African Government Policy Effects on Costume and Makeup Practices: The Nigerian Experience

By

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Abstract

This study looks at the lack of will in policy formulation and implementation for the performing Arts by successive government regimes in Nigeria as a case study for a majority of African countries and how these have affected the extent to which Costume and Makeup have been developed and utilised on African stage and in Nigeria in particular, with emphasis on University theatres, the Nigerian Television Authority and Nollywood. The methodology is qualitative and entails an empirical review, screening of some drama productions available on Nigerian televisions, market survey, interviews, and a practical attempt at Participatory observations. It was found that, non-review of teaching curricula and absence of funds to provide needed materials for practical training and retraining has made the curricula of most theatre arts and performing arts training institutions in Nigeria and Africa inadequate at matching the pace of modern technological developments in the theatre arts. In the visible absence of manufacturing or importation and the subsequent absence of sales shops for essential theatrical makeup materials, practitioners are forced to improvise and lack in addition for adequate training and retraining to be achieved. Suggestions have been made here in for possible means of content and technical quality uplift for African theatrical Productions, with a view to improving practitioners, local consumption, and international marketability of their products. This study hopes to inspire more focused government visions for indigenous arts in Africa and should boost efforts towards better Costume and Makeup practices on African theatre stage, television, and movie industries.

Key words: Policy, Practices, Productions, implementation, Marketability.

Introduction

The knowledge of what constitutes costume and makeup in the arts of the theatre is a prerequisite for this study. In trying to give costume a definition, Barbara and Cletus Andersen as cited by Gillette (1999, p.377) stated that "anything worn on stage is a costume, whether it be layers of clothing or nothing at all". Gillette in contributing to this statement opines that, "...More especially, this definition includes all clothing, underclothing, hairdressing, makeup and accessories such as hats, scarves, fans, canes, umbrellas... the design and appearance of all of these costume elements is the province of

the costume designer".(ibid) Makeup and costume design in practice and in concept today, appear to be differently perceived. Makeup was in the past, presented as an element of costume by Wilson, Gillette, Brockett, and other renowned scholars of the theatre Arts. According to Wilson (2001, p.372), "A part of costume is makeup – the application of cosmetics (paints, powders, and rouges) to the face and body. With a regard to age and the special facial features …." It is necessary to strongly stress that makeup from the 1980's upward into this second millennium is no longer a part of costume, but a fully developed theatre design specialization in today's' theatrical practices. Makeup and costume are complementary and collaborative, which fact may have caused their forced marriage until the 1980s, when their separation as specialised areas of the theatre arts became obvious.

In this study, we also disagree with Barbara and Cletus Anderson on the suggestion that costume is only clothing worn on stage. This study posits that costume is worn in everyday life by professionals such as doctors, nurses, lawyers, labourers, and even full-blown lunatics. And because the costumes worn for a performance like a carnival is not on a conventional stage, this study has found it necessary to qualify costume for performance with the term theatrical to distinguish circular [every day] costume from that used in the performing arts. This study observes that Gillette has become out-dated in bunching the duties of the property's artiste and makeup artiste with the duty of a costumier. Perhaps in the conservative theatre of Europe of his time (more than two decades ago), over utilization of personnel for several tasks which was the order.

Makeup on another hand, is associated with mask, not only because most forms of modern makeup such as may be achieved with latex are removable and re-useable, but also because the concept of creating a new character through makeup, requires the masking (covering up) of the artiste playing the role to the intent of creating a dramatic character for the production. Makeup in this study shall be understood to mean, any significant change to the appearance of the actor by intentional and organized application of cosmetics and other artificial materials to the face or body of the actor with a resultant change in appearance. Michael Gillette collaborates this definition. According to Gillette, (1992, p.376), "Makeup is the vital element in creating the total appearance of the actor. To a great extent the makeup design gives the audience its primary clue to age, health, and vitality of the character. "For further scholarly understanding, it is right to note that simple application of face powder can in dramatic concept be seen to achieve a character change in a performance, particularly in African ritual theatre as postulated by Enessi Ododo in his thesis, where he first introduced the term, "Facekurade". In his explanation of his "Facekurade" concept, Ododo, (2004, p.286) explained that,

> ...Ebira people have a theory of mask use, but it does not exactly fit with the practice of mask use". It is also an observation that is obviously predicted on Ebira masking essence that is grounded in masking absence which extols the full fiat of ancestral mystic presence. What Picton

> (1990a:184) considers as an ambiguity and "an apparent disjunction between theory and practice" is in fact the spine of the Ebira masking theory which distinguishes it from the general masking norm.

