FROM RITUALS TO FILMS: A CASE STUDY OF THE VISUAL RHETORIC OF IGBO CULTURE IN NOLLYWOOD FILMS

By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the PhD is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Date: 30th Sept, 2009.

ABBREVIATIONS

NFVCB	–	**National Film and Video Censors Board**
FESPACO	–	**Festival Pan Africaine Du Cinema (Festival of Pan African Cinemas)**
FESPACI	–	**Federation Pan Africaine Des Cineaste (Federation of African Film Makers)**
CFU	–	**Colonial Film Units**
FU	–	**Film Unit**
NFC	–	**Nigerian Film Corporation**
NFDC	–	**National Film Distribution Company**
IMF	–	**International Monetary Fund**
WB	--	**World Bank**
SAP	--	**Structural Adjustment Programme**
DNA	–	**Deoxyribonucleic acid**
COMACCO	–	**Compagine Africaine Cinematographique Industrielle et Commerciele**
SECMA	–	**Societe D'Exploitation Cinematographique Africaine**
AMPEC	–	**American Motion Picture Export Company**
AFRAM	–	**Afro-American Film Inc**
NYSC	–	**National Youth Service Orientation**

NTA   –   **Nigeria Television Authority**

VCR   –   **Video Cassette Recorder**

VHS   –   **Video Home System**

VCD   –   **Video Compact Disc**

DVD   –   **Digital Versatile Disc/Digital Video Disc**

AU   –   **African Union**

NCC   --   **Nigeria Copyright Commission**

UIS   -   **Unesco Institute For Statistics**

UNESCO   -   **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural**

Organization

IMDB   -   **Internet Movie Database**

USA   -   **United States of America**

UK   -   **United Kingdom**

ATR   -   **African Traditional Religion**

EFCC   -   **Economic and Financial Crimes Commission**

GSM   -   **Global System of Mobile Communications**

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Abstract

Many reasons have been advanced as to why the video film industry in Nigeria has been so successful financially and in building loyal audiences among Africans around the world. The present thesis argues that Nollywood films help to provide a time and a place for resolving deep-felt tensions in an increasingly modern world while affirming an authentic African [Igbo] identity. The way contemporary video films are produced brings these films close to the dominant emotional and identity questions posed by the Igbos, Nigerians and Africans alike. Particularly in Nigeria, the Nollywood film industry has brought familiar symbolic rituals of cultures on to the screen for audiences' pleasure. Exploring the recurrent themes of these films raises consciousness about Nollywood as a

new and special site where cultures are generated and regenerated. Here, major questions of values and meanings of life are explored, which raise awareness of the Igbo's journey as a people. This thesis uses textual analysis as well as indigenous audience focus-group analysis to explore cultural representations in Nollywood. A wide range of participants were interviewed in the eight focus-group sessions that were conducted. Two in-depth interview sessions were also carried out on some Nollywood actors. Broadly, this research objectives were:

- to identify a conceptual framework for understanding the culture of Africa and Nigeria, in particular, using the concept of 'communalism'.
- to determine the range of reception and consumption modalities of Nollywood products in Nigeria by means of focus-group interviews.
- to explore the impact of Nollywood as an industry in the wake of globalization and in the context of current global trends.

In pursuing these goals, this study looked at selected key films including, *Things Fall Apart* (1986), *Coronation* (2004), *Bless Me* (2005), *Igodo*: *The Land of the Living Dead* (1999), *Living in Bondage* (1992), *My Best Friend* (2003), *Oil Village* (2001), *Widow* (2007), *Last Ofala* (2002), *Fool at 40* (2006), *Festival of Fire* (1999) and a lot more as listed in this study's filmography. At the end this research found that the experience of Nollywood films is something of a centripetal process of communication for the Igbo and Nigerian viewers who believe that these texts help build their societies, culturally from below.

Chapter One

1.0 General Introduction and Research Question

1.1 Introduction

As a country, Nigeria stands out in Africa as a mosaic of multi-ethnic cultures and religions which can be problematic in representations especially for outside filmmakers. The 2006 national census population of the citizenry highlights that it is a country of

140,003,542 people, with 72,709,859 being males and 68,293,083, being women (Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Official Gazette,* 2007). There are three major ethnic groups, apart from the minorities. Rotberg states further that 'Nigeria, after all contains more than 250 ethno-linguistic groups and about seventy "nationalities": Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba account for about 60 percent of the total population' (2007: 19).

Primarily this thesis focuses on the Igbo area of Nigeria and its rituals as represented in Nollywood films, but also makes allusions to Nigeria and Africa in the wider contexts occasionally because of some identifiable cultural commonalities across black African nations. This definitely can be problematic as well but suffice to say that instances of them [commonalities] exist. Nyerere, Obote and Kenyatta, (all former presidents of different countries of Africa), in a statement to emphasize this point of commonness once remarked, 'we share a common past and are convinced of our common destinies. We have a common history, culture and customs which make our unity both logical and natural. Our futures are inevitably bound together by the identical aspirations and hopes of our people and the need for similar efforts in facing the tasks that lie ahead for each of our free nations' (1963; cited in Ngugi, 2005: 2).

These common history, culture, and customs are what this thesis describes as 'communalism' in terms of the nature of the Igbo and African cultures. It embodies the substance of the *beingness* of Africans or the *Africanness* of Africans as a matter of fact, their existence and the *quiditas* of their characteristics. It is the quintessential aspect of what or who they are. (Echekwube, 2003: 26). It is a 'system of social order in which among other things, the supremacy of community is culturally and socially entrenched, society is hierarchically ordered, life is sacrosanct, and religion is a way of life. In such an ecosystem, each one is an integral part of the whole and derives his or her place in the context of the community' (Moemeka, 1998: 124). Among the indicators underlying this culture as listed by Moemeka are core elements such as: the supremacy of the community, respect and sanctity of authority, usefulness of the individual, respect for the elderly, and religion as a way of life (ibid: 128-131). Onwubiko outlines similar indicators too as elements of communalism in his work, *African Thought, Religion and*

Culture. These include: the sense of community life, sense of good human relations, sense of the sacredness of life, sense of hospitality, sense of the sacred and religion, sense of time, sense of respect for authority and the elders, and sense of language and proverbs as cohesive of the community based on truth (1991: 13).

These elements and more, while not just being unique to communalistic societies like Igbo, are extremely extolled in communalism far more than other characteristics, especially when explored through social relationships and communal cultural celebrations of rituals which buttress their worldviews and thought systems. For Moemeka, communalistic communities evolve naturally. They are also people-oriented. According to him, 'membership in such communities is culturally mandatory for all the descendants of the common ancestor. Individual members have no choice but to be members. They are born into the community, not selected into it. Even though a member may emigrate or may relocate hundreds of miles away from the locus of his or her community. He or she may reject the norms or mores of the community […] yet; culturally he or she still remains a member' (1998: 122).

Communalism became famous in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s when it was evoked during the period of the struggles for independence from Western countries (Ekennia, 2000: 200). Identifying how most African leaders applied it to their nationalistic struggles for independence, Faniran calls communalism the 'African root paradigm'. For him, it is what Leopold Sedar Senghor and Aime Cesaire defined in terms of 'negritude'. Julius Nyerere defended it as the philosophy of *Ujamaa* or African 'family-hood', while Kenneth Kaunda enthroned it in his notion of 'African humanism' and Kwame Nkrumah called it 'consciencism'. Most recently, Martin Nkafu has identified it as 'the vital union of Africans characterized by a vision of totality in which "beings" while perceived as distinct are nevertheless ontologically and intimately related with one another' (Faniran, 2003: 11).

One criticism that Moemeka has had to contend with in his assumption of how Africans communicate communalistically is on how to account for changes in these

'communalistic cultures'. For instance, Njoku argues that with colonial influences and Western orientations, 'new forms of communities based on different logics are struggling to take their places [in Africa] and in some cases, there is the march towards individualism' (Njoku, 2006: 79). Thus, given the new scenarios provided by education and civilization, one wonders how Western educated elites of African origin deal with most primordial communalistic cultures. Our key interest in Moemeka's theory therefore is to explore how Nollywood films encode communalistic cultures and how audiences interpret them, which Awa (1988: 62), like Moemeka discusses as 'a testament to the non-individuality of the African' to distinguish it from other forms of societies like the individualistic and collectivistic societies.

It is mostly the communalistic elements therefore that we shall be exploring in the course of this study especially as we look into the Nollywood film industry as a cultural industry that draws inspiration from some village rituals and worldviews. Herein, the intereconnectedness between the material and the spiritual worlds of Igbo cosmology is explored particularly following the insights of Moemeka (1998), Faniran, (2003), and Eboh (2004). While this study does not depart significantly from the traditional trend of audience research, it nevertheless combines audience and textual analysis as complementary sites of deconstructing meanings.

1.2 Objectives of Research

Agreeing with Ross that 'popular mass media play a significant role in the transmission and maintenance of cultural identity, through a repetitive display of cultural norms and values, which eventually becomes seen as simple "truths" ' (1996: XIX), this work aims to uncover the different aspects of Igbo cultures as transmitted through Nollywood films. Even though there are so many studies on film reception and consumption practices in the West (Hall: 1980; Radway: 1984; Morley: 1985; Meyrowitz: 1985; Ang: 1985;

Livingstone: 1990; Lull: 1990; Gray: 1992; Liebes and Katz: 1993; Ross: 2003; Bailey: 2005, Ging: 2006), only a few are dedicated to the analysis of Third Cinema audiences like Nollywood, especially as an industry outside the purview of the Euro-American zone. This research therefore seeks to redress the lack of audience reception analysis of a given Third (World) cinema.

Generally, there is the significant absence of research on Third World films especially, those of Africa. Decrying this lack, Guneratne and Dissanayake regard it as a consequence of the general neglect of Western film theorists. According to them, 'the lack of audience research into Third Cinema, a major body of film theory that does not originate in a specifically Euro-American context, is a neglect among film theorists that coincides with a neglect within film studies in general of the cinema of the non-industrialized countries' (2003: 1). And even though this is not the main thrust of this study, suffice to note that Third Cinema ideologies can be said to be at the background of almost all African film industries, for instance, Nollywood. By this is meant the notion of using films as a system of cultural nationalism and sustenance. Haynes argues that this category of 'films are opposed to both the bourgeois illusionist cinema and auteurist art-house cinema of the West. The films are often assimilated into the framework of the concept of 'Third World' due to some sort of cultural nationalistic tendencies inherent in them' (Haynes, 2000: 6). In this sense Haynes signals the road already taken by Nollywood in representing issues of interest differently as an alternative voice to Hollywood and other mainstream movie industries of the West in Africa. It therefore follows to argue that Nollywood offers an apparent break with the cultural imperialism of 'outside' film products in Africa in line with other African cinemas as affirmed by Kunzler in his study of the film industry (2007) in order to counteract the stereotypical representations of Africa engendered by colonial misunderstandings. The following are the broad objectives being investigated:

1. to identify a conceptual framework for understanding the culture of Nigeria, at the macro-level, and the Igbos in particular on the micro-level, herein referred to as 'communalism' through textual analysis;

2. to determine the most appropriate range of reception and consumption modalities of Nollywood products through audience analysis by means of focus-group interviews;

3. and to explore, interpret and validate the impact of Nollywood as an industry of cultural goods at the wake of globalization and in the context of current global trends.

This study therefore looks into both the Nollywood industry and its filmic productions in a way suggested as most appropriate by Turner: that is, by considering 'the process of production and the reception of the cultural goods as being related' (2006: 180). In doing this, we will also be applying Hall's 'encoding and decoding' model of reading media messages semiotically alongside Turner's 'ritual process'. Hall particularly recommends that the production and reception of media messages be considered as 'not identical but related within. They are differentiated moments within the totality formed by the social relations of the communicative process as a whole' (Hall, 2003: 53) and this is considered a good theoretical foundation for teasing out contexts in Nollywood here. An understanding of the type of social relations formed by Nollywood's communicative processes is to be traced here by means of both audience and textual analysis.

The argument here is that new media technologies have facilitated an alternative industry in Nollywood which has become a *splace* (read 'space' and 'place') of a sort, a site where major questions of values and meanings of Nigerian [Igbo] cultures are taken up, explored, and thrown up to raise awareness of the self-portrait of the people's journey and thought patterns. As Garritano clearly puts it in relation to Newell's (1997) findings on the films, the Nigerian video film industry, like any other West African popular medium 'is a force that strives to shape the norms of the culture where it is an active participant' (2000: 171). Thus Nollywood can be read as an industry that 'explores the limits of social conventions with films that are allegories of cultural and economic transformation caused by the modernisation processes' (Kunzler, 2007: 1). The overall

hypothesis of this research therefore is that having an independence in producing their own films, far removed from foreign policies and distribution channels [as was and is the case with canonized African cinemas known in the West], Nollywood has given Nigerians a coherent voice in representing their cultures in a way that significantly departs from the stereotypical representations of Nigeria and Africa in mainstream Western media.

1.3 Representations of Africa in Film

Africa's colonial history generally impacted politically, economically, and ideologically on the continent's unique and positive values. Dirks goes far to argue that [African] 'culture was what colonialism was all about' (1992: 3). Especially on the ideological frame, misrepresentations were made of Africa. As Bush argues, 'colonialism disoriented African societies' (1999: 102). As early as in the mid 1890s, Roberts highlights that 'movies were used in Africa almost as soon as they were invented […]. In 1897, the Lumiere film catalogue included forty-four items from Egypt […], twenty-one from Algiers or Tunis' (1987: 191). Of course the major attraction was on the exotic stories of Africa, coated with stereotypes that made Western explorers heroes before their listeners and movie audiences. In the 1920s, recorded journeys were undertaken to appeal to the appetite of the West for exotic Africa and even 'missionaries made films to gain support at home for their labours in Africa' (Roberts, 1987: 196 – 200) and so, different images and stories were made about Africa and her 'primitive' cultures and perhaps, has continued to the 21st century? The resulting enduring view of these colonial representations becomes therefore what Bush calls the 'western visions of Africa' (Bush, 1999: 29).

Following these ideologically constructed images that then framed Africans from the angle of depression against the apparent superiority of the West, Fanon's idea of inferiority complex can be said to be effected in the minds of most Africans in the culture-contacts that ensued between them and the Europeans. According to Fanon (1967), 'every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an

inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality finds itself face to face with the language of its civilizing nation, that is, with the culture of the mother country […], a flaw that outlaws any ontological explanation' (Fanon, 1967: 109).

This cultural death came almost unexpectedly to most African societies under colonialism, and its effects have left them struggling to strike a balance between the modern and their primordial ties ever since. Commenting on the cultural shocks of this early encounters of Africans with Europeans, Onwubiko revokes the kind of inferiority complex Fanon expresses in the way that captures how native Africans discussed the presence of Europeans in their midst at that stage thus, 'when the European appeared, the Africans saw him as a strange and mysterious creature. From his activities, the African began to think of him as a spirit. The Igbo clearly said: *bekee wu agbara*, which literally means, the white man is a spirit. In the same way, the Efik said *Mbakara di ekpo*, which also means, the white man is a spirit. For the Yoruba, they described him as, *oyibo, ekeji orisa* – which means, the European who is next to a deity' (1994: 4). Using native ethnic languages to describe the European and his or her colonial activities reveals at the deepest significance, the extent of the impressions created in the minds of the Africans at the cultural shocks of these encounters, more so, with films that tended towards considering European culture as far more superior to theirs.

Following this background, the subject of African history and story by the West became a matter of 'feelings' and 'stereotypes'. As Nwachukwu suggests, 'most films were made with distorted ideologies. While the Briton, or white male character is adorned with intrepid heroic candor in them, the African is presented as superstitious and backward. His culture also is presented as no match for that of the Europeans' (Nwachukwu, 1994: 43). Among the numerous films Nwachukwu analyzed to tease out the binary oppositions between Africans and their white counterparts are: *Sanders of the River* (1935), *King Solomon's Mines* (1937), *Men of Two Worlds* (1946), and *Daybreak in Udi* (1949). In these films he argued, Africa is usually represented as 'the locus for the European civilizing mission by rendering the African person ignoble' (1994: 43).

