Mona was styled in different styles, like maternity gown, skirt and suit blouse, light home gown using the Yoruba traditional fabric. The fabric reflects

her new culture, and her environment – Lagos. These prints resonate around the Yoruba populace and were available and affordable in Lagos. Her clothing styles reflect her class and level of exposure to modern designs, despite making use of culturally and modern produced fabrics and accessories, this is what Utoh-Ezeajugh describes as “Modern traditional designs.... (which are) styles achieved with fabrics manufactured locally or imported into the continent, which are intrinsically African in style, design concept and cultural aesthetics” (20).

In general, the apparel and accessories in *The Figurine* are painstakingly crafted to depict the richness and complexity of Yoruba culture while also expressing the characters' personalities, social interactions, and storylines. In essence, the costumes added to the film's immersive and visually spectacular environment by authentically portraying traditional Yoruba dress and cultural emblems, as there were variety of costumes designed with the adire, Ankara and kampala print fabric, which is noted to have originated from Southwestern Nigeria.

Synopsis of *Milkmaid*

The Milkmaid is a strong emotional Nollywood film produced and directed by Desmond Ovbiagele, handled by Danono Media and Mighty Man Entertainment in 2020. It is a story that explores the harsh reality of insurgency and its profound impact on individuals and communities. Set in Nigeria's conflict-ridden Northeast area, the film recounts the journey of two sisters, Aisha and Zainab, whose lives are forever changed by the brutalities of Boko Haram terrorism. The two Fulani sisters living a peaceful existence in a rural village, are thrust into chaos when Boko Haram militants attack their home. Separated from their family and forced

into captivity, the sisters are subjected to unimaginable horrors, including violence, abuse, and indoctrination. Aisha confronts religious extremist in search of her missing sister, but all efforts was disrupted and complicated.

Interpretative Analysis of Costumes and Cultural Representation in *The Milkmaid*

The Milkmaid takes place in a small town in Northeastern Nigeria, an area renowned for its many ethnic populations and rich cultural legacy. The film's costumes faithfully capture the traditional clothing of the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group, who are well-known in the area.



Fig. iv Mallam Farooq (Amir) Fig. v Dangana, a warrior of Jihad wearing elaborate babanriga and cap as his costume

In Fig. iv, we see Mallam Farooq, an Amir of the Jihad group. Emir/ Amir (Sarki), prior to its use as a monarchical title, the term "emir" was historically used to denote a "commander", "general", or "leader". In contemporary usage, "emir" is also sometimes used as either an honorary or formal title for the head of an Islamic, or Arab (regardless of religion) organization or movement. Their traditional attire is voluminous and has loosely layered look, making everything they wear stunning and detailed. The characters are adorned in swathes of fabric, favouring gorgeous stripes worn horizontally or bright outfits with ancient traditional African patterns, in a spectacular mix of colour and pattern. Depending on their location and occupation and mostly their religion, they may wear the turban around this to veil the face, called "Alasho". The Hausas practice the Islamic religion which is a basis for their mode of dressing.

Fig. v. Has Dangana, a lead warrior in the Jihad group, who controls wealth and power costumed in "Thawb" or "thobe" which is an Arab dress for the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula. It is a long-sleeved ankle-length traditional robe. Thobes are often worn by males, are suitable for formal events and religious rituals, and are seen as emblems of national and cultural identity. Since many fashion designers have been incorporating their own contemporary touches into the traditional garment, thobes have grown in popularity as a fashion accessory. A key part of their outfit is the embroidery. Their caps are heavily embroidered unlike the more simple "Filas" of the Yoruba likewise their Baban Riga. He is also covered with a red and white design keffiyeh or kufiyyeh, which

originated from the Iraqi city of Kufa. It is a traditional headdress worn by men from parts of the Middle East and is fashioned from a square scarf, and is usually made of cotton. It is available in multiple colours and styles with many different methods of tying it, depending on regional origin and the nature of occasion.



Fig.vi & Fig. vii: Aisha, Zainab and others with hands adorned with decorations in preparation for her wedding as well as regular daily outfits

Fig. vi. Is an image of the young girls colourfully dressed and adorned going around their Nunu (milk/dairy products) business in the community, with their signature calabash. Today, so much of

Hausa culture in the cities has been replaced with Islamic culture. The clothing is no exception. The style of clothing has not changed that much but the fabric has. In the past, Hausa women wore a blouse, zani (wrapper) and head tie. Today, they still wear the same thing but the blouse may now have long sleeves and the fabric will be “atampa” or “Ankara” (patterned cotton fabric). Most also wear a scarf or hijab over their head tie. The Fulani women are not shy when it comes to jewellery; they love to adorn themselves with different jewellery pieces. Fulani women love to wear beads around their waist and bracelets on their hands, and jewellery on their head, noses, earrings and waist, and this was portrayed in the costume of the women.

In Fig.vii, Zainab’s hands and legs are being designed in preparation for her wedding. The Fulani/Hausa people love to put on different floral patterns on their bodies, specifically on the hands and feet. It is a major body adornment culture and practice in Northern Nigeria. “Lalle” (kunshi) which is also known as “Hienna” (dye made from a plant for body decoration) is one of their most fascinating body designs. Hienna or Lalle is commonly used to beautify the Hausa or Fulani bride on her wedding day and the make-up designer of the film, made efforts to capture this aspect of the culture of the people.