Anigala (2006, p.88) supports this view, in his research on Ukpalabor festival in Nigeria. He observed that, "Mask and native chalk powder are used as disguise techniques and devices for dramatic expression during the Ukpalabor festival…"

Contentious issues of the study

The major problem faced by the arts in general within the African continent is the lack of will in policy formulation and implementation by successive government regimes, both military and civil. Policies that do not benefit the political class or the military junta in power on the short term often appear to be neglected or delayed through procrastination or outright rejection. For example, from independence in 1960 till 1986, law makers in Nigeria could not formulate a national cultural policy. Many contradictory ministries and other government establishments were created for political reasons, until a total confusion on who is charged with doing what set in. According to Ododo, (1984, p.7),

> One major problem in the move to formulate a vibrant cultural policy is linked directly to the fact that too many people are put in charge of cultural matters such that no one seems to know exactly who is in charge of what. There is on the one hand a federal director of culture, … There is on the order hand a national council for arts and culture headed by an executive secretary, whose rank in the civil service is at par, it seems, with that of the federal director of culture. Then, as if to further complicate matters, a National Film Corporation was also established, headed by another top official who is also charged with the responsibility of certain aspects of culture... Without clearly defined goals and objectives, each of the units has carried on as if it were an autonomous and totally independent body….

The formulation of a cultural policy in 1986 did not change the cultural direction of the country, as the multiplicity of culture establishments mentioned above and further including, The International Centre for the Arts, Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, The National Museum Board, The Nigerian Television Authority, The Nigerian Video and Film Censors board, The National Institute of Arts and Culture and The Nigerian Tourism Board. It was observed that most of these ten named establishments made claims to policy implementation and appeared to interpret the concept of culture to be limited to cultural dances, exhibition of artefacts, recognitions of traditional festivals and religions.

Some exceptions in the business of not clearly identifying the limits of their mandate however, included the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, which has an academic focus and has concentrated on publishing literature of domestic cultural relevance. Also, the International Centre for the Arts, which on its part focuses on international promotion of Nigerian crafts, dances and literature dramatizations, and the Nigerian Television Authority, which despite having a good focus on cultural definitions, promotion and protection, have been severally delayed and derailed from achieving their full potentials by destabilization of its management through deliberate political interferences of successive governments, funds starvation, poor staff welfare package, nepotism and tribal considerations for appointments. Ododo (ibid) further observed that,

> Evidently, we do not as yet appreciate the effective role culture plays in a people's national self-development. And by culture here, is meant not merely the cultural dances and displays for visiting heads of government, or the signing of hardly functional pacts with foreign countries. By culture is meant the sum total of the material and spiritual value created by all our people through history. Culture means the arts, the science, knowledge, manners, education, mode of thought, behaviours, attitudes accumulated by a people in their struggle for freedom from nature and other social systems of domination.

It is indeed the civic duty of the theatre artist in Africa to collaborate with indigenous historians to correct the lies of colonialism, such as the origin of theatre being in Greece. Nwachuku (2017, p. 299) posits that,

> The first recorded performance in Africa was in 2,600 BC. Egypt, (it is twenty thousand years older than the Greek rural Dionysian festival; said documented origin of theatre in Europe). Known as the "Abidos Passion plays" as found in the tomb of Pharaoh Amenhothep II. ...as evident in the murals adorning the walls of the pharaohs' tomb….

It was in an attempt to perform their civic duties of promoting and projecting the culture of the nation, as contained in section 21 of the Nigerian constitution to the benefit of the nation, that the Nigeria Television Authority over the years, introduced several relevant programmes in a progressive manner for upwards of the last four decades, like; Cock Crow at Dawn, Obigbo Connection, Masquerade, Samanja, Tales by Moonlight, etc.