Commenting on the propensity of entrenching misrepresentations in Western films about Africa, Barlet argues that 'when they showed black people in their films, they unashamedly reproduced the dominant discourse against all intercultural contamination – even when the intention seemed purely comic, as with Jamie Ulys's highly successful *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980)' (Barlet, 1996: 109). Stam and Spence corroborate this by highlighting that 'the colonialist inheritance helps account for what might be called the tendentiously flawed mimesis of many films dealing with the Third World. The innumerable ethnographic, linguistic and even typographic blunders in Hollywood films are illuminating in this regard. Countless safari films present Africa as the land of "the lions and the jungle" when in fact only a tiny proportion of African land can be called "jungle" and when lions do not live in jungles but in grasslands' (1999: 240).

In *The Gods Must Be Crazy* particularly, African natives are depicted to marvel at the discovery of a bottle of coke, pointing to the extreme emphasis of Africa as a place that is not yet in touch with global everyday realities by Hollywood. The film represented Africa as considering the bottle to be a kind of spiritual object capable of causing them harm, despite 'coke' being a globalized commodity and very much evident at their door steps. Hence here again, the film betrays another example of Western media's attempt at underscoring Africa's 'primitivism' stereotypically, even in the 1980s when the film was produced. This same kind of stereotypes also consistently runs through most *Tarzan* films where Africans are placed side by side with animals in forests [typical of apes], living in jungles with no houses, hence we talk of stereotypes in relation to these representations of Africa. Arguably among other Western mainstream films that show disproportionate interests in stereotypes of Africa are texts like *Cry, the beloved Country (*1951), *Come back Africa* (1959), *Out of Africa* (1985), *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1981), *African Queen* (1951), *Dogs of War* (1980), *Zulu* (1963*), *Zulu Dawn* (1979) etc.

Stereotype intrinsically may not be possible to avoid within the demands of mass communications. As McKay argues, 'it helps to avoid cognitive overload by allowing one to package stimuli into manageable numbers of categories', but of course 'it becomes

dangerous when the traits ascribed to the group are assumed to make them biologically or ethnically negative or inferior like in race, sex, age, etc' (1995: 170). An implication of this therefore is that stereotyping can be technically deceptive in spite of the ends it serves. 'It is a label which involves a process of categorization and evaluation, often used in representations' (O'Sullivan, 1994: 126). It is simply a short cut to forming impressions of 'others' by generalizing with almost no information, expectations about a people based on their membership to a group (McKay, 1994: 170).

Particularly in relation to Africa, this seems to underlie the media image of people's understanding of the continent. Ackah (1999) for instance highlights that, 'living in the West, the image that confronts the [African] Diaspora is of course Western images. When these images portray Africans in a negative light, depicting them solely as victims of famines, civil strife and corruption, then the intellectual of African Diaspora feels himself or herself to be under attack. As a black individual living in the West he or she is merely a savage in a suit, only one step away from the Africa that he or she experiences on the television screen' (1999: 61). Thus, this argument smacks of a whole cluster of swirling concerns on the filmic or television images of Africa as represented in Western media which puzzles Africans all over especially the Diaspora who are privileged to critique these visual representations by juxtaposing them with the situation of things where they come from, hence the implications of this study.

African cinemas primarily evolved to challenge most of these African misrepresentations. Nwachukwu identifies the rising spirit of the first filmmakers in Africa as charged with nation building. According to him, 'contemporary black African film practice emerged out of the excitement of nation building and a quest for the revivification of Africa's lost cultural heritage and identity; a quest that has inspired innovative and creative diversification in the cinema and throughout the art' (1994: 304). For Bakari and Cham, 'the early practice of cinema in Africa was posited as a crucial site of the battle to decolonize minds, to develop radical consciousness, to reflect and engage critically with

African cultures and traditions, and to make desirable, the meaningful transformation of society for the benefit of the majority' (1996: 2).

Generally speaking therefore, the idea of cinema in Africa has followed the ideologies of pan-Africanism to explore questions of the identity and personhood of the Africans especially through their cultures. This entails letting the people have 'their own' voice and speaking out their own concerns by themselves rather than being spoken 'to' or 'for'. Cinema making then became 'part of a collective influence: a continental drift towards a very specific notion of Africanity' (Akomfrah, 2006: 274) that questions the distorted notions about the continent and its cultures. Writing on Western misrepresentations, Irele sees Hegel's philosophy[1] as the most exalted statement that rationalizes Europe's ethnocentrisms. It is, he argues, 'the standard that provides a powerful philosophical base for the chorus of denigration of the non-white races by European colonial adventures all through the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century' (Irele, 2007: 12). According to him, 'this ideological significance of Europe's contemplation of a world in which it was master by reason of the quality of its collective mind emerges most clearly in Hegel who by excluding Africa from the historical process through which the human spirit fulfils itself, places Africa at the opposite pole of Europe and as its spiritual antithesis' (Irele, ibid: 11).

Irele extends the interpretation of Europe's ethnocentricisms to Levy-Bruhl who is regarded as a pro-Hegelian acolyte. According to him, 'the high point of European ethnocentrisms arguably was also attained by the work of Lucien Levy-Bruhl who devoted time to demonstrating the disparity between the nature and quality of the European mind and what he called the 'primitive mentality' of the non-Western peoples and cultures' (Irele, Op. Cit: 11 - 13).

Levy-Bruhl and Hegel arguably are both proponents of the kind of binary opposition that characterized Western colonial activities in relation to Africa during the colonial era. Hawkes speaks of Nietzsche as contending that 'this idea [legitimation of binary oppositions] is to justify and perpertuate the division of society into a privileged group of

Greek, aristocratic men, and the excluded "others": women, slaves, and barbarians' (Hawkes, 1996:156). Particularly in his book *Ideology*, Hawkes highlights Nietzsche's ideas by offering a foundation to the classification of things between the 'good' and the 'bad', 'us' and 'them', and 'we' and the 'other' as grounded on egoism that excludes the 'other' as different and inferior. According to him, 'in the past, civilizations have generally developed sophisticated criteria to demonstrate the errors of their victims or rivals. The Greeks declared foreigners to be uncivilized, primitive barbarians who lacked the gift of rational thought; the early Christians portrayed pagans as sinful, worldly idolaters, addicted to the things of this world and the pleasures of the flesh' (Hawkes, ibid: 13). This too, I would argue extends to most filmic representations of the West who define Africa predominantly in terms of their woes, and not in relation to their successes.

The post-colonial discourse which questions such ideological oppositions emerged in Africa in the context of asking 'what is African' and 'African identity?' This notion has engaged most African philosophers in rigorous debates since the 20th century up until the present. Particularly in African philosophy, which Okolo argues 'articulates and critically reflects on the total experience of the African' (Okolo, 1987: 11), this notion of African identity and personality has been expressed in various ways in order to re-address Western (propagated) misconceptions and ideological frameworks on the continent. Scholars and political nationalists like Nkrumah, Cesaire, Senghor and Nyerere among others have tried to reinvent what is African identity in their works. In a way, it is the same journey that African filmmakers have continued, starting with the call of FESPACI (Federation Pan-Africain Des Cineaste/Federation of African filmmakers) in 1975 with its Algiers Charter. In this document, 'the sub-Saharan African filmmakers agreed to entrench some form of authenticity into their cultural products by focusing essentially on African cultures' (Bisschoff and Murphy, 2007: 494).

Even though one may not think that all European histories of Africa are entirely filled with distorted myths, yet how mainstream media qualify Africa's media image is something of a big concern. One only needs to testify to this by viewing any of the films cited here as imbued with stereotypes. The concern here is that these distortions about

Africa have not only been made in philosophy and literary works, but also being perpetuated in and through films. Beginning with the first films in Africa by the colonial films units,[2] to most documentaries, the image of Africa is often casted in the light of ugly trends (Magombe, 1997: 667). In otherwords, in most films involving African and European races, for example, the British, 'there is the subliminal message of cultural hierarchy where the conditions of the British culture over the African is communicated by presenting what is natural, normal and desired through their British culture's set of racial or gender stereotypes and; at the same time, what is unnatural, abnormal and undesired through the subordinate African culture's set' (Crawford and Turton, 1992: 185).

However, given the apparent turn of events in the 21st century, some of these stereotypes seem to have been somewhat currently challenged and questioned. Barlet for instance, highlights that, 'when Hollywood took over the colonial stereotypes of Africa, they went into the making of some forty Tarzan films over a seventy–year period. Today, Hollywood is more likely to offer liberation films in which Blacks are upstaged by White liberals. *Cry Freedom* (Richard Attenborough, 1987), for example, shifts the focus from black leader Steve Biko to a white journalist, David Woods, wrestling with his conscience' (Barlet, 2000: 210). This, no doubt, signals a paradigm shift in Hollywood as also do other films like *Totsi* (2005), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), and *The Constant Gardener* (2005) where black Africans are no longer casted as 'savages' and the underdogs of the Tarzan films, but, as civilized people who do duties from the vantage point of human angle perspectives. Yet, even though these films underscore the needed apparent reversal of some of these ideological stereotypes, it still remains to be seen how far they can go to reconstruct the media image of black Africa in the West especially since 'what most people of the West know about Africa are mainly from movies' (Drakard, 2006: 1). Thus, contributing to this debate is where this thesis looks at Nollywood representations, especially in relation to the cultures and people of Igbo extraction in Nigeria from an insider's perspective.

1.4 Implications of Study

Placide Tempels[3] (1959), one of the earlier researchers into the world of Africans stated that 'a key feature of the conception of human nature [for the African] is that a person is not an entity separate from others, but rather participates in other beings (including persons), and is, in part constituted by the other beings' (cited in Bourgault, 1995: 5). An implication of this view for this study is to investigate from the viewpoint of Nigerian films, how much of this is true of the Igbo cultures and how or whether these (African) cultures are changing or hybridizing presently. This study also will examine Nollywood as a national cinema and point out the indicators of communalistic practices in the films that describe the authentic nature of Igbo cultures in the contexts of both their old and new manifestations.

Again, since the notion of Third Cinema evokes an oppositionality that positions films as geared toward Third World emancipation and decolonization, this research investigates audiences' readings in an attempt that interrogates Gledhill's conviction that 'once an oppressed group becomes aware of its cultural as well as political oppression, and identifies oppressive myths and stereotypes, it then becomes a task of that group to replace their lies, deceptions and escapist illusions with reality' (Gledhill, 1999: 254). Thus, by exploring some Western mainstream filmic representations of Africa vis-a-vis some African films of (African) cultural representations, this study explores not only the engendered stereotypical impressions made of Africa; but also investigates the underlying differences between both Western and African representations of the continent. In a general sense therefore, one question that guides this study is: what cultural characteristics are easily deducible about Nigeria and the Igbos in particular by viewing Nigerian (Nollywood) films?

1.5 The Concept of Culture

Culture has variedly been defined over the ages and across continents. It is as Taylor (1832 – 1917) argues 'a complex whole, including knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other habits acquired by people as members of a society' (cited in

Luzbetak, 2002: 134). It is for Ang 'the objectified set of ideas, beliefs, and behaviours of peoples' (1996: 133) and for Hall, it is concerned with 'the production and exchange of meaning – between members of a society or groups' (Hall, 1997a, cited in Gillian Rose, 2001: 6). This is not to say that these definitions compete with one another but that they are different ways of echoing the same notion of facts. Hence by the extension of their implications to human societies, culture is all about living and the manner of doing things in the society.

Hall's view of culture in particular, which is 'identity, history, agency and practice, according to Rojek cannot be taken as fixed entities but parts of a system of representation which is permanently in a process' (Rojek, 2003: 2). This means that culture is in a flux and brings about new formations with time. That is, cultures are evolutionary and create room for new realities as time passes. 'The concept remains a complex one [...] a site of convergent interests' (Hall, 1997: 33). It is right to signal that the fluidity of Hall's concept of culture which embraces identity, values and symbols implies that different aspects of it remain, but yet, adapt to new situations and realities over time. Culture generally therefore 'consists of meaningful social actions and the variable systems of meaning which give significance to our actions [and] allow us to interpret the actions of others' (Hall, 1997: 208). Following this, the Nigerian and Igbo nation can be said to combine significant features of culture which are 'overwhelmingly rich and varied in [their] manifestations' (Hannerz, 1997: 12) as seen in Nollywood films.

To undertake the study of Igbo and Nigerian cultures in this way 'through its narrative address' as Bhabha argues, 'does not merely draw attention to its language and rhetoric; but also attempts to alter the conceptual object itself, where its positive value lies in displaying the wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with its national life' (Bhaba, 1990: 3). In this light, some Igbo rituals are studied here from the perspective of their nuanced visual and cultural representations in Nollywood as aspects of [Nigerian] cultures that problematize Western stereotypes. Generally, I have found Turner's (1974, 1982) explanation of the pleasures of theatre, film and television as a *ritual process* to be particularly helpful in understanding the place

of Nollywood among Nigerians who resonate with its cultural themes and storylines to explore meanings in the society. Certainly, there are many useful explanatory theories of this phenomenon, but the ritual process is very illuminating, in part, because Nigerian and Igbo cultures in particular (where this writer comes from) can be described as a continuous series of rituals and are analyzed in this research by the application of Turner's theory.

1.6 Turner's Ritual Process and Nollywood Films

The theory of ritual process comes principally from the contributions of Victor Turner, who did a study of the ritual of passage among the *Ndembe* people of North Western Zambia. People express in their communalistic rituals what moves them most, and since the form of expression is conventionalized and obligatory, it is the values of the group that are revealed (Uzukwu, 1997: 41). These, as will be decoded in the select films, include festivals and activities of communities that are symbolically celebrated and become an integral part of people's rhythm of life and personalities. For instance, the funeral rites of titled men and women, new yam festivals, initiation rites of young adults, naming ceremony of new-born babies, breaking of kola nuts, title-taking ceremonies and dozens of other ritual events are all cultural rituals that Nigerians celebrate with symbolic rites, full of significant meanings. These aspects are all recurrently represented in Nollywood films. Turner's theory of ritual process is founded on his application of the insights of Arnold van Gennep on similar rites like these. His interest in cognitive anthropology led him to explain ritual process as a general form of a culture's coping with structures of power and the attempt to balance institutions of power with commitment to community.

Ritual is a place where people integrate short-term pragmatic goals and the longer-range mythic values of a culture, where they can replace personal alienation with an affirmation of personal identity. In Turner's view, every society's attempt to mobilize itself to solve its broader societal problems leads to an emphasis on authoritarian institutions, creation of status differentiation, justification of the concentration of power and inequality, reward

of individual ambition, technical knowledge and other forms of 'structure' (1969-1995: 106-107). Structure may be necessary, but it also generally produces conflict, alienation and oppression. Hence, Turner argues that most cultures balance the over-emphasis on structure with a periodic deep experience of community which emphasizes social leveling, concern for the needs of others in the community and personal identity formations.

The purpose of the rites of passage among the Ndembe, in his view, is to impress young people with their duties to the community and recall to those assuming positions of chieftaincy that they should not use their power for their own interests but to serve the whole community. In his interpretation, there are three moments in the ritual process: leaving the realm of structure, entering into a symbolic experience of community which is deeply emotional and pleasurable and then returning to the context of structure with a sense of social values. Turner characterizes this experience of community as 'liminal' (from the Latin *limen* or threshold of a door), that is, as an experience that is on the threshold between utopian communal happiness and the practicalities of structure in everyday life. Ritual is, as Real observes, celebratory, consumatory, (an end in itself) and decorative rather than utilitarian in aim and often requires some element of 'performance' for communication to be realized (1996: 48).