The female characters—the two eponymous milkmaids, Aisha and Zainab in particular—are shown adorning vibrant hijabs, flowing "shadda" or "wrapper" wraps, and ornately beaded necklaces, bracelets, and earrings, with vibrant body designs made with ‘Hienna’ which is a major body enhancement practice amongst the Hausa populace, these were the costumes they used during the wedding celebration before the siege. The Hausa /Fulani of this present day are characterized with the Islamic doctrine that allows

for body covering which do not allow their girls or women expose their bodies, and that is why they are mostly seen putting on long flowing dresses with long sleeves and adorned with colourful veils draped over their bodies. Before the siege, Aisha though in the midst of other milk maids is costumed in a embroidered “Atampa” pink and blue fabric styled into a long skirt, an elbow sleeved blouse with a pink veil that runs over her shoulder; while Zainab is costumed in a long yellow and white Ankara floral designed flowing gown, with an orange coloured veil wrapped over her head down to her waist area. They are both adorned with rainbow coloured beaded head pieces, earrings, nose rings and hand bangles typical to the Hausa/Fulani maidens. The bright colours of the costumes match with the milk pot (calabash) which is a crafted pot that houses the milk gotten from their cows, and are usually designed with bright colours which represents the unique artistry of North East Nigeria.

The milkmaid uses the calabash as a prop (which reveals the most common occupation of the female) to enhance the beautiful colours of the costumes, worn by the milk maid which made them look very attractive. The use of bright coloured costumes runs through the film until the siege, where the maidens were captured and were taken into the bush where they were provided with varieties of dull coloured costumes which varied from brown flowing Ankara gowns, to Ankara skirts and blouses, though they were mostly covered with “hijab” (a flowing robe that runs from the head through to the legs). The hijab is a head covering worn by Muslim women in observance of the Islamic religion. It is a scarf that covers the hair and neck and is a symbol of modesty. The term Hijab, means to cover, which is the Islamic idea of *Awrah*, which is the religion's law of covering certain body parts, for both men and

women. The maidens who were forced into marrying their abductors, were compelled to cover their bodies to avoid being sources of attraction to other men. The dull coloured dresses, ranging mostly from black to brown colours, revealed the pains and agony the girls were passing through, against the freedom and beauty they experienced before the incident. The earlier costumes of Aisha and Zainab reveals that the Hausa/Fulanis are amazing people with a rich cultural and religious heritage. The film generally absorbed the current traditional Hausa attire in enriching its story, which highlights the tale of the present situation in some parts of Northern Nigeria.

Conclusion

Nollywood film costumes have been seen as tools used for cultural signifiers and expressions of traditional Nigerian dress culture. Coming to the knowledge of this, some seasoned Producers began to realign with the exposition of Nigerian culture by trying to use their films to project the traditional dressing patterns of the different ethnic groups. Given the exposition and projection of Nigerian dress culture in the films, many Nigerians in Diaspora and indeed other African countries and the Western world, began to access and celebrate Nigerian culture. Nollywood costume designers have continued to beef up efforts in portraying Nigerian culture in its most appropriate forms. Through costumes and body designs; they began to invest in showcasing African textiles and designs and paid attention to details. The designs and arrangement of the costumes in the two films studied, show that the designers invested in research in order to effectively recreate both historical and contemporary characters. There is also an increasing tendency to combine traditional and modern aspects in the costumes of the

characters, even though traditional clothing still plays a big part in representing ethnic and regional identities in Nollywood productions. It is in this vein that the designers and producers of Nollywood films should continue to carefully portray the traditional dressing patterns to avoid miss-representations meanings, ideologies and concepts.

Works Cited

- Asiegbu, Bature-Uzor Nkechi. "Costume, Make-Up and Props as Conveyors of Culture in Nollywood". *International Journal of Current Research in the Humanities (IJCRH)*. Vol 1 No. 27 2023. 338-352.
- Eze, Chiamaka Precious Akas, Nicholas Chielotam. "Costume and Make up, as a Tool for Cultural Interpretation: A Study of Egba Festival of the Kokori, Isoko Local Government Area of Delta State". *Arts and Design Studies*. Vol.36, No. 1. 2015. 22-34.
- Ibiwoye, Tope Israel. "A Journey Through Time: A Pictorial Documentation Of Yoruba Fashion From 1960 To 2020" *Aku: An African Journal Of Contemporary Research* Vol. 4 No. 3, 2023,1-20.DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.25435.54567 https://www.apas.africa/journal/AKU_4_3_1.pdf
- Okadigwe, Mary Nkechi "Semiotic Reading of Costumes in Nigerian Video Films: African Bride As A Paradigm": *African Journals Online*.Vol. 10. No. 1, 2016. 139-162.

Okafor, Kosy Anulika. "Historical Accuracy in Nollywood Costume Designs: Approaches Constraints and Gains." *The Creative Artist: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies*. Vol14. No. 2, 2020. 91-131.

Peirce, Charles Sanders. *Peirce's Theory of Signs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2007.

Utoh-Ezeajugh, Tracie. "Socio-cultural Trends in Theatrical Costume and Make up; Designing the Egedege Dancer of South East Nigeria". *The Creative Artistic: Journal of Theatre and Media Studies*, Awka: Valid Publishing Company. 2006. 83-92.

---. "Traditional Nigerian Dress Culture: A Historical Overview". In *Dress Culture and National Development*. Rasaki Ojo Bakare and Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma eds. National Institute for Cultural Orientation Abuja: Kraft Books Ltd. 2010. 22-51.

---. *Traditional Dress Culture: A Historical Overview. Dress Culture and national Development*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2011.

---. "Beyond Eurocentrism: Classifications, Theories And The Construction Of Identity In African Dress, Body Designs, Costumes And Make-Up". *The Creative Artist : A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies* .Vol. 15 No. 1, 2021. 1-38.

Authors' Addresses

Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, PhD

Prof. of Theatre and Film Design

Department of Theatre and Film Studies

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

t.utoh-ezeajugh@unizik.edu.ng

&

Faith Oziohu Salami

Department of Theatre Arts,

Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba,

Kogi State.

faithsal16@gmail.com