Some Empirical Views

Makeup and costume alongside related forms of theatrical designs, like properties design and set design are gaining professional attention on Nigerian screens. However, in Nigerian institutions for training such practitioners, the supporting research and training

towards standardization, technological advancement and subsequently industrialization, appear to be too slow in meeting the needs of the fast-growing entertainment industries. According to Eni (2012, p.213),

> Design in the theatre is both formal and informal. A formal design progresses through planning stage, idea sketches, the making of all necessary detailed drawings and processes to be used, and product construction. Informal design is constructing without the aid of all the formal design parts. Whether formally or informally designed, a theatre design must fulfil the basic principles of balance, harmony, rhythm, texture, colour, usefulness, proportion, economy of lines and originality.

It has also been observed in this study that the informal design technique as opined by Eni is the predominant approach of most costume and makeup designers in screen production practices. By this we mean that, such stages of designing as graph sketches are done away with; because field experience has shown that, on the field of costume practice only freehand sketches and tailoring measurements of the actor are considered as necessary by professional theatre costumiers, such efforts a calculating angles of cuts and curves with graphs, T-squares, compasses and dividers are implemented freehand during the actual cutting, with total reliance and guidance on the measurements of the actor who has been cast to wear the costume.

Quite unfortunately many theatrical costume and makeup designs in Nigerian and many other African nations' screen productions fail to achieve; "balance, harmony, rhythm, texture, colour, usefulness, proportion, economy of lines and originality" all at once. Most often than not, only three or four of the listed qualities are achieved. Shuaib (2005, p.91) posits that,

> This problem is further aggravated by acute shortage of trained professionals in this rather technical field. Till date in Nigeria, it may be insinuated that no adequate training programme has been implemented as regards costume and makeup in Nigerian universities, to produce well-grounded specialists in these two areas of theatre programmes are significantly congested with academic theatre courses with little slot for practical courses... because there is no theatre equipment to that effect.

Ododo (2000, p.94), sharing Olapeju Shuaib's view submits that, "With a design environment that lacks sufficient modern facilities and with very few design specialists around, the training of the designer in the Nigerian theatre appears inadequate." The above observations expose an urgent need to document development in the field of practice in Nigeria's 'Nollywood' (movie industry) and television. There is also a need to find out why Nigerian universities appear slow in meeting the manpower and

technological needs of these industries. If excuses are to be considered for the relatively young movie industry known as Nollywood, one wonders how any excuse can be given for television and live theatre (stage) that have come of age. The following three points according to Nwachuku (2005, p.9), are being considered in this research as possible reasons for the retarded growth in makeup and costume design practice in Nigeria.

1. The early exponents of trained professional makeup and costume designs were mostly foreigners who have either returned home or died without adequate transfer of knowledge and skill to Nigerians.
2 .Non-review of teaching curricula and absence of funds to provide needed materials for practical training and subsequent acquisition of skills has made the curricula of most theatre arts and performing arts training institutions in Nigeria inadequate at implementation and incapable of matching the pace of modern technological developments in the theatre arts.
3. Indigenous writers and indigenous producers of essential books and materials on makeup and costume are slow to emerge. In the visible absence of importation and the absence of sales shops for essential theatrical makeup materials in particular, the practitioners are forced to improvisations and lack adequate means of retraining.
4 .The refusal or the lack of knowledge of economic value by government, as inherent in the production of television and film makeup material or the provision of enabling business environment for investors in this sector.

According to Fosudo, "Contrary to the widely held motion that 'film' in Africa is only a recent development because of the current popularity of 'Nollywood', the very first trace of film in Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana dates back to British and French Colonial governments. In Nigeria, it was in 1903, that the screening of a documentary at Glover Hall in Lagos," (2012, p.96) flagging off Motion picture and television practices in Nigeria, which have however undergone lots of evolution since that first screening in 1903 and have evolved many practitioners.