Certainly, Nigerians experience in everyday life the worst aspects of 'structure': the brutal assertion of dictatorial government, the use of public office for personal gain, the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a few, the neglect of public services because these are used for personal interests and a litany of other familiar abuses. They also witness communal mutuality in village festivals, traditional dancing tunes and steps, religious worships and socio-cultural co-operations in works. Thus, when the typical home video viewer watches, in the protected environment of family and friends, another idealistic scenario of all these is propagated in which for him or her, greed and oppression are punished, the person serving the community is at least honored and the weak get some respite through identification with filmic storylines and representations that showcases retributions as justice. For this reason, rituals (whether in real life situations or

in [Nollywood] filmic representations) have two references to what they achieve: backward to convention, habit, agreement and established order, and forward to indicate the immediate and soon-to-be realized social significance of an underlying order (Rothenbuhler, 1998: 14). In this context, by moving backwards, the notion of memorability and nostalgia are evoked in terms of what used to be in the days of the ancestors; while in going forward, there is the reference to the communal aspirations of the people towards reaching a goal with their ruling elders and leaders guiding the journey in the present.

One impressive aspect of Nollywood in all of these is in the representation of cultural rituals as a major aspect of communalism. This illustrates the ability of film producers and directors to marshall familiar symbolic language of these cultures into their productions, especially in the portrayal of the ritual scenes, to provide the experience of communal liminality (Animalu,1990: 46), cultural integration and nostalgic egalitarianism among proximate audiences – who are mainly Nigerians and Africans. This we shall be revisiting when discussing audiences later in this study. But suffice to say that using the women's cult particularly in his *Ndembe* studies as an example of what ritual participation does for community members, Turner graphically states that:

> Women's cults have the tripartite diachronic structure made familiar to us by the work of Van Gennep. The first phase, called *Ilembi* separates the candidate from the profane world; the second, called *kunkunka* (literally "in the grass hut") partially secludes her "from secular life"; while the third, called *ku-tumbka*, is a festive dance celebrating the removal of the shade's interdiction and the candidate's return to normal life (Turner, 1974: 47).

Thus, Turner's structure therefore refers to social movements from where one is at a moment, to where he or she receives training, then to a higher level that is where he or she started and now returns, but with a higher vision and new knowledge. While the first stage is the normal human society, where there is power, struggles, achievements and subordinations (ordinary everyday society), the second stage is the symbolic environment that creates the learning process –'the *communitas*' (ritual environment). In it, all

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participants are equal and submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders, (which can be likened to watching a film in a room, or participating in a cultural symbolic (ritual) ceremony, or even in a religious worship). Thus, in this second stage, the participants undergo the initiation rite, which implies that they identify with the actions they have witnessed and feel ennobled by it. Here, some kind of cultural myths are played for the group and wisdom, no matter how esoteric, is imparted to them for higher tasks ahead. By this is meant that the encoded stories of the people's journey as a group, are retold and handed down to them (Abanuka, 1991: 9) like the experience of watching films which often creates new knowledge impression in audiences. By this is implied as well that the act of viewing arguably is itself a process of initiation into the represented 'reality' which informs the knowledge economy of viewers and positions them to make meaning of the subject matter represented for them.

The essences of these [represented] myths according to Onwubiko are: 'that they embody the values of the people, they document the traditional education of the people, the songs, symbols, signs, proverbs and riddles, and works of arts' (1990: XI). Resonating with this idea is the insight of Real on what he termed 'mythic rituals'. These according to him 'connect us with our historical past and our physical environment. They establish order and define roles. They restructure time and space for our era […] celebrate the central […] values in culture' (1996: 48). Connecting this view with communalistic rituals, Eboh argues that the African view of 'reality is a vital key to unlocking the people's system of interconnected beliefs, ideas, values and practices. 'Symbols', he says, 'manifest "being". Symbols and myths embody archtypes, paradigms, examplary acts performed by gods or heroes in the morning time, in the mythical time *in illo tempore'* (Eboh, 2004: 2).

Like the women's cult in *Ndembe,* the people of the Igbo tribe and Nigeria in general have a lot of rituals which they celebrate. One of the ways by which these rituals communicate in Nigerian and African society is by maintaining cohesion in the culture. They connect the participant to richer meanings and larger forces of their community. Rituals in this way create solidarity in the form of subjective experiences of sharing the same meaningful world which is attained by participants through the condensed nature of

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symbols used therein. Even though one acknowledges the influence of westernization and scientific developments in Africa and Nigeria generally, one still believes that the [new] influences do not abolish these old rituals in the people's everyday life. From day break to evening, people have ways and rituals with which they communicate with their God or gods, ancestors and neighbours. Also from weeks to seasons, months to years, there are festivals and rituals both in private and in public situations which the Nigerian people still celebrate. In all of these, there are family rituals, kindred rituals, village rituals, community rituals and some other bigger rituals that involve the whole of the people as a clan or community and can be decoded to understand their worldviews and thought patterns (See Appendix D on more community rituals and festivals and their significances).

Ritual is one aspect of a people's culture that captures their 'quintessence' and gives a perfect example of communalism in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular. Thus, the force of it comes partly from its antiquity, real or supposed, and the problem facing all who celebrate rituals in a fast-changing African and Nigerian society is how to combine relevance to changing circumstances with the sanctity of communalistic traditions which is one task that Nollywood industry is grappling with in filmic representations or filmic ritual communications currently. In his studies on cultural communication in the Yoruba area of Nigeria, Faniran, who researched on rituals as indicators of communalism, highlights that when a child is born, it is taken that he or she has disrupted the normal social order prevalent in the family at that time and this demands a new meaning. For this, the members of the lineage must come together to create, share and celebrate the new meaning. This is the ritual of celebrating 'birth' communally within which a name is given to the new born child. The term *Oriki* therefore in Yoruba is a symbolic *agnomen* that socializes the child into the culture by revealing his or her past and projecting him or her to the future. This is what the gathered community gives to their new born child in such a celebration by giving him or her family name (2003: 122).

In Nollywood, one film that recalls this narrative and ritual is *Omugwo* (2004) by Tchidi Chikere. Usually after the safe arrival of a new born baby in the Igbo speaking part of Nigeria, the mother is relieved of her domestic tasks by a close relative of hers. This could be her mother or the mother-in-law. Such a person looks after the new parent and her newly born child. During these days which might last between one to three months or more, the mother of the newly born baby is given the best food and treated with all kindness and decorum by her relatives and friends. And it is this ritual celebration that is called *Omugwo* in the Igbo area of Nigeria. Significantly, at the end of one's stay, the close relative who looked after the mother and the new child is also compensated for her duties throughout the ritual period. She is bought presents and given money to take home. And this is what the film *Omugwo* dramatizes when Nkem Owoh envied his wife and opted to go in her place to an *Omugwo* ceremony, in order to be the beneficiary of the potential proceeds from it instead of his wife. This, of course proved hectic for him to cope with, especially with feeding the new baby and domestically looking after the entire household that made him quit the ritual unceremoniously. Representing this ritual in film means that Nollywood recreates the Igbo people's story and by so doing initiates audiences into the Igbo ritual and festivities that herald a new born baby by making the film their 'ritual environment', the *communitas* that helps viewers participate in the symbolic culture.

Like any other set of people, the Igbos have many ways of symbolizing not only *Omugwo*, but also other rituals that mean much to them, which Nollywood films extend in a uniquely Nigerian and Igbo manner, by their representations. The five key rituals studied here are significant examples of these cultural celebrations shrouded in the philosophy and cosmology of the Igbo people. These include: *Iri-ji* festival (new yam festival), *Ime-Oji* ceremony (presenting and offering of kola nut), widowhood and funeral rituals, symbolic ritual dancing and religion and worship ritual. Thus, if for instance, old age and grey hairs for them symbolize fulfilled life and wisdom, and may naturally earn one the right to courtesy and politeness (Onwubiko, 1991: 35); the kola nut is a symbol of life (Abanuka, 1991: 5) which warrants respect as a symbol of hospitality among these people. In this same way, these rituals and many others have meanings and implications which

Nollywood showcase and which this thesis will attempt to point out in their various forms. In all of these and their celebrations, the conventionality of symbols belongs to the particular Igbo community that formulates or creates and uses them since there are sometimes variations in the celebration patterns of even among the Igbos given the diversities and uniqueness of individual ritual backgrounds.

1.7 Structure of the Study of Rituals in Nollywood

The way this research is conducted forms the structure of its presentation here. While Chapter one establishes the general introduction to the whole research process, giving a background to the objectives and implications of the study and an overview of the concept of the representation of Africa on film, Chapter two dwells on understanding the circumstances and significance of the emergence of Nollywood in Nigeria in order to examine the type of representations that are now made of African cultures. This in a way ventures into African cosmology and worldviews and by so doing positions both this study and the reader in the context of an analyst looking for textual indicators to explore the hypothesis of this present study.

Chapter three is devoted to a rigorous and comprehensive review of the existing literature on Nollywood. Here are discussed scholarly works that deal with both textual and audience analysis in the film industry. The fourth Chapter specifically concentrates on the methodologies used in the research, done under two paradigms: textual analysis by means of exploring representational texts and audience analysis by means of focus-group interviews. Thus, Chapter four recounts details of the focus-group methodology and statistics of research as well as the reasons for using mainly qualitative strategies in the entire study rather than the quantitative alternative. It is in Chapter five that we underpinned the presentation of communalistic practices in the films by means of textual analysis of the select Nollywood texts and audience analysis. By this means, we were able to articulate commentaries on the representations of African and Nigerian [Igbo] peoples and cultures in the films by particularly concentrating on the celebration and significance of the selected Igbo rituals.

Chapter six is dedicated to the more findings of the primary fieldwork in relation to the explored themes of this study while Chapter seven deals with the kind of culture conflicts that resulted in the Igbo communalistic cultures, given their 'culture-contacts' with Europe during colonialism and other related factors. Added to these is the presentation of some flaws identified in Nollywood practice by the primary research participants. Chapter eight finally is on the summative analysis of the entire work with suggestions for possible further researches in the area of Third Cinema/Nollywood and reception analysis.

1.8 Chapter Conclusion

The research question and general introduction that guides this thesis is what this first chapter has set out to illustrate. By establishing the broad history and subject matter of Nollywood, this chapter has paved way for a research study focused on the analysis of Nollywood cultural representations by means of both textual and audience reception readings. We began by outlining not only the origin and impacts of colonialism on representing African on film but also by outlining the aims and objectives of our study.

The concept of communalism is one other area that this section introduced to indicate how significant it is to this study. By understanding the interactivity between Africans and their environment as communalistic people, one discovers the errors of the colonialists who rejected what they did not understand of the people's cultures and [mis]represented them as barbaric and paganistic. In the chapter that follows, we will be examining the emergence of Nollywood and how it problematizes most colonial representations of Africa from the within.

ENDNOTES

[1]Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) is believed to have propagated much of the stereotypes about Africa through his writings. Particularly in *La Raison dans l'histoire* he wrote: '[Africa] is not interesting from the point of view of its own history, but because we see man in a state of barbarism and savagery which is preventing him from being an integral part of civilization. Africa as far back as history goes, has remained closed and without links with the rest of the world. It is the country of gold which is closed in on itself, the country of infancy, beyond the daylight of conscious history, wrapped in the blackness of night' (1965: 247 cited in Bayert, 1993).

[2]The Colonial Film Units (CFU) served as an organ of the colonial administration in the Ministry of Information charged with the making of films for Africans and other colonial audiences. In giving a history to the Colonial Film Unit in Nigeria, Owens-Ibie states that 'W. Sellers started up the Colonial Film Unit as an agent of development designed to lift standards in areas of health, education, agriculture and industry

among the local population. They were educational and fitted the general policies of the colonial administration. In 1947, the CFU ceased to exist and was replaced with the establishment of the Federal Film Unit (FFU), which later metamorphosed into the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) in 1979'. (Owens, N. *How Video Films Developed in Nigeria*. Available from: http://www.nigeria-planet.com/nigerian-movies.html. [Accessed 28 June 2008].

[3]Placide Tempels worked in Africa as a missionary. His work on African Philosophy, *Bantu Philosophy* (1945) was a huge success at a time when it argued antithetically to Hegel and Levy-Bruhl's notion that Africans were incapable of ideation.

[4]*Simulacra* is a latin word with verb root as *simili* meaning 'similar' or 'in the same manner'. Here Elkins borrows from Baudrillard to indicate that images mimic realities and rebound around human beings.

Chapter Two

2.0 Nollywood and Representations

2.1 Introduction

Nollywood refers to the Nigerian national film industry. The name has an uncertain origin but was derived from acronyms such as Hollywood and Bollywood. Haynes highlights that it apparently appeared for the first time in print in an article by Matt Steinglass in *New York Times* in 2002 (Haynes, 2005). There is the ongoing debate about

its understanding however as the national cinema industry of Nigeria among Nigerian film critics. In 1974, for instance, Ola Balogun, called for establishing a national cinema in an article entitled, *Nigeria Deserves a Film Industry*, published in a Nigerian Newspaper, *Daily Times* (Haynes, 1995). In 1995, three years after Nollywood has begun productions he wrote, 'the reasons a national cinema does not exist correlate with the political failures of the Nigerian nation'. Among these failures he listed include: disinterest, ideological bankruptcy, incompetence and misconceived projects; unwillingness of the national bourgeoisie to invest in film production, failure to establish a strong national center in cultural projects, and the nation still remaining supine in the face of neo-colonialism whereby cinema screens are filled with foreign productions (Haynes, 1995: 115).

Even in his edited work, *Nigerian Video Films* (2000), there is the reluctance to address Nollywood as a national cinema. Instead terms like 'Nigerian video films', 'Nollywood phenomenon' are used. Some factors may be responsible for this reluctance which might include the lack of full government sponsorship or involvement in the industry, different ethnic production centers as well. But all these apart, the concept of 'national cinema' as applied to Nollywood and discussed here reflects the understanding of the geographical home base of the filmic productions as well as the themes and languages used therein to explore the social issues and concerns of Nigerians. Again, that the federal government of Nigeria has in 1993 set up a regulatory agency, *National Film and Video Censors Board*, to censor the activities of the industry, implies that Nollywood is being treated as a 'national cinema' in today's Nigeria, even if it was non-existent a few years ago.

According to Kunzler, the Nollywood film industry is 'an industry that developed out of a context related to domestic and international cultural, economic, and political environments [...]. It is heterogeneous in nature and can roughly be divided into Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo video films which designate their production centers[1] in the South-West, North and South-East of Nigeria respectively' (Kunzler, 2007: 1). Put together, these Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo films are called the 'Nollywood films'.

Like any other national cinema therefore, such as Irish Cinema, for instance, which 'sustains and challenges the myths of a country's nationhood' (Hill and Rocket, 2004: 10), or as Williams argues, 'functions as an economic weapon in the competitive arena of world capitalism, promoting national values' (Williams, 2002: 6), Nollywood uses languages and themes that resonate with Nigerians to tell their stories. Guided by the tenets of African nationalism and cultural identity, the Nollywood industry makes films to make money 'essentially' but at the same time addresses local concerns (Akomfrah, 2006: 282). It exists 'almost entirely outside pan-African institutions and international circuits that shaped most of the politicized African Cinemas'[2] (Haynes, 2000: 5) and 'borrows from state media and the transnational flows of Indian and American films and Nigerian folklores' (Dul, 2000: 238).

2.2 Background and Emergence of Nollywood

Nigerians have been fascinated by cinema ever since the first film, the coronation of King Edward VII at Westminster, was shown in Lagos in 1903. A local newspaper, *The Lagos Standard*, commented that it attracted thousands of people in Lagos and 'came as a welcome relief to the dull monotony of the town, the amusements of which were few and far between' (cited in Mgbejume, 1989: 22). By 1914 there were several cinemas in Lagos, and in the 1920s, five or more cinema halls were presenting films every evening. A local newspaper highlighted that, 'crowds of anxious young men and women were always waiting at the theatres for the doors to open' (Mgbejume, 1989: 28). Soon after that era, in 1935, the Edgar Rice Burroughs film *Sanders of the River,* which was partly shot in Nigeria featured the Nigerian Orlando Martins (1899-1985), who acted alongside Paul Robeson from America and therefore began creating the sensitivity around filmmaking in Nigeria (Aderinokun, 2005: internet source). After 1945, the 'movies' became the principal evening entertainment in Lagos and other Nigerian towns. Cinema halls multiplied in Lagos and in 1951 seating capacity was estimated to be around 34,000 with annual attendance about 3,500,000 (Mgbejume, 1989: 29). The cost was six pence and Nigerians crowded into the cinema halls, not to watch quietly, but to participate boisterously in the screen action.

In the 1950s and 1960s there were also more than one hundred theatre troupes in the Yoruba[3] region alone, travelling from village to village for evening entertainments. These included Wole Soyinka's *Mbari Mbayo* cultural group and Hubert Ogunde's troupe (Aderinokun, 2005: ibid). During the 1980s, some of these stage presentations began to use short film projections to portray the splendour of kingly courts, magical transformations and the intrigue of good and evil spirits, and the outrageous wealthy living of the new Nigerian rich.

When in 1959 the country's first television station (also the first in Africa) had began transmission from Ibadan, the capital of Western Nigeria, now Oyo State, (Nwachukwu, 1994: 114), it was possible to show most popular theatres like the Yoruba folkloric theatres and other films on screen. By the middle of 1980s, when every State has got its own television and radio broadcasting stations, laws limited foreign television contents on the media schedules, and the producers of television programmes started featuring local popular theatrical arts more than their foreign alternatives (Cinema of Nigeria, 2009: internet source). Among the soap operas broadcast by the national television channel, officially called 'Nigerian Television Authority' (NTA) at this period included the television serializations of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, which was hugely successful and is one of the key texts to be analyzed here, the *Aido family*, *Village headmaster*, *Cockcrow at Dawn*, *The Masquerade*, *Mirror in the Sun*, *Checkmate*, *Sura, the Tailor*, *Awada Kerikeri* and *Second Chance* (Aderinokun, 2005: ibid). Following this later came the inexpensive video technology of the late 1980s that transformed the practice of producing and consuming films and the stage presentations moved totally into video film production. The people loved it even more than the live theatres and Nollywood was created!

It was by maximizing the potential offered by audiences' thirst for pleasure in watching soaps that the first Nollywood filmmakers, championed by Kenneth Nnebue,[4] ventured into film productions. How the soaps served as a pathway to the emergence of Nollywood is basically founded on audiences' interest facilitated by modern day

technology which surmounts the economic constraints of the earlier celluloid filmmaking practices. Particularly in the 1990s, Nwachukwu argues that there was an explosion of the video production that heralded much popular appeal among audiences (Nwachukwu, 2003: 127).

How Nollywood translated from localized stage productions to a film industry is a journey that this research will explore. There were economic factors that made it difficult for celluloid filmmakers to sustain the market in the 1980s, which were overturned by cheaper technologies from Asia and Europe that helped moved the market to video-film productions. There was also the technological dimension to this, which was the use of 'ordinary' video cameras to make these films in order to cut costs against the economic burdens of the Nigerian nation in the 1980s and 1990s. Added to these was the view that Nollywood practices were rooted in the television industry that began screening local soap operas and theatres following the 1972 indigenization Act.[5] From this stand, Haynes (1995), and Haynes and Okome, (2000) argue that the passage of films from stage productions to celluloid filmmaking originated with the Yoruba travelling theaters. Haynes particularly argues that a major influence on this transition was 'Ola Balogun, who made the first Yoruba film, *Ajani Ogun* (in 1977), with Duro Ladipo and his troupe, and starring Adeyemi Folayan, (known as Ade – Love)', (1995: 100). Essentially it can still be argued that another fundamental factor that gave inspiration to Nollywood's cinematic practices is 'citizen journalism'. By this is meant individuals' zeal in empowering themselves, in order to make their voices heard by the general public.

Citizen journalism in Nollywood is arguably what Okome identified when he argued that 'the history of the emergence of popular video-film is connected to the deep-seated desire by [this group of] Nollywood consumers [and producers] to have a voice in the social and cultural debates of the time' (2007: 17), because in their (re)presentations Nollywood producers and directors are creating parallel commentaries on the social issues concerning the people. It is this type of self representation that has marked the usefulness of 'you tube' and other participatory channels in the internet where ordinary citizens present their opinions on issues of concern. Especially in the 1980s and 1990s in Nigeria,

when military rulers were at the helm of affairs, and when the 'political tensions evident in society could not be directly addressed on mainstream television' (Oluyinka, 2008), because of fear of the rulers, most Nigerians began encoding messages that related their views and fears on the political and social issues of the day.

The success of this industry comes from what Nwachukwu identifies as the drive for 'commercial viability' (2003: 127). This is because the new video film industry places a high premium on entertainment and since it seeks the pleasure of viewers in order to recoup expenses, the directors and producers aim at excellent results in their productions. On this, Haynes states that, 'the new video films, on the basis of sheer commercial vitality can claim to be the major contemporary Nigerian art form' (2000: XV). Its historical emergence in Nigeria, according to Adesokan, hinges on 'the neo-liberal deregulations of many economies in Africa that brought changes in the uses of technology, especially of the digital kind, which is open to reformatting in quite imaginative ways. When you live at the mercy of poor economic and political calculations,' he said, 'you tend to be inventive, keen to improvise, bend tools to serve your purposes. The Nigerian films came out of that context' (Adesokan, 2006: internet source).

Particularly in Nigeria, the film industry has significantly illustrated the ability of marshalling familiar symbolic rituals of Nigerian and African cultures in the films which help create nostalgia and resonance in the viewers. They reveal familiar stories, problems and values of Nigerians and Africans in general. Here, major universal questions of values and meanings of life are explored. And by viewing these video films in groups, which is the favourite entertainment of Nigerians at the moment, this study found that both viewers and producers are drawn to the films by the resonance of storylines to their everyday socio-cultural situations or what we call in this study, the Igbos' indigenous [cultural] 'lived-in situations' and ritual experiences.

2.3 Lived–in Characteristics of Nollywood Storylines

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Nollywood films are typically about lived-in situations of Africans and Nigerians in particular. As Esosa argues, 'finding concrete references to their own lives seems to be more important to African viewers [...]. Even in the horror genre or in action films, Nigerian videos are clearly orientated toward everyday life in Africa. Traditional aspects such as magic and witchcraft are integrated into the plots just as much as car accidents and laptops' (Esosa, 2005: internet source). These films develop and portray themes with existential significances for ordinary Nigerians: childless marriages, political assassinations, discrimination of victims of HIV/AIDS, religious scandals, election frauds, village celebrations, students' lives in colleges and the like.

Specifically the film producers and directors of Nollywood can be said to first of all attract home audiences by playing out symbols that resonate with their lives, wherein the landscape, locality, attire, food and music have meanings based on their proximity to audiences. Commenting on *This is Nollywood*[6] (2006), produced by a team of filmmakers from the United States, Franco Sacchi, of the *Centre of Digital Imaging Arts of Boston University,* outlines that, 'Nollywood producers know they have struck a lucrative and long-neglected market - movies that offer audiences, characters they can identify with in stories that relate to their everyday lives […]. Nollywood settings are familiar. Nollywood plots depict situations that people understand and confront daily: romance, comedy, the occult, crooked cops, prostitution, and HIV/AIDS' (2005). For Bob Manuel Udokwu[7] (2007), 'whatever message one has to put across is such that the interest of the people has to be drawn to it. The stories that come out of Nollywood essentially represent the lifestyles or what you might call cultures and traditions, and the general life experiences of the people'.

Cultures and traditions are always typical of particular peoples. It is the specificities and characteristics of individual groups that give them their identity as a people. In Nollywood, the cultures of Nigerians are often thrown up in representations. It is the myths and symbols of Africans and Nigerians in particular that form Nollywood's aesthetics and storylines. Culture in this context therefore is understood as the 'total historical experience without denial or suppression of past or present, a dynamic unity of

ancient and modern, a two-headed continuum with one head plunged into the immensity of the memorable past; and the other as firmly and deeply immersed in the contemporary here and now' (Okere, 1995).

The notion of building on what is happening in Nigeria, whether socially, culturally or politically is what is referred to as the 'lived-in situations' of Nigerians. This is depicted in most Nollywood's storylines. Added to these are themes of every day rituals in the lives of Nigerian and African citizens alike, especially the Igbos of the South-Eastern Nigeria. In *Not without My Daughter,* for instance, one observes the typical tension that characterizes the Nigerian nation between the lines of ethnic and religious divides encoded into film. The film recaptures the tension that often shrouds Northern and Southern relationships and marriages. In this film, for instance, a Muslim man (Northerner) and a Christian woman (South-Easterner) have a lot of obstacles to face in order to get married because they are of different religions and cultural backgrounds. In *The Stubborn Grasshopper* (2001) as I was informed[8] in the course of the primary research of this thesis as well, the political story surrounding the late former head of State, Gen. Sani Abacha, who ruled Nigeria from 1993 to 1998 was been (re)presented, underpinning [real] life situational issues encoded in filmic storylines.

Other films like *Government House* (2004), *Girls' Cot* (2006), *His Excellency and the Siren* (2004), *and National Anthem* (2004) among others, reflect the political scenarios in the country at one stage or another. Some others like *Igodo* (1999), *The Return* (2003), *Widow* (2007), *World Apart* (2004), *Last Ofala* (2002), *Coronation* (2004) explore the day to day living issues of the populace from the traditional and cultural perspectives. Also included in the 'lived-in' situational representations of the films are those that reflect the religious tendencies of groups like the Catholic, Muslim, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches. Among the films that explore religion are for example, *Bless Me* (2005), *Power to Bind* (2003), *Tribulation* (2007), *21 Days in Christ* (2005), and a lot more. Especially some of these films are read thematically in the course of this study to underscore these 'lived-in' situations.

Respondents in this study's primary research argued that filmic representations draw a lot of inferences from their societal cultures and socio-political realities. They argue that political and religious issues as they happen in the Nigerian polity get represented in the films, as well as differences in race and worship styles. Answers that betray this sentiment in the focus-group sessions include statements like, 'Nollywood talks about Nigerians [..], even their religions', 'they give us information about what is happening around us [...] and how we live [...]', 'it teaches a lot about our [Nigerian] cultures; even those of the North and their religions [...]; how poor or rich we are, and at times they imitate Hollywood', 'It exposes what is happening [...] and how they can affect us tomorrow'. By these findings, respondents corroborate Okome's view that 'popular audience negotiate and restate their desires, aspirations and dreams without fear of institutional intrusion. This [Nollywood's] pragmatic method of telling the social and economic concerns of the abject gradually builds up into neighbourhood feelings [...] often left unattended in the larger political dispensation of the state' (Okome, 2007: 9). Thus, audiences believe that the represented cultures have something to do with their society and negotiate their place and positions through the films. Answers as enunciated above show that respondents are abreast with the structures of the society, their cultures and institutional lifestyles and are able to interpret the codes once they see them in films. In one of the sessions, one undergraduate said, 'the films are based on our traditions, ancient and modern [...]; even today, you see how the police do their duties at check points, how traditional rulers, politicians, pastors and priests do their jobs [...] without joining them' as already seen.

Nollywood film producers depend on what locations offer in natural settings before they invest in building [artificial] film sets. At times, natural streets, ordinary road users, market women and usual church congregations are brought into the texts, similar to the neo-realist style of representations of the West, in the films of the 1940s and 1950s.[9] Bob Manuel Udokwu highlights this when he said, 'of course, we build sets. Sometimes we use existing structures like beautiful houses which are modern day homes that people actually built; flashy cars that are actually owned by our people; and not some computer generated stuff. So, Nollywood is part and parcel of the people's life, and there is no way

you can remove the stories from the culture of the people'. Thus, the filmmakers have a way of bringing current themes and locales of villages and towns they represent into films. Haynes and Okome argue that 'the video-films in the aggregate do a remarkable job of conveying the country's immensity and diversity' (2000: 88). For Nwachukwu 'those produced in the North reflect the Hausa, Islamic and other cultures of the Northern states; the Igbo films are produced in South-East, and utilize the tradition of Igbo theatre practices, while the Yoruba films which are produced in the South-West, mirror the ethnic tradition of the Yoruba travelling theatre' (2003: 135). Suffice to say then that in the light of the different ethnic production centres in Nigeria currently (see appendix I), 'there is the rising argument about what constitutes the Nigerian film. Is it the Igbo film, the Hausa film or the Yoruba film? Or yet still, is one talking about the English film in Nigeria?' (Dul, 2006).

A quick response to this [ongoing debate] lies in observing the modes of production of these films as well as their dominant themes. These are generally related despite emerging from different ethnic production areas. Nollywood is all of the Nigerian films put together. Since a lot of things are classified in Nigeria according to tribes and ethnic tendencies, Nollywood films are not isolated from this, especially in considering the competitiveness that surrounds Nigerian businesses around the country from different ethnic centers. The filmmakers follow the same framework of production in all sectors of the Nigerian nation. They reflect the lived-in situations of Nigerians and represent issues that many Nigerians and other Africans can relate to despite their production backgrounds. As Kunzler argues, they affect Africans more than other foreign films (Kunzler, ibid: 10). They emerge from what Richard Mofe Damijo[10] calls 'real genuine stories about the cultural experience of the people, exemplified by Elechi Amadi's book that is translated into film, *The Concubine* (2006), and Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) also adapted into a film in 1986 (Damijo, 2007).

2.4 Ethnicity in Nigeria and Nollywood

Ethnicity is 'a creation of the Nigerian colonial state [...] tied to the forceful bringing together of various peoples, economies and polities by Britain, and defining them as Nigerians' (Obi, 2001: 17). This is to say that before the advent of colonialism, what is today called Nigeria existed as 'individual nations' or 'nationalities' that had trade and neighbourly relationships with each other. With the divide and rule policies of the colonialists, political administrative blocks were created and regions were mapped out from one another. These regions eventually grew into protecting their own interests; hence tribal tendencies were enacted and are the reason of ethnicities in Nigeria.

Nigeria as a geo-political entity came into existence in 1914. This was 'when the British amalgamated three of the West African colonial territories: the colony of Lagos, the Southern Nigeria protectorate and the Northern Nigeria protectorate' (Gannon, 2006: 266). These three regions are principally the Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa speaking areas of the country respectively (Obi, 2001: 17). Even though they cannot stand for the majority of other minorities *per se*, they are the main regional poles around which political powers rotate in the country. For this reason, representations are made of Nigeria from the context of these three zones in Nollywood films.

Generally from 'the late 1940s, particularly after the Macpherson (colonial) constitution of 1951, which laid a federal basis for the nationhood of the ethnically plural Nigeria, on the basis of unity in diversity, all the groups started to organize for power' (Obi, 2001: 18). This became the basis for the struggle to win political posts. For this reason, the Nigerian media often caricature politics as a struggle for the 'sharing of the national cake', meaning, drawing from the national resources with a view to enriching oneself and one's tribe. Apparently the pre-colonial political parties that originated from the different regions of the country then charted tribal sentiments after their specific ethnicities. Commenting on this, Obi highlights that 'ethnicity was a tool of the elite both for competing and for co-operating for the capture of power, and for dividing the masses of the people that had begun to protest the inequalities of colonial capitalism' (Obi, ibid: 17). It is arguably against the backdrop of ethnic sentiments as enunciated above that the

political powers of the day agreed to federalism as a system of government for Nigeria which is currently in place. Remarkably Jinadu highlights this more:

> Federalism as system of concurrent regimes therefore developed in Nigeria in response to problems of governance created by this ethnic configuration. It is deliberately structured to provide the legal superstructure within which the various ethnic fractions of the political class seek access to state power, with a view to controlling or influencing its exercise (1985: 73).

In the 1980s and 1990s, civil unrests and riots characterized the Nigerian nation under the military rule of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida and late General Sani Abacha which pushed arguments along ethnic lines. Jega outlines that these leaders were even considered to be pro-ethnically minded which attracted a barrage of media outcry against them. 'They [were] accused of using their control of state power to promote Islam, at the expense of Christianity, and to provide federal jobs and contracts to Northerners and/or Hausa-Fulanis at the expense of the Southerners, and/or Yorubas, Igbos, and so on' (Jega, 2000: 33). The issue of ethnicity therefore is still significant in Nigeria, hence, this research discusses the country as a nation of multi-ethnic cultures, religions and languages but concentrates on the Igbo variations of these aspects. Jega suggests that 'identities based on religion, ethnicity, regionalism and communalism, which are essentially "given" rather than "chosen" have existed since the creation of Nigeria' (Ibid, 32). In other words, they are part of what constitutes Nigeria as a political entity. Ethnic differences manifest themselves in a lot of ways in the everyday life of Nigerians. If this is not through tribal facial markings, it is through religion, language, fashion, dance, or food. For Mustapha, 'apart from politics, religion, dialect, culture and facial marks were used to distinguish members of one ethnic group from others, particularly before independence in 1960' (2000: 7). Gannon argues this further to highlight that 'in the past, facial markings were used [...]. Their primary purpose was to identify friend or foe in warfare, rather than to serve as bodily decoration' (2001: 268). These marks were in the form of tattoos or strong lines on the chin or upper arms that were ethnically implicative.