In the areas of costume and makeup, the rollcall to date, even with the inclusion of untrained practitioners and those who have worked on only one production and do not continue (one-off artistes), remains below the needed manpower in this area of endeavour. Fanyam, (p. 99) posits that, "The few professionals in Nigeria today are conditioned to rely almost solely on western design concepts, techniques and technology for their practice." Femi Shaka (2012) lent a voice to this discourse by bringing into perspective another dimension to Fanyam's observation. According to Shaka, (2012, p.78),

> This grossly unappreciated sector (motion picture industry) which occasionally attracts lip-service from the government when the need arises for rebranding or whitewashing of our (Nigerian) jaded collective

> psyche, is reputedly second in rank age to the oil and gas sector, in terms of contributions to national economy.

In making up for the screen, a makeup artist must recognize the fact that his makeup should appear realistic, because of the zoom capabilities of cameras. Makeup for film and television must appear to be light no matter the quantity or weight of materials used. Any makeup for the screen identified by a viewer as a makeup is not proper, even when such a makeup is presenting something unreal as real through application of fantasy. The makeup artist should always insist on doing his makeup under the exact recording light or must test his completed makeup under the recording light. A good makeup artist should insist on watching the director's monitor during the dry run to enable the making of necessary adjustment, as what the camera sees often is different from what the human eye sees. Generally, the sole purpose of makeup in screen productions is to enhance the naturalism that is required of a movie or television programme, no matter how unnatural the concept of the production.

While there is a visible increase of practitioners in makeup and costume practice, it is depressing to note, that a good many of these practitioners lack skill and training and are in the business due to high unemployment rate in African countries at large and not because of a passion for the art. According to Nwagbo, (p. 121); "Duro Oni lamented the current economic situation in the country (Nigeria) as militating against the acquisition of essential production equipment". He went on to observe that some hire companies in stage lighting equipment that should be patronised cannot be, because their charges are exorbitant. The scenario is similar in makeup and costume practices, as the really skilled and equipped practitioners cannot be afforded by most independent producers and ironically government establishments like the Nigerian Television Authority, which are mostly managed by managers working on shoestring budgets. Darah (2008, p.1), lamented that,

> The comprehensive goal of a developing nation like Nigeria is development, or its somewhat better variant, modernization. We do not see much room for argument about that, what can be and is vigorously debated is the quickest and safest route for the journey into modernization and what items should make up the traveller's rather limited baggage allowance.

It is important to note however that, the importation and provision of makeup equipment and sales shops for women daily makeup needs are very adequate in Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya and a greater percentage of African countries, but with the exception of South Africa and Senegal, what is lacking are theatrical products for specific use of television, film and stage performances such as; spirit gum, latex, water resistant blush kits and foundation kits, theatre blood, blood capsules, dental enamel, wax, and many other basic prosthetics (materials that enable the extension of the human skin surface to archive

masking with a natural appearance) and complex special effect aids too numerous to list here.

The lack of interest of African governments towards funding the development of traditional African makeup and non-import or availability of distributors of these western technology and techniques appear a key factor in the poor performance or at most, limited performance of the trained practitioners of makeup and costume on stage, television and movie practices on African screens and stage. The Nigerian makeup artiste: Perekeme Odion (Awarded best costume in 1999 THEMA awards, for the movie "Gado"), lamented in an interview granted Olapeju Shuaib. (2005, Pp.177-178) In the said interview, he captured the plight of the makeup practitioner in most African countries and posited that,

> …we (do not) even have one theatrical makeup store in this country (Nigeria), where we can buy makeup materials, we have to import them. So, what do you expect? Only few people can practice. So, what it means is that you (do not) have materials, you have to import. In the absence of local industries or alternatives, majority of us improvise. Sometimes we use raw eggs to have age effect on a face. It depends on our application. Do you believe that sometimes, Nigerian makeup artists do aging without using those things they call Latex? Sometimes we use eye pencil only.