The problem of ethnicity in Nigeria is diverse and contextualized. It does not only emphasize geographical locations but also unique cultural practices. Hall argues that ethnicity 'acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextualized' (1996: 162) in it. This construction of identity is the primary force behind every ethnicity and communalistic practices, especially in primordial African values or what Geertz calls 'primordial ties and attachments' (Geertz, 1996: 8). By this he implies 'being protective of all the assumed "givens" of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connections mainly, but beyond them, the "givenness" that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a langauge, and following particular social practices' (Geertz, 1996: 41). In representing Nigerian cultures, Nollywood films underscore tribal and national concerns and perspectives. They therefore 'invoke an implicit sense of shared destiny as they contemplate the social relations through which "nation" is constituted' (Akudinobi, 2001: 139) in Nigeria. Shared social destiny and practices inform our definition of communalistic culture in this exercise and is made explicit in this research by the study of five chosen Igbo rituals. As Gannon argues, 'just as the market place is clearly divided into sections by commodity and into subgroups by market associations, so too, is the Nigerian society clearly delineated by ethnic and language differences [...], just as the separate commodity sections form an integral whole to serve a common clientele, so, too, does the Nigerian society try to forge a national identity out of the widely diverse ethnic groups' (Gannon, ibid: 267/268). Some of the films that represent ethnic tensions in the country include *Battle of love*, *Across the Niger* and *Laraba*.

Particulary *Battle of love* by Simi Opeoluwa chronicles family love in the middle of the Nigeria- Biafra civil war event of the 1967 -1970 from ethnic perspectives. It is the story of Dubem, a major in the Nigeria Army before the war, residing in the Muslim North who got faced with difficulties in a war brewed with ethnic passions. Originally he was married to a Hausa woman, Habiba, with whom he shared life in the North until the war started. Especially the Igbos were been massacred in the North by Northern militia men

in revenge of a coup d'etat they thought the Igbos masterminded which claimed most of their [Northern] military service chiefs. Dubem was torn between running for safety to Biafra, his potential new nation and remaining with his wife and family in the North and risk being killed by other Hausa militia men. Faced with circumstances like these, he decided to escape secretly but was unfortunate to be captured by some Hausa soldiers under the leadership of his sworn [Hausa] enemy, Bako, who branded him a Biafran spy. Thus, ethnic issues in this film like in many others showcase the tension represented in Nollywood that made Okoye argue that 'as long as this divisive mindset is nourished, a national identity will continue to elude the imagined community known as Nigeria' (2007: 9).

To illustrate the point of when national themes are the mainstay of these films, what Erikson states of the role of film can arguably be applied to Nollywood too. He states that 'film stresses cultural similarity of its adherents and by implication, it draws boundaries vis-a-vis others, who thereby become outsiders' (1996: 30). In Nollywood films like *Across the Niger* (2004) and *Not Without My Daughter*, the pervasive issue of ethnicity in Nigeria is being problematized as well in relation to cross-ethnic marriages. In *Across the Niger*, Kanayo (the groom) faces objections of his family in bidding to marry a lady from the North since both of them are of different ethnic groups. *Little Angel* (2004) starring teenager-celebrity Sharon Ezeamaka (Jessica Agbor) as the protagonist makes another visual representation of romantic lives in Nigerian homes and secondary school levels while interrogating ethnic differences in relationships. In a way it moralizes the society on the family upbringing of children in the country while calling attention to liberality in terms of marriages across ethnic boundaries. Being a diligent daughter of a well to do young family, Jessica could define her life as richly blessed more than other families but was left to die miserably since her parents were cut off from family ties after marriage and had no one practically to come to their rescue or that of Jessica after a ghastly motor accident.

The film begins with a wide angle shot of the honey moon romances of Ekpeyong Bassey and Oge Okoye, the yet-to-be parents of Jessica, in a deserted but lovely beach of a quiet

city. Playing and chasing themselves round the plantation trees and swimming pools makes viewers guess the direction of the love act which invariably came to light when both friends were seen negotiating with their individual families on the prospects of marrying each other. To this, there are similar objections from both parties on the basis of tribal differences, except for the support of Bassy's grandmother. Here, the stereotypical trend of tribes arguing against one another is been played out where the Igbos in this film wondered why Bassey should be contracting marriage with a girl from Cross River state, considered as primitive and less developed.

Little Angel is a romantic film that problematizes the sudden turn of events in life when things seem to be going well. With much love for each other, the newly wedded family was at the moment of glory when they decided to visit the village and appreciate Bassey's grandmother when unfortunately they had an accident. This marked the turn of events for Jessica who dropped out of school as a teenage girl and could not have any person to contact to help pay her mum's hospital bills or bury her father who got killed in the incident. Here, this film depicts Jessica as a teenage heroine who sold all her toys and starved herself to buy food for her sick mother. In this context, the issue of divine justice is been once again questioned as to how God in his silence could allow these woes befall little Jessica, who by the merit of this film can rightly be described as a 'little angel'. Just at the verge of looking out for her family relatives, she stepped on a loosely dropped nail and was infected with tetanus that killed her a few days later with her mum lying unconscious in the hospital without the knowledge of any one else, but the doctor and the viewer.

Directed by Dickson Iroegbu, *Little Angel* is one other Nollywood film that problematizes ethnic tensions and childcare difficulties in the Nigerian society. While it enthrones the need for tolerance for ethnic tribes, it also challenges the idea of lack of health care emergency policies in Nigeria currently especially for the less privileged members of the society. Suffice to say that what the issue of ethnicities highlights is that the films do attract home audiences by playing out symbols that resonate with their stories. In this way, the landscape, attire, food and music are unique indicators of these

cultural representations in the films. Commenting on this, Haynes states that, 'ethnicity is an example of a submerged issue that the Nigerian videos may help us to see, since ethnicity is a basic (though not a simple) structuring principle of Nigerian video film production and ethnic politics in Nigeria are very much out in the open' (2000: 10).

Most Nollywood films are encoded with these ideological frame of mind that reflects their proximate backgrounds in the Nigerian cultures and by watching them, an indigenous audience can easily decipher if the encoder is playing out some national themes and concerns, or representing the Hausa symbols and their belief systems, if not the Yoruba folklore and Lagos life experiences or the Igbo business deals and family matters. Thus, in this context, the films have signature characteristics that give Nollywood its unique aesthetics and a depth of significances as we shall now see.

2.5 Nollywood Aesthetics

Characteristically, Nollywood films showcase a particular kind of film quality that revives cultures by resonating with audiences and telling their stories of where they are coming from and where they are going; with their ancestors in the past and symbolic community leaders leading them onto the future. This re-creates memories and makes viewers relive their cultural experiences. Culture is one essential edifice upon which Nollywood filmic storylines are set and characterizes the aesthetic qualities we shall be exploring here. Brereton's *Hollywood Utopia* points to what could be called the underlying ingredients and the significant characteristics of films to attract audience's pleasure when he states that, 'class, race, and gender issues cannot be avoided within film, and in any case, these more obvious constituents are necessary to attract audiences' attention and drive the narrative forward' (2005: 42). For this, film aesthetic most frequently implies a sense of place and fluidity of perspectives that accompany the imagery and make storylines pleasurable to audiences. Writing on this, Willemen identifies the aesthetic form of narrative in Western film culture as the aesthetic of the hero, while that of Third Cinema is not. He argues thus: 'it starts with a hero, develops with a hero, and ends with a hero. This is as natural a style as breathing. Every shot and

sequence of shots is governed and orchestrated around this principle. Any other character, place or decor is recognized and made visible only in relation to the hero. The hero occupies the foreground and hovers over the background – the entire screen is his or her domain' (1998: 60).

While most Nollywood films follow this trajectory of Western film culture by somewhat mimicking Hollywood, the nature of Nollywood film aesthetics generally differs from that of Hollywood. Nollywood, which creditably falls under the class of 'Third Cinema', is imbued with an overall cultural identity and symbolization of both oral and written literature that form the narrative device (Diawara, 1989: 199). Thus, while 'the primary determinants of the Western aesthetic project are verified round the elements of beauty, transcendence, order, perception/reception, the creative principles of criticism, values, authorship (genius), taste and historical definitions' (Taylor, 1989: 98), Third Cinema, for instance Nollywood, focuses instead on the story mainly, as opposed to the actions of the heroes. The 'open-ended nature of the films, which accounts for the consideration of everyday life helps to compose its aesthetic, wherein, the memorability of work has much to do with both the intellectual stimulation of one as well as his or her sense of what is emancipatory aesthetics' (Teshome, 1989: 61).

By 'memorability', Teshome speaks of Third Cinema (such as Nollywood), as 'a guardian of popular memory, record of visual poetics, folklore and mythology, and above all, the testimony of existence and struggle' (1989: 61). This is seen also in the light of what Walsh in *The Media in Africa and Africa in the Media* says is needed in explaining African film themes and aesthetics. According to him, these 'should be theories which can account for the various, often widely different and original African applications of imaging and recording technologies. The resulting experience and how these in turn are encountered and made sense of in radically different contexts and societies indicates this aesthetics' (1996: X).

The dynamics of this aesthetics (identified by African and Nigerian societal contexts), lies in the ability of doing an examination of both the oral and literate cultures, which brings to light in the films, the concept of 'space' and 'time' (Teshome, 1989: 44). While

the literate culture would include the use of writing skills and developed media technologies, that of orality implies what Ugbojah refers to as 'folk media' in the African and Nigerian contexts and what Ong calls 'second orality' (1982: 45). Folk media are grounded on indigenous cultures and aesthetics produced and consumed by members of the group. They reinforce the values of the group and are the visible cultural features that often are quite strictly conventional, by which social relationship and worldviews are maintained and defined. They take on many forms and are rich in symbolisms (Eilers, 1992: 127) which is a central feature of Nollywood's productions. Mmost Nollywood films share in the quality of good films which Richard explains when he submits that 'a good film gives the viewer something important to consider in the opening sequences: background information about characters, or an image helpful for interpreting the story' (Richard, 2006: 78).

Between space and time, cultures and traditions acquire a unique identification within the society they define. In Nollywood aesthetics, the sense of spatial orientation, as argued by Teshome, 'arises out of the experience of an "endless" world of the Third World mass. The nostalgia for such a vastness of nature, resulting most often in long wide shots, are done to constitute a part of an overall symbolization of the ecological environment. By this is meant, that the landscape as depicted, ceases to be mere land or soil and acquires a phenomenal quality which integrates humans with the general drama of existence itself' (1989: 33). This preponderance of wide angle shots of longer durations in Third Cinema, exemplified by Nollywood, also foregrounds 'a viewer's sense of community and how people themselves "fit" in to nature' (Teshome, 1989: 45). Typical of this aesthetics is illustrated in the film closure captured in the appendix G of this thesis.

African films as ecologically centered represent this idea of nature by the usage of wide shots of immediate ordinary environments and peoples in their normal circumstances. Emphasizing this point, Barlet argues that in African films, 'the camera embraces landscapes and bodies, setting them in both their geographical and political environments. The African space, which is often filmed in panoramic long shots, is indissoluble from passing time. Thus, still shots of landscapes, sunsets or people standing still have nothing

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static about them. They represent time – the time of the narrative or the time the narrative subtends, a vision of the world registered in movement' (2000: 173).

By being part of nature, film's representations and presentations of natural aesthetics, which Nollywood particularly captures depict the human person as one at home with the environment. Berry sees in this the vocation of mankind and recommends ecological preservation as a remedy to humanity's lost sense of harmony with nature (1988: 2). In this way, the general question of approach to Nollywood films is both ecological and cosmological. There is the mythologization of events and the mythifications of human stories that renew both the popular memory and the folkloric thinking of the people's culture in Third Cinema. Corroborating this view, Ogundele states that in Nollywood particularly, 'the world of folktale is a world of fantasy in which animals and inanimate objects take on anthropomorphic attributes, in which human beings acquire non-human features and both interact on a more or less equal basis of existence. It is also the world of witches and wizards who may be benevolent or malevolent, depending on circumstances. But above all, it is a morally idealized world in which, eventually good is rewarded and evil is punished' (Ogundele, 2000: 100).

However, while being descriptive of Africa's cosmological thought patterns, the folkloric notion of films is not restricted to Nollywood alone as a unique characteristic. Scholars like Propp and Levi-Strauss[11] have underpinned folklores as well in Hollywood and other Western mainstream films. But suffice to say that the interest here is not on the narrative theory of filmic representations as these authors used to explore Western representations, but on the anthropological depictions of African [Igbo] philosophy and thought as seen in their communalism which buttresses more or less, the aesthetic cultural elements of these films.

2.6 Communalistic Representations in Nollywood

Like every other part of Africa, Nigerians believe that 'man is a product of a universe in which all energy and everything is interconnected, born out of a "primal force" which has spread a little of itself into all it has generated' (Barlet, 1996: 84/85). By this is meant

that Africans generally believe in a world that is unified between all beings, whether material, spiritual or metaphysical. Thus, for Onwubiko, 'the world of Africans is one of inanimate, animate, and spiritual beings and there is the influence of each category of these beings in the universe in which they inhabit' (1991: 3). This inhabited universe according to Nwoga is a 'space' which is a field of action and not just a location made up of discrete physical distances and separate physical spaces. *Ala mmuo* (spirit world) and *ala mmadu* (human world) according to him, are the plains of spirit action and of human action, and these need not be physically separated. It 'is the non-separation of these entities in physical terms that makes interaction between the various worlds possible so that spirits and their activities impinge on realities that are seen in the human and the physical' (Nwoga, 1984: 36). It is this view of 'non-separability' of the two worlds that is expressed in films like *Things Fall Apart*[12] (1986) and many other African and Nollywood films where there is the constant tendency to consult the oracles (spirits) before taking up communal obligations which is part of African ontology.

The spirit world is seen to be part of the human world and the mediators between these worlds are culturally called the chief priests or *Dibia* in the Igbo speaking part of Nigeria and *Babalawo* in the Yoruba area of the nation. Significantly in both literature and film adaption of *Things Fall Apart,* the reality of this worldview is concretely represented. In the description of who the earth goddess or *Ani/Ala* (as called in Igbo language) is, and what role she plays in the life of people as a local deity in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe writes: '*Ani* played a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. And what is more, she was in close communication with the departed fathers of the clan whose bodies had been committed to earth' (Achebe, 1958: 221).

In the adapted film of this novel, the elders often meet in consultation with communal deities like *Ani,* the earth goddess and *Amadioha,* the god of thunder, in order to carry out communal duties. This is the case before the funeral rites of Ogbuefi Ezeudu, for instance, in the film, *Things Fall Apart,* and in *Igodo: The Land of The Living Dead,* when the community experienced massive deaths as a consequence of the wrath of the gods. The

role of the traditional priest in these village ontologies is therefore significant in every community, since he or she bridges the gap between the real and the supernatural worlds, striving to sustain peace and harmony between all members (Kalu, 1994: 52).

In other films from the Yoruba and Hausa ethnic zones, this social reality of Africa's deep ecology is also expressed. Oha comments that despite the conversion to Christianity of most Yoruba people, 'many Yoruba Christians do not doubt the power of the *babalawo'* (Oha, 2002: 121–142). He asserts this because, given religious indoctrinations that most converts receive, each and every one is expected to renounce belief in traditional deities as utterly 'paganistic' and unfounded. But by not doing so, following Oha's argument, it can be said that the cultural tenets of African ontologies and traditions are still strong among the people despite religious evangelizations, western education, and colonial administrations that overturned most of them at the period of colonialism. The film *Sango* (1997) by Femi Lasode particularly dramatizes Yoruba cosmology in its representations of communalistic [folkloric] communications. In this film, the story is told of *Sango*, the traditional king of the old Oyo kingdom with spiritual powers that helped him win battles. Being an epic film equipped with cultural costumes, deep mystical powers of the gods and evocative sound tracks, this film reveals in great depths the idea of African ontology in its richness in terms of communication between the human and spirit worlds. Similar to *Sango'*s deep ecological representations of African ontology are other Nollywood movies like *Igodo* (1999) and the *Festival of Fire* (1999), which focus not only on the relationship between the world of humans and the spirits in African worldviews but also emphasize how human activities are guided by the dictates of the gods. Instances of these types of activities in the films and the practical manner of behaviour in Africa makes Moemeka (1998) argue that Africans communicate communalistically. By this claim he refers to indices of cultural communalism in people's daily lifestyles. In both verbal and non-verbal communications he believes that, 'communalistic acts are engaged in to confirm, solidify and promote social order. In such cultures, communication is always a question of attitude towards one's neighbour […] closely tied to communication rules designed to ensure communal social order' (1998: 133).

Almost all human activities that are done repeatedly with devotion can be described as rituals. The key term in the action is the routine of repeatability which can be daily, monthly, annually or otherwise. But particularly in this study, the notion of rituals is taken from the definitions offered by scholars like Turner (1969), Rothenbuhler (1998), and Real (1996). By extension of their notion to Igbo cosmology, this study discusses the five chosen communalistic rituals celebrated locally, especially to mark cultural events tribally or mythically. Some of these are enlisted in the appendix D of this research with their dates and places and cultural significances. Yet, a guiding principle in the entire discussion of ritual processes and events is the highlight of Geertz in interpreting Turner's notion of 'social dramas' [rituals] on all levels of social organization from state to family. Geertz argues that: 'rooted as it is in the repetitive performance dimensions of social action – the reenactment and thus the re-experiencing of the known form – the ritual theory, not only brings out the temporal and collective dimensions of such action and its inherently public nature with particular sharpness, it brings out also its power to transmute not just opinions but, […] the people who hold them (Geertz, 1973: 28). This is what the art of producing and viewing 'rituals' in Nollywood films does to viewers who resonate with them and is the bedrock of this thesis on ritual communalistic communication.

Communication rules as implied by Moemeka are not written or documented rules, but cultural norms or civic manners as observed in African communalistic society. Primarily, they are symbolic rules and might differ from one ethnic community to another. For instance, the greeting patterns of young people to the elderly differ between the Yoruba and Igbo of Nigeria. While the Igbo bow gently before the elders or highly placed individuals as greeting patterns, the Yoruba prostrate before the elders they greet. Generally, both cultures therefore are communalistic and observe the social norms of greeting patterns, but symbolically in different ways. Gannon captures this in the life of Nigerians when he reiterates that 'aspects of the Nigerian culture that have survived colonialism and modern influences largely intact include seniority and authority relationships, social roles and status, a rigid class structure (where it existed), orientation

to time, view of work, early socialization, the extended family system, and traditional festivals' (2001: 278). Communalism generally aims at achieving a common ground for people which is what Okafor identifies as the basis of coming to live together. According to him, 'the end of the state, the objective for which men come together to form this association is to promote the temporal well-being of its members' (1984: 287). It is the people's culture which defines and binds them together in unity. It is that which graphically tells of the people's beliefs, ethos, mores and all other shared meanings. Therein the unity or disunity of a people is easily dictated especially through their rituals (Uwah, 2005: 83). Communalism captures the eco-system that operates in African cosmology which serves as a core attribute of most Nollywood filmic storylines which this study explores. Moemeka defines it as 'a social structure that is holistically inclusive' (1998: 119); while Eboh sees it as 'where the individual and the community are considered as a whole in an unbroken interdependence' (2004: 163). Ccommunalism therefore is a rich site of cultural values and symbols especially in the context of rituals in Africa and Nigeria in particular which Nollywood has continued to represent in a lot of ways which is one main reason their storylines resonate with audiences' experiences. It is also the main issue this research is showcasing by analyzing its cultural indicators semiotically as seen in Nollywood representations, which is believed to have made films a meaning making site of Nigerian cultures.

This notion is not only applied to communications between individuals and their neighbours but also between human beings and the 'spirit world' as already discussed. Tomaselli, et al. argue this point when they highlight that the 'integration of the spiritual and the material is partly found on oral tradition that many African societies have sustained through the centuries of colonization and westernization [and] filmmakers see their art as commentaries on their societies in order to enlighten people about the contexts of their experiences' (Tomaselli, Shepperson, and Eke, 1995: 32). It is these contexts of experiences that this thesis argues reveal communalism under various shades. In his study of communication in communalistic societies, Moemeka expresses the view that despite huge resources of cultural indices, researchers and theorists have failed to identify the uniqueness of communalism as a fundamental cultural aspect of Africans where

individuals virtually 'lose the self' for the 'welfare of their community' (1998: 119). Okigbo on this note believes that there is the absence of a 'theory-based research in African communication' (Okigbo, 1987: 28) to explain this uniqueness. Realistically therefore, it is this dearth of research into African communication patterns and cultures that makes a study of communalism in Nollywood worthwhile. Even in today's post-colonial African society, communalism can visibly be attested to, especially in the area of kinship and extended family relationships both in real life situations and in Nollywood films. On another level, the concept can arguably be explained as Africa's own affirmation of the values of universalized Christian solidarity and charity which could form a possible subject matter for another research.

However, by kinship relationships is meant that every member of a clan is considered a significant part of a particular lineage that makes up the tribe. Individuals in this context are identified by their ancestral roots and lineage history. For this, Tomaselli, et al. argues that 'reality in the ontological sense can be thought of as incorporating African kinship systems' (Tomaselli, Shepperson, and Eke, 1995; 21). This implies considering individuals as bonded to one another and even genetically related. Mbiti re-echoes this notion by highlighting that, 'it is kinship which controls social relationships between people in a given community: it governs marital customs and regulations, it determines the behaviour of an individual towards another' (Mbiti, 104, quoted in Faniran, 2003: 44). Particularly in Nigeria, the kinship system is communalism in practice in the micro context. Gannon (2001) locates this in the context of extended family relationships in Nigeria. Kinship system and extended family relationships share almost the same boundaries and command the same social behaviours towards others in the kindred, clan, village, tribe and country. For Gannon, 'virtually all of the disparate ethnic groups [in Nigeria] believe in the extended family system' (2001: 270).

In the Igbo speaking area of Nigeria particularly, kindred members are called *umunna* to distinguish them from *umunne* which refers strictly to immediate family members of the same parents. *Umunna* is a translation of the word 'kinship'. It carries within it the notion of neighbourliness, extended family relationships and communal affiliations based on

genealogy. The philosophy of 'unity in diversity' in the Igbo speaking area of Nigeria is founded on the authority of *umunna* which is seen as a communal decree that should be upheld by all. For this reason, the Igbo people often say *Igwebuike*, which means 'unity is strength or power'. And when people gather to agree on an issue of communal concern, it is said that they have spoken with 'one voice' – *otu olu* which implies communalistic approval of whatever is discussed and therefore ought to be upheld by all members of the community as a decree even when it is unwritten.

In communalism, favourable duties are expected to be extended to one another on the basis of commensality and solidarity, which is the pivot around which communalism revolves. For an 'outsider', Gannon offers an allegory to this understanding when he highlights that, 'the extended family is the African parallel of the Western social welfare systems. Members of extended families take care of one another, find jobs for young members, band together to help members in times of sorrow or hardship, intervene to solve marital problems, and come together to celebrate one another's success' (Gannon, 2001: 281). All these are attributes of communalism and build into Igbo cosmology and worldviews. Specifically, in traditional African society, Mbiti underscores that 'communalism implies that the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporally. He owes his existence to the people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole […] and depends on the corporate group' (1969: 108). And it is this connection between the individual and the community that Moemeka refers to as 'entitativity' by which he implies the extent that a set of individuals share a common fate, whereby, what affects one member affects all including the gods and the animals [called 'forces' in African philosophy]. Decoding these communalistic elements in Nollywood representations underpin the assumption of this study that rituals inform these films especially the Nollywood Igbo productions. But let us at this stage underscore the production model of these films before analyzing communalism in them.

2.7 Political Economy in Nollywood

The term production, having its functional roots in economics, necessarily implies the directing, shooting, editing and writing of these films and their subsequent circulations in distribution processes. In other words, by these terms, one refers to the details that go into making a successful film from the pre-production stage to its post production sessions to yield dividends. Thus, technically in every production, 'each shot in the film is continually involved in constructing the relationships which helps the film make sense' (Turner, 2006: 148).

The production procedure of Nollywood differs from those of celluloid filmic types due to the kind of digital technologies used in making them. The major reason for this is the availability and ownership of production studios not by Nollywood, but by individual business merchants. For instance, if 'at the centre of Hollywood production is the studio system like those of the film companies, MGM, Warner Brothers and United Artists that own the studios and distribution networks' (Dutton 1997:18), it is not the same with productions and distributions in Nollywood, where studios are owned by private individuals and filmmaking is in the private sector.

These are studios owned by individuals who are ordinarily business entrepreneurs. They have nothing to do with the film industry particularly, apart from offering their services to film producers who come to them for editing and mass production. Currently, 'Nigerian films outsell Hollywood films in Nigeria and many other African countries. Some 300 producers churn out movies at an astonishing rate—somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 a year. The films go straight to DVD and VCD discs. Thirty new titles are delivered to Nigerian shops and market stalls every week, where an average film sells 50,000 copies. A hit may sell several hundred thousand. Discs sell for two dollars each, making them affordable for most Nigerians and providing astounding returns for the producers' (Cinema of Nigeria, internet source).

The only public studio dedicated to Nollywood is Studio Tinapa, which is yet to be put into use. This was built and launched in Cross River State by the State government, led by the then Governor, Donald Duke, (April, 2007) in an effort to mould his State into a hub for business and leisure tourism in West Africa, according to an online Nigerian

daily newspaper, *This Day*, April 8, 2007. But while this would mean a concerted effort to centralize Nollywood production in a way, such a feat is not yet been actualized. It however marks a development in the instances of support that the industry has started receiving in Nigeria recently. Generally the establishment is part of the entire Tinapa Business resort which according is to be developed in phases and is built in collaboration with Dream Entertainment, a Hollywood based production and distribution company, designed as a one stop shop for Film/Television/Music industry center, providing filming and recording services to local and foreign productions in Nigeria for feature films, TV shows, TV drama and other related productions (*This Day*, Sunday, 8th April 2007, internet source).

Nollywood therefore has no centralized studios at the moment, except that individual producers have their production offices in the major cities in Nigeria, like Lagos in the West, and Onitsha in the East. This means that Nollywood films are dependent on some sort of 'independent productions'. For this reason, the organizers of *The Nollywood Projec*t in the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, assert that;

> the most significant consequence of Nollywood's entrepreneurial
> origins is the autonomy it affords. The industry has never received
> any significant support from the Nigerian government. Neither is it
> dependent on support from the foreign interests that cultivate the
> *Palme d'Or* aesthetics commonly associated with the canonical
> films of African cinema studies. It has arisen free of the dogmas
> of cultural development programmes and adheres to no conditions
> or regulation beyond ownership of the most ordinary kind
> (The Nollywood Project, 2005: internet source).

Nollywood films are produced by using digital video cameras, however sophisticated, to shoot, coupled with editing and writing them directly to videos. By this is also meant, that in general terms, 'there is freedom from some kind of external control, particularly economic and political' (Dutton, 1997: 35). Yet, even though this freedom is a 'credit' and not an 'advantage' to the industry, there are some regulatory processes that must be followed, such as those of the video film censoring board on the policies of the federal government's commission on communications in Nigeria.

The initial breakthrough of the video film industry was made possible by the availability of videotape cassettes, video cameras, and video machines in the Nigerian market. As Dutton observes, 'even though the video tape has been available for professional television productions since the 1950s, it was only in the 1980s that it became widely affordable in the form of video cassette recorders (VCRs) and video camcorders' (1997: 82). In Nigeria, this domestically intended production equipment are [is] deployed in achieving the productions of the Nollywood's video films which corroborates Dutton's argument that 'it is the application of video to independent and domestic production, via the camcorder, that has created the biggest interest. There have always been individuals and groups wishing to film and distribute their own visual records of events or artistic ventures, but with the advent of video technology, the opportunity to engage in "filmmaking" has been available to millions, such is the technical ease and relative cheapness with which videos can be produced' (Dutton, 1997: ibid).

Debates over how much a production costs in Nollywood has been open ended. On the main, it has attracted the attention of people even from outside Nigeria. In introducing his documentary *This is Nollywood,* Franco Sacchi said, 'when I first read about Nigerian directors producing hundreds of feature-length films with digital cameras, a week, and with a few thousand dollars, I found the subject irresistible […]. Unlike Hollywood and Bollywood, Nollywood movies are made on shoe-string budgets of time and money. An average production takes just 10 days and costs approximately US $15,000' (2005). This approximate cost nevertheless, is not consistent for all productions. There are some that are not known to the public. The fact is that video film production is part of the vast informal economy of Africa that avoids dealing with conventional banks because of high interest rates and demands for collateral, and seeks to market products directly so that profits will flow strictly back to the small entrepreneurs and their backers. For this reason, the funding to pay actors and production crews comes at times from individual sponsors, often personal friends and acquaintances that come from the same village or even members of extended families who are successful business men. They invest in the

production with the hope of recouping gains, but also to see their people, their region or even their village projected on video screens (Uwah, 2008: 93).

Generally there is a problem with official statistics about most aspects of media production and consumption in Nigeria (UNESCO Institute for statistics (UIS), 2009: 2). It is hard to conclude how much a particular Nollywood film takes to be produced for instance. Interviews with some Nigerian actors reveal that statistics can be somewhat personal and 'secretive' due to the landscape of Nigerian businesses. For Mildred Okwo, a producer and director, in an interview with Nworah[13] on the film, *30 days* (2006), the answer to a cost of film production in Nollywood is difficult. She states, 'I really don't know the true answer to this question because the Nigerian film industry tends to be so close mouthed about their business dealings. I have heard that it ranges between one million and 10 million naira [that is between US $8, 473 to US $84, 738]. But then again, a film like Jeta Amata's *Amazing Grace*[14] costs so much more than that. So your guess is as good as mine' she concludes. Corroborating this view is Haynes (2007: 3), who in writing on the significance of the 'video boom' in the country stated that, 'legend has it that a few films have sold a quarter of a million copies (about US $2.50 each)'. Thus, between these people, there is the real absence of statistical details either from the government or the financiers.

For Bob Manuel Udokwu, 'the people who are financing these films in Nigeria are business men, entrepreneurs who want to make money. Hence, there is some element of secrecy. Only the makers are the people who know how many copies of their films are produced and how many are sold. They do not publicize this to the general public so that people do not think they made millions. But the framework, the censors' body[15] is trying to put in place has some kind of mechanism to determine how many copies of a film that is sold over a particular period of time' he concludes. From a Western perspective, this is a long way from the standardized model of annual publishing of legal and audited tax returns that is characteristic of not only all cultural products, but also of all business transactions. Richard Mofe Damijo highlighted that the movie financiers are what the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* call merchant investors – who are also known as

the 'Igbo traders' (2007). These are the main stakeholders in Nollywood and there is not yet a mechanism that makes them declare tax returns on their cultural productions or release statistical details[16] to the public. There remains therefore, this problem of lack of accurate financial statistics in Nigeria and Nollywood, not only from the perspective of lack of production details, but also in terms of film distribution and consumption details which more research could help to resolve.