The seriousness of this depravation in the costume and makeup profession is made more visible by analysis and roll call of trained practitioners (which omitted some major players), in the publication of Sunday Enessi Ododo, a pioneer professor of technical theatre practice. As cited by Nwagbo,(2012, p.117) further criticised the development of the design phase in Nigeria, where after twenty-one years from 1985, only a few more designers have emerged in Nigerian theatre practice, hence making the area a virgin one in Nigerian theatre that has come of age. Some of the notable names he shortlisted are in the area of set and ligh? design; - Wasiu Kareem, Biodun Abe, Alani Nasiru, Sunday Enessi Ododo and Bola Kujore: Lighting and sound effects design: - Molinta Enendu; Costume and makeup design: Chucks Okoye, Grace Hassan, Peju Sonuga , Idowu Sonubi, Moji Bantefa, Telma Fieberesima, Kate Igbokwe and Felicia Mayford. Makeup and props design: Dike Nwachuku, Perekeme Odion, Gabriel Okoye, Ifeanyi Uzoka and Dagogo Diminas-Jack.

An individual study of all the above-named persons point to the common parameter of selection which are based on good reputation earned by each of them on the field of practice via stage, television or film, with some of them excelling in two or all three media mentioned above. Others not listed but prominent names in postulations and theories exist in the academia, up to the rank of professor, but mostly lacking pedigree of sustained and outstanding practice on the field. However, there are prominent omissions on Ododo's list of these tested and notable field practitioners some of whom are also in academics, and

this we attempt to update here for the records. Omitted in the area of set and lights are Shina Ayodele, John Iwu, Adikiba Boyle and Partrick Agha. In costume we have; Iyen Obaseki-Agbonifo (National president of the Creative Designer's Guild of Nigeria [CDGN](2002-2015). Others are Millicent Jack (Past president of the CDGN Rivers state chapter) and Thelma Odozi Fuberesima. In the area of makeup and props design, the omitted names are Soibifaa Diminas Jack, Victoria Egbusin (formally of the NTA) and Ifeanyi Ikponyi. Others in this class who may have been omitted shall be mentioned in subsequent studies.

We also observe that Peju Sonuga (Nee Sodeinde) trustee of the CDGN, should not have been listed, because her notable practice dates back to 1975.When she returned from training in the United Kingdom to establish a makeup and costume training unit at the Nigerian Television Authority station at Victoria Island, which produced the likes of Victoria Egbusin, the late Felicia May ford and many others still in television practice. She is of an earlier generation, the first of Nigerian extract to professionally practice makeup on the European movie scene and has been a teacher to most of those listed with her. She is over 70 years old and retired from practice to her palace as the Olori (kings' wife) of Shagamu kingdom in Ogun state of Nigeria.

Conclusions

Since the universities have taken to training makeup artistes and costumers in theory and little practice, the process by which most of the academically trained field practitioners come into practice have remained in the limited process of past practices in Europe and America as informed by Baker (1993, p.1), when she stated that, "Hitherto the passing on of theatrical and media cosmetic skills has depended largely on short practical demonstrations by one makeup artiste to another, mainly at the work place." Even in situations where these skilled persons may conduct workshops, given that almost half of those listed by Ododo are in the lecturing profession, the absence of sufficient materials to teach limits their abilities to transfer practical skills. One logical and seemingly sound solution proffered for solving this problem, in absence of materials at an affordable cost for costume and makeup training and practice, was that proposed in Shuaib,(2005, Pp.121-122) which suggested that,

> Costume and makeup practitioners and other theatre practitioners should also look into the setting up and using a trust fund for concrete 'projects interdisciplinary collaboration, training and capacity building in a phased programme – where the main point of such programmes are fashioned after popularising theatre industry, especially costume and makeup practice in order to generate income. Professionalize the discipline so as to positively build a virile industry in Nigeria.

An idealistic solution, but yet not implementable by practitioners, because they are widespread, lack trust in each other, have a high degree of rivalry and most of all, barely make a stable living, insufficient for contributing to an endowment fund of the magnitude required.

Suggestions

This study advises government of African countries to invest or create enabling environment that would encourage the local productions of theatrical makeup and costume materials. Many of such materials have raw material sources that are first taken from African countries, such as rubber, which is used in producing latex. It is here suggested that, tertiary institutions in which makeup and costume designers are trained should urgently review their teaching curriculum to emphasis practice and make funds available to provide needed materials for practical training and subsequent acquisition of skills, so as to match the pace of modern technological developments in stage, television and film drama productions. Indigenous writers and indigenous producers of essential books and materials on makeup and costume need to make more efforts towards illustrative design publications.

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