It is not only that the producers of Nollywood films maximize the benefits of the new technologies to these productions; they also create avenues of distribution aided by the internet and tourism. Primarily, the use of English language in most texts as said earlier, affords the industry to cover a wide range of audiences' reception both at home and abroad, coupled with the power of advertisements through the multimedia channel of the web, the print media (newspapers, magazines, posters, and fliers), radio and television. On this note, Aderinokun argues, that Nollywood audiences are scattered all over the world. 'Every film in Nigeria has a potential audience of fifteen million people within the country and about five million outside, but these statistics may be somewhat conservative considering that half of West Africa's 250 million people are Nigerians and according to the World Bank records, slightly over 7 million Nigerians are scattered around the world, most of them in the developed economies' (Aderinokun, 2005: ibid). This means that it is not only in Nigeria, but also all over Africa that Nollywood is making phenomenal impact on audiences. On the general export rate of the films, Haynes opines that 'the export of Nigerian films has been remarkable, even if most of the profits do not end up in the right hands. They are what is on television in Namibia and on sale on the streets in Kenya. In Congo, they are tuned down, while an interpreter tells the story in Lingala or other languages. In New York, Chinese people are buying them. In Holland, Nollywood stars are recognized on the streets by people from Suriname, and in London they are hailed by Jamaicans' (Haynes, 2005: internet source). Thus, there is the democratization of Nigerian films as well as the remediation of public rituals by the films.

The distribution of Nollywood films however has a challenging dimension to it due to piracy and almost ineffective systems to checkmate it. 'To curb piracy, which all media

products are prone to, due to ineffective copyright laws, the distribution system allows for a quick distribution of the films before pirates can copy it. This means that most money is made in the first week after the release of films' (2007: 13) Kunzler highlights. By this he does not signal the problem but re-echoes the *ad hoc* nature of making these films and distributing them within the country. This takes lesser number of days when compared to mainstream film production elsewhere in the West.

The internet particularly makes Nollywood films readily available to audiences all over the world. As a marketing strategy, some websites[17] are designed to review and sell the movies. For this, what Buckingham admits of the use of internet in the West can be applied to Nollywood. Thus, 'the web offers a means of distribution as well, via web streaming of moving images and audio materials' (Buckingham, 2006). Added to the internet are distributions by Nigerian Diaspora and those of the video retail and rental shops, both in Nigeria and elsewhere (see appendix C on films displayed in a rental shop). This means that alongside advertisements through multimedia channels like print (newspapers, magazines, posters, and fliers), radio and television channels,[18] the internet is another channel where films are discussed, reviewed and sold to fans across the globe. Even for the Nigerian Diaspora, the movies are seen as part of a travelling luggage. Ofeimun arguing this states that 'since Nigerians travel a lot, their video films have also been travelling with them (Ofeimun, 2003) which Kunzler believes 'help them cope with nostalgia' (Kunzler, 2007: 13). Since most people travel outside, in search of better job opportunities, they yet continue to seek link with their cultural ties by making use of the nation's media products through identifying with the industry's aesthetic qualities and storylines.

2.8 Genres and Audiences

Paradoxically the production of Nollywood films, like in any other genre[19] based media, is guided by audiences' taste. The producers and directors guide themselves by the desires of audiences in order to recoup investments. Film therefore, as Turner indicates, 'provides us with pleasure in the spectacle of its representations on the screen, in our

recognition of stars, styles, and genres and in our enjoyment of the participation in the film going event itself. Film is a social practice for its makers and its audiences: in its narratives and meanings, we can locate evidence of the ways in which our culture makes sense of itself' (Turner, 2006: 4). By this measure arguably, Nollywood audiences are taken on board to make successful films. This entails fashioning films according to genres that satisfy audiences' pleasure.

Even though some genres in Nollywood may be quite different from standardized mainstream classifications, the movies cover a lot of storylines in diversified categories. Whether it is the Nigerian English films, Igbo, Hausa or Yoruba films, Nwachukwu comments that, 'with a plethora of genres in the new cinema products, Nollywood, set either in the local language with English subtitles or in pidgin English, is successful' (2003: 135).

Suffice to say that like Nwachukwu, this writer believes that with Nollywood currently, 'there is a deliberate attempt to use the film medium as a "voice of the people" and by so doing, a concerted effort to achieve an indigenous film culture distinct from the dominant foriegn commercial cinemas' (2003: 126), especially by means of cultural and national film aesthetics. As argued by O'Connor and Klaus, 'genre classifications as well as (sub-) cultural identity on the basis of class, gender, ethnicity and generation are instrumental in determining the kind and variety of pleasures experienced in the act of viewing (O'Connor, and Klaus, 2000: 370). Nollywood films, this research would argue, achieve pleasure in consumers by representing characteristic qualities of audiences' backgrounds in terms of their ethnicity, history and myths, and thereby give the people their own voice through specific genres. Hence, for this reason, genres practically enable the generation of movie meanings and do not hinder them. As Lapsey attests, 'genre provides a field for variation and elaboration of meaning and do not undermine them. It is not something that imprisons but something that allows freedom in productions and choices of what to view' (Lapsley, 1988: 107).

This notion of audiences' pleasure in Nollywood films generally rests on resonance with filmic storylines and their proximity to cinematic locations and settings as was articulated in the focus-group interviews of this study. But suffice to say that like Lull's view of television, Nollywood films have come to direct attentions to things family audiences discuss about. Lull argues that 'television does not give families something to talk about, it guides their attention toward particular topics and because families like to gather in front of the screen, the viewing situation is a convenient social setting in which to talk and otherwise to communicate' (1990: 148).

The audiences in Nollywood can be said to interact fundamentally with filmic texts at home or anywhere. Since the films are products of their cultures and traditions, Adedeji highlights audience's pleasure and participation when he states that, 'the audience in the [Yoruba theatre] reacts by participation. They provide endings to proverbs, take up the chorus of chants and punctuate stories with exclamations or interjections and approbations. The occasion of an assembly in a [...] community calls for the use of the resources of oral tradition and once the audiences' experience is evoked, they show aesthetic pleasure in the widespread participation' (1971: 142).

As a matter of fact, the context of viewing these films can vary depending on where one is at a time. But the main modes of consumption as understood here are family viewership and video parlour consumption. This is not being prescriptive, but to underscore the dominant patterns of audiences' interactions with texts, especially given the availability of new domestic technologies in the country. Emergent from the focus-group primary research of this study is the fact that most people watch films at home on television screen with either the DVD or VCD machines. Generally, there are two main ways of consuming Nollywood films in Nigeria. These are: the in-house and rental club consumption modes (Kunzler, 2007: 11). While in the home consumption, family members gather in private or sometimes in public to watch the films; in the rental clubs people pay to join others to see movies in the bars otherwise called video clubs. The third version of consumption that might be considered is that of cinema attendance which is less popular compared to others and does not merit being included here since most

Nollywood productions are on VCD and DVD formats rather than in cinema standardized forms. Added to this is also the fact that there is no constant power supply in Nigeria at the moment and most cinema halls are dilapidated due to inappropriate maintenance over the years; even though recently efforts are being made by stakeholders to resuscitate the cinema culture especially in the major cities like Lagos and Abuja as we shall fully highlight later.

Okome nevertheless analyzed only two sites in his Nollywood's 'sites of consumption' which he limited to 'street corners' and 'video parlours'. By both 'street corner' and 'video parlour sites', one would think he means to explain the view that viewers and audiences 'come together' in front of video and music stalls either along the street or in a room that is equipped with a television set and video recorder respectively called 'video parlour'. While according to him, no fees are paid on the 'street corners' context of seeing films, a small amount of fee is charged in a video parlour context (2007: 2 – 17).

The video parlour 'is a simple location where members of a community congregate for the sole purpose of consuming video narratives [...]. The essential quality that it must possess is that it has room enough to take in people who are willing to pay a small fee to see video films with other members of the community' (Okome, 2007: 7), while the 'street viewing' has no fee attached and can be beside any shop or stall depending on where a television set is brought outside for passers-by to see. Sometimes, such television sets are owned by electronics repairers who carry out their works on the pavements of their workshops or they are owned by film rental shops that use them to test videos for sale to avoid selling pirated copies to customers.

In all of these however, this study brings in both 'street viewing' and 'video parlour viewing' (video club viewing) under the context of 'watching video films in groups' or family viewing context as discussed earlier. However, while acknowledging 'street corner viewing' context as significant, it is right to underscore that such is only an *ad hoc* site for the consumption of these films and is not treated separately in this study. This again is to showcase the notion that most movies are watched in groups and relaxed

family circumstances which is implied by Gannon's highlight that in Nigeria, 'the favourite way to relax is to be in the company of friends who can trade war stories about the vagaries of daily life, pass on the latest social gossip, and solve the country's problem' (2001: 274).

Okome's argument on the 'street sites' is however illustrative of another context of Nollywood consumption in Nigeria, apart from mainstream 'home viewing' and 'video parlour' patterns. But even though these are *ad hoc* sites, implying as he said that 'audiences come together in front of video and music stalls [...] main outlets for the rental of video and music cassettes' (2007: 7), they are indications that street businesses such as watching films and football matches on roadside screens especially by passers-by and petty traders or apprentices is commonplace in the major cities of the country. They can leave as fast as they stand to watch the films or sports depending on the generousity of the television owner and how he or she intends to use it in business. For this reason, we have not grouped 'street corners' alongside the mainstream contexts of Nollywood's consumption sites.

Again, making use of the VCR/VCD/DVD in conjunction with the television set is the main mode of consuming Nollywood and other films in Nigeria. This means that these technologies do occupy the same space and position within the home's structural arrangement. According to Lull, 'the space in which families live, has a cultural significance that differs from country to country and from family to family within nations' (Lull, 1990: 156). Generally therefore, the understanding of genre does not limit Nollywood's production-freedom but allows for the creativity of filmmakers and the elicitation of audiences' pleasure for particular movies. It is what Turner refers to as a 'system of codes, conventions and visual styles which enables audiences determine rapidly and with some complexity, the kind of narrative they are viewing' (Turner, 2006: 119). In Nollywood, while some films characteristically stand alone in their categories, many others overlap two or more genres together. In the select filmography of this research, these elements are seen to play out in the texts analyzed where genres constitute an essential factor in the consumption attitudes of the audiences of Nollywood films.

2.9 The [Nollywood] Igbo Films

The Igbo society is one out of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. They live in the South-East of the country and are mainly Christians and a few traditional religious worshippers. About eighteen million to twenty million Nigerians speak the Igbo language. The Igbos are diversified in their films and the themes are representational of stories that resonate with people's experiences and mostly their rituals as analyzed in this study. The present Igbo society is what Barber calls a 'transitional society'. In this context she refers to significant perceptions and mentalities formed by external influences and variables that have played roles in the dynamics of the society which include the slave trade, colonization, amalgamation of the present day Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914, external economic and social relations, trade, missionaries, education, first and second world wars, independence and the Nigerian-Biafran war of 1967 -1970. (Barber, 1997: 184).

The Igbo society arguably is the cradle of the new Nollywood industry with the screening of the first Nollywood and Igbo film, *Living in Bondag*e (1992), by an Igbo man, Kenneth Nnebue. This is very much distinguished from the history of the old celluloid filmmaking practices in Nigeria in the 1970s and 1980s before the advent of new media technologies that are mainly used in Nollywood as seen already in Chapter one. Igbo films have many distinguishing characteristics from both Yoruba and Hausa films. For Ekwuazi, this is seen in 'their themes, their high imaginative intensity and their ability to communicate at a level that immediately holds the emotions spring from a particular Igbo matrix' (2000: 133). These 'Igbo films encode responses to modernity, urbanism and so on, that are specifically African, Nigerian, and Igbo. Thus, they are an expression of the Igbo's aggressive commercial mentality, whose field of activity is Nigeria's cities and not only the Igbo cities' (Haynes and Okome, 2000: 76).

Most Igbo films are set in English language (more than the Yoruba and Hausa tribes), with a few in Igbo language. This is one factor that gives the films an edge over others as they reach wider audiences both within and outside of Nigeria and constitute mainly what

non-national audiences outside Nigeria understand as Nollywood films. But on the contrary to this argument, another dimension is that many think the Igbo filmmakers are not adequately promoting Igbo language and cultures but betraying them at the wake of much touted neocolonial imperialism unlike the Hausa and Yoruba. According to Haynes 'Hollywood is frequently invoked as the model or inspiration of the Igbo and English language filmmakers. Partly, this refers to the attempt by dynamic and modern operators to create a proper entertainment industry, aspiring to the technical capacity to copy the look of at least the minor Hollywood genres' (2000: 75). This view of Haynes indicates the class of Igbo films among other Nigerian productions. Most of the products are shot in English with universal themes that make them acceptable commercial goods both at home and abroad. For Nwachukwu, among the Nigerian films, 'the most prolific and most developed are the Igbo and Yoruba film practices' (2003: 135). This study concentrates on the Nollywood Igbo films mainly to discuss the five significant Igbo rituals: *Iri-ji* (new yam festival), *Ime-oji* (presentation and breaking of kola-nut), widowhood rituals and funeral rites, ritualized symbolic Dancing, and the ritual or worship and religious sacrifices.

2.10 Chapter Conclusion

The impacts of colonialism affected the development of many projects in Africa, both positively and negatively. In the area of film productions however, colonialism was less favourable to the early African attempts on independent filmmaking practices, especially in the Anglophone Africa, for instance, Nigeria. Given the availability of new digital technologies and reduced dependencies on the West for sponsorships, the Nollywood film industry emerged in Nigeria as a new cultural artifact of 'Third Cinema' that encodes films after the socio-cultural experience of the people.

In this chapter also, we have spelt out the fact that Nollywood movies share the same Third Cinema ideologies of cultural nationalism and lived-in situational characteristics and themes that reflect people's worldviews and experiences. In its context we discover that while the films interrogate cultures, they are also been influenced by these cultures,

hence there is a significant interface between especially the Igbo cultures [rituals] and the films. In the next subsection, we shall be exploring how scholars and audience reception researchers have analyzed this interplay, not only between the texts and cultures, but also between representations and audiences. In other words, our concern is to underpin the kind of reception studies that have underlined Nollywood across the few years of its existence in history.

ENDNOTES

[1]Nollywood production centers are mainly located across the country between the three major regional blocks. These are the North, the East and the West, otherwise called the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo geographical zones. Nwachukwu (2003), Haynes (2000) and Kunzler (2007) attest to this phenomenon in Nigeria while articulating ethnic differences at the production backgrounds of the films. In appendix I, these production centers are presented and marked within Nigerian map as explored in this work.
See appendix I for production areas of Nollywood in Nigeria.

[2]African cinemas as implied here refer to those films produced mainly by the West African countries with the help of Western sponsors that are less distributed in Africa but more in Europe and America. Being behind the films financially gave France and Belgium an edge over their ex-colonies in producing local

films for instance. This is one point that challenges the idea of branding such films 'African cinemas'. Nwachukwu purports that the West had their reasons for sponsoring and censoring most of these films and distributing them. He argues that 'exploitation by foreign-owned distribution companies exemplified colonial ideologies. Distribution was entirely controlled by powerful and highly profitable European-owned companies that suppressed the emergence of indigenous African cinema. To them, African cinema would bring competition and a change in audience taste that might challenge their exclusive hold on the African market' (Nwachukwu, 1994: 62). Paradoxically, what is often spoken about in the West, in relation to cinemas is placed in the singular case (African cinema) but refer only to these films as if all the cinemas of Africa are homogenous. This study considers cinema in Africa in the plural however, hence we have chosen to say African 'cinemas' rather than 'cinema', because of the view that we respect not only the individual country's political independence but also their particular film industry's independence. Barlet corroborates this perspective of addressing cinemas in the plural in Africa. He argues that 'Africa is plural and so is its cinema. Hence, the reference to African cinemas. There is, however, also a great unity to Black Africa' (1996: ix). Thus, following Barlet, we underscore the existence of many cinema industries in Africa, but focus mainly on the Nollywood industry, which is one out of the so many others in the continent. For this reason, we will refer to both the individuality of African cinemas as well as to their unity. We imply by this that they all share the Third Cinema ideologies as imbued with African themes and aesthetics, yet in all of these, from particular countries and perspectives.

[3]The Yoruba people occupy the West of Nigeria and are one of the major ethnic groups in the country that is examined in this research. It is acknowledged that the Yoruba travelling theatres foreground the emergence of the indigenous film industry in Nigeria (see: Okome, O. 1995). The Yoruba films engage audiences by telling the folklores of Yoruba tradition, myths, and cultural rhythms of celebrations and interactions with the spirit world. For this reason, Yoruba films are said to originate out of the Yoruba folkloric entertainments. By recording their theatrical arts, the Yoruba filmmakers produced the early Nigerian celluloid films. Haynes argues that, 'Yoruba films grow straight out of the Yoruba travelling theatre. This form of popular drama was created by late Hubert Ogunde out of the traditional *Alarinjo* theatre [...]. Its formal structure includes substantial elements of music and dance and even acrobatics, as well as drama, and it incorporates traditional Yoruba metaphysical and religious beliefs' (1995: 100).

[4]Kenneth Nnebue is credited with being pioneer of the Nollywood film industry with his film, *Living in Bondage* (1992). Many stories have been told about him and one of them is this: 'Nollywood came about by accident. In 1992, Kenneth Nnebue, a Nigerian trader based in *Onitsha*, [some say Lagos], was trying to sell a large stock of blank video-cassettes he had bought from Taiwan. He decided that they would sell better with something recorded on them, so he shot a film called, *Living in Bondage* about a man who achieves power and wealth by killing his wife in a ritualistic murder, only to repent later when she haunts him. The film sold more than 750,000 copies and prompted legions of imitators'. (Neucollins, Mark. 2007. *Contemporary African Cinema: the Emergence of an Independent Cinema in Nigeria,* at http://speakinggofart.wordpress.com/2007/04/20/contemporary-african-cinema-the-emergence-of-an-independent-cinema-in-nigeria/. See also Haynes and Okome. 1997. 'Evolving Popular Media in Nigeria' in Haynes, J. (ed). *Nigerian Video Films*. Kraft books Limited. p. 24.

[5]The *indigenization Act* was a decree of the Nigerian military government in 1972 that demanded all cinema halls, formerly owned by foreigners to be handed over to indigenes to operate. It also challenged media houses to focus on indigenous productions and was aimed at promoting Nigeria's arts and cultures, against the dominance of foreign films and other media products in the country at the time (See: Aderinokun, 2005).

[6]Franco Sacchi and his team produced the film *This is Nollywood* (2007) alongside some Nigerian filmmakers. It is a documentary on the Nollywood industry, the production patterns and the reasons for its high level of success both in Africa and around the globe. Details of this movie can be accessed on the website: http://www.thisisnollywood.com [Accessed 28 August 2008].

[7]Bob Manuel Udokwu describes himself thus 'My name is Bob-Manuel Udokwu. I was born in Enugu, the capital of Enugu State. But I am from Ogidi in Anambra state. My studies were at the University of Port Harcourt where I have a certificate and a first degree in Theatre Arts. Then, I went to University of Lagos to get a Masters degree in Political Science specializing in International Relations. I have won so many awards including the *Afro Nollywood Awards* in Oct 2006. I have two children. I also write scripts, act and direct films'. I interviewed him in the course of his visit to the Dublin *African Film Festival* in April, 2007, at Jury's Inn Hotel, Parnel Street, Dublin, after the screening of *The Concubine*, of which he is the lead actor.

[8]In an answer to the question of how Nollywood reflects the 'lived-in' situations of Nigerians, Juliet, 24, a final year student of Imo State University replied that, 'there is a film *Stubborn Grasshopper* [...], if you watch that film, you will see that it is what happened here in Nigeria many years ago. In fact, it captures what happened to one of the former military presidents of the country, Abacha. No wonder, after a while he died, they [Nollywood] acted that film [...]. In fact, if you are watching that film and you know the situation of things in the country then [...] while the film is going on, you will remember Abacha. So I think they [Nollywood] are really trying!'. This is a film that captures the historic trend of events under President Abacha. Oluyinka describes this period of Nigerian history as 'the early to mid 90s when the industry began to thrive, Nigeria was under a defiant military regime that was intolerant of the news media. This (Abacha) was the regime in power when Nigeria was suspended from the commonwealth in 1995, for its anti-democratic practices and its infringements of human rights' (See: Olayinka, E. (2008), 'Appreciating Nollywood: Audiences and Nigeria', at www.participations.org, Vol.5. Issue 1. special edition [Accessed 24 November 2008].

[9]Mark Cousins in his *The Story of Film* (2004) gives substantial evidence of the realist and neorealist films of the 1940s when filmmaking was still in its developmental stages in the West and Asia.

[10]RMD otherwise called Richard Mofe Damijo also visited Dublin in the course of *Dublin African Film Festival* in April, 2007 at Cineworld Cinema, Dublin. I interviewed him at Jury's Inn Hotel, Parnel Street, Dublin, where he was lodged. He described himself as a Nollywood actor and a lawyer thus: 'I am a graduate of the University of Benin. I am a lawyer. I am an actor and a business man also'.

[11]See Dundes, A. 1997. Binary Opposition in Myth: The Propp/Levi-Strauss Debate in Retrospect. *Western Folkore*. vol. 56. no. 1. Pp 39-50.

[12]*Things Fall Apart* is one of the key literature texts in Nigeria which has been adapted into film. Especially in 1986, the nation's Television, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) serialized this movie on its channel which was a huge success and until date remains a reference point in discussing the dynamics of Nigerian cultures, especially the Igbo perspective. This is mainly because Achebe did not only capture the typical Igbo [African] cultural scenario before the advent of the Europeans but also illustrates the after effects of colonialism on the Nigerian country, using Umuofia village community to construct this. It is a key text and film that forms part of our discourse here on African cultures because of its resonance to what some aspects of the history and experience of Nigerians as people has been. Although the film is indicatively a pre-Nollywood production, suffice to say that it shares a lot of similarities with other Nollywood filmic productions, which include, being produced on VCD format and not on celluloid, being screened on television like other Nollywood films and using deep ecological aesthetics, characteristic of Nollywood in terms of cultural history and experiences to discuss African and Nigerian ontology and lived-in situations.

[13]Full Detail of Uche Nworah's interview done on 23/02/2007 titled 'Cost of Nollywood' is available at: http://www.chatafrikarticles.com/articles/434/1/Interview-with-Mildred-Iweka-by-Uche-Nworah/Page1.html [Accessed 24 August 2008].

[14]*The Amazing Grace* (2006) by Jeta Amata is the first Nollywood film shot on 35mm [which is the standard of cinema in Hollywood and other Western mainstream productions]. It combines actors and actresses from Nollywood and British film industries in (re)presenting the slave trade especially as it involved Nigerians from Old Calabar area and the United Kingdom.

[15]The Censors board is officially called the Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) – See http://www.nfvcb.gov.ng. This is the website of the official regulatory body of the cultural industry in Nigeria, set up by the government's Act No. 85 of 1993, to regulate the film and video industry in the country. In 2005 alone the department verified 1,568 locally made Nigerian Nollywood films and approved 82.4% of them for commercial release (See: Kunzler, 2007). As at present, the board is working hard to put into place, a systemic platform to checkmate piracy and regulate distributions and statistical details. This was remarked by Actor Bob-Manuel in the interview cited above and also reiterated by Emeka Mba, the Director General of the National Film and Video Censors Board in 2008, in an interview he granted to *The Sun* Newspaper. Essentially he remarks, that, 'chief of these initiatives […] seeks to promote […] more responsibility in filmmaking by our filmmakers [...]. It's also aimed at creating a channel of empowerment for people within the industry and also give it structure […] to help lend our efforts to fight against piracy and generally promote the cause of a good society through what we do at the censors board' (See http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/showtime/2008/aug/22/showtime-22-08-2008-001.htm. [Accessed 22 November 2008].

[16]Given the circumstances created by lack of adequate statistics on Nollywood films by both literatures and provisional details on the Censors board and the Nigerian Film Corporation websites, it is difficult to ascertain if there are any tax returns declared on Nollywood products and other cultural productions in Nigeria. This would have helped to ascertain the distribution and consumption rates of different Nollywood films among audiences, but was not found anywhere at the time of this research.

[17]Among different websites that display, review and market Nollywood films on the internet include: http://www.nollywood.com/, http://www.nollywood.net/, http://www.nollywoodmovies.tv/, http://www.nollywoodwatch.com/,   http://nigeriamovies.net/,   http://www.nollywoodmovies.com/, http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/franco_sacchi_on_nollywood.html, http://www.nigeriancinema.com/,http://www.nigeriannews.com/nollywood/, http://www.thisisnollywood.com/nollywood.htm,   http://www.thenollywoodfactory.com/, http://nollywoodjournal.com/,   http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/franco_sacchi_on_nollywood.html, http://www.nigeriafilms.com/ , http://www.nigfilmcorp.com.

[18]Nigerian films are screened on different television channels across Nigeria, Africa and Europe regularly apart from internet and website channels. The films are screened locally in Nigeria on the MNET, which is a digital satellite television station that transmits the films on *Africa Magic*. Across UK and Ireland [Europe], Nollywood films are also screened on *Sky Television* on regular basis on the following channels: 329 (Nollywood Channel), 330 (AIT Movistar Channel), 333 (NigeriaMovies Channel).

[19]Arguably Nigerian videofilms follow the universal characterization of film genres such as horror, comedy, etc. Yet, it is right to underscore that the movies at times have a mixture of these genres all together. Hence, the length and theme of movies which are often concluded didactically warrant the filmmakers combining morality with religion, showcasing the track of retributive justice at the end of one's sufferings with faith in God. Other instances are the historic-epic genres where films dramatize the gallantry of heroes in communities while telling the cultural history of the tribe to audiences. It is for this reason that Nollywood genres share patterns with universal classification of genres, while in some instances chart a unique course of its own classifications and categories as listed in the main text.

Chapter Three

3. 0 Reception and Audience Analysis

3.1 Introduction

Having explored the nature of representations of Africa on mainstream Western films in Chapter one and the emergence and representations of Nollywood in Chapter two, this

present chapter explores the different kinds of reception studies undertaken in film studies both in the West and other Third Cinema, but especially in Nollywood. In doing this, this research is studying culture as a sense-making process that makes 'sense' not only of external nature or reality, but also of the social system that it is part of, that is, studying the social identities and daily activities of the people within it (Igbo culture). Hence, reading 'culture' as Fiske suggests 'is not akin to using a can opener to reveal a meaning hidden in a message but rather a consequence of interactions between texts and audiences' (Fiske, 1990: 164). For this reason, our study explores Nollywood's cultural representations and mainly in relation to Igbo rituals. Suffice to say at this juncture, that one question that is aimed to be answered by this thesis therefore is: what differences underlie Nollywood's representations of Nigeria and Africa's cultures from those of outside 'stereotypes'? Thus, in this regard, the primary aim is to engage in the analysis of the audio-visual representations of Nollywood by exploring existing literatures in film analysis to underscore how scholars have dealt with the three main sites of meaning-construction in film representations, namely: (1) The site(s) of the production of the image (2) The site(s) of the image itself and (3) The site(s) of it as seen by various audiences (Turner, 2006: 16) across borders and timelines.

3.2 Film as a Meaning-Making Site of Cultures

The functional idea behind emphasis on the analysis of films is the fact that there is always a message encoded in every filmic text waiting to be decoded. The text is 'a complex and structured arrangement of signs, rather than an empty vehicle for the transmission of information' (Moores, 1993: 6). Having its root in the Latin verb *texto*, meaning to weave or twine things together, or construct or build something, it refers to the 'construction made of words and visuals and presented for consumers on the screen' (Jensen, 2002: 117).

For viewers to understand the ideologies behind every media product, especially film, a deconstruction process is needed. It refers to the ability of individuals to make meaning of films. These take the position of 'being critical to decode, analyze, and evaluate

mediated messages' (Lemish, 2003: 41). It is a process that helps consumers comprehend the truth that all media products are 'art experiences', or market products based on the practical knowledge of production techniques (Srampickal, 2002: 48). It is also having the idea that by editing, dubbing, using music, sound effects, cuts and scenes that film producers have a preferred meaning encoded in the texts, while at the same time positioning oneself to know the difference between a text's preferred meaning and the ones audiences bring to the reading of such a text. About the 1950s the realist trajectory of Andre Bazin suggested that the myth of 'total cinema lies in the idea of creating a perfect illusion of reality' (Campbell, 2005: 31). 'Reality' in films was viewed to be the social world as represented which is the underlying signifier of meanings that characterized textual messages. In this sense, film producers were seen to encode ideological impressions to promote propaganda, stereotypes, interests and stories through signs and symbols that can be decoded from the purview of existential reality.

The word 'sign' which has its etymological root in the Greek word *semeion* refers to systems and their rules in the construction and reconstruction of meanings in media texts (Rayner, Wall, and Kruger, 2001: 30). Barthes (1913–1980), de Saussure (1839–1913) and Pierce (1857–1914) by developing and applying various semiotic theories to understanding communication texts point to the way of decoding symbols and signs in explaining media representations (Jensen, 2002: 25). These social constructs often described as signs and symbols generally refer to 'cultural ways of making sense of the world' (Dutton, 1997: 44) which is what media producers do by encoding texts with messages to be decoded. As Rayner states 'these can be words made up into sentences or sentences made up into paragraphs, or sounds, images and others put together in particular sequences as codes to give particular meanings' (Rayner, et. al. 2001: 30). The reader of a text (sign) as Barthes argues has to go through various stages in deconstructing the meaning latent underneath a sign, which scholars like Turner (1969), Geertz (1973), Fiske and Hartley (1978), Morley (1980), Moemeka (1998) have applied in studying various cultures of peoples.

Building on studies like these therefore, this research engages in an analysis of the representations of Nigerian and Igbo rituals in films through recognizable signs. This entails the deployment of semiotic concepts which produce detailed accounts of the ways meanings are produced (Gillian, 2001: 70). It is a study specifically based on the categories set by film analysis in relation to cultural studies which has 'the common thread of responding to a set of conclusions about the specific characteristics of film text(s) by operating on the assumption of the culture's authorship of the text, which helps to trace the myths and ideologies of the films back to their sources within the culture' (Turner, 2006: 179).

Film analysis therefore involves deconstruction which is a call to empowerment, not necessarily to guard against the effects[1] and influences of media messages, but to interpret the ideology behind the production of texts. Since the 1970s in particular, audience and textual analysis of texts have been the main thrust of media communications especially since 'the Screen theory arguments became less popular on the basis of being too abstract' (Morley, 1992: 60). Today, much emphasis is still being placed on the social interactions that spectators bring to 'reading' films (Campwell, 2005: 172) and the way meanings are made by their reception and interpretations. This study's filmic analysis aims to arrive at the interpretation of cultural symbols invested in films to gain meanings of the socio-cultural activities among the communalistic people of Africa and Nigeria, in particular. In this way, the Nigerian national cinema is being used to explore the representations of Africa from across Europe and America. This is because, as O'Regan argues in the context of Australian cinema, 'national cinemas are one of the means by which the local and the international reconfigure each other' (O'Regan, 2002: 108).

Since 'a film is not only a sequence of moving images but also an organized mixture of images, words, texts, music and noises that are characterized by a constant displacement and circulation of meaning' (Jensen, 2002: 134), this study investigates meanings in films by decoding filmic symbols (texts) and audiences' readings. It does this by noting that most researches in film studies in the past have used media texts to point out the realities

of people's cultures by reading media representations. Srividya (2005) for instance, identified the incongruous projections of Indians in Western movies as stereotypical and misleading in his reading of Western representations of Indians in Western films. In his reading of some select Irish national films, Brereton explored the underlying historical truths of the fact of the religious faith of the Irish over the years (2006); and Oha (2006) analyzed the compact nature of Lagos, a major commercial city in Nigeria by reading filmic representations of the city in Nollywood. Currently and in consideration of the dominant media image of continental Africa, Ackah laments that 'the power of the image, be it photographic or televised, is such that when one thinks of famine, one immediately thinks of the starving people of Africa. What is forgotten in the famine debates is that the other major continents of the world have suffered from famine at some stage in their histories' (1999: 68).

What all these show is that in films, there is an ample array of meanings that can be made of human societies, especially of African continent and people, given the dominance of their representations. Nollywood films embody much of the history and stories that could be read to illustrate that filmic text conveys a huge range of meanings of societies and their cultures as seen in most studies done already in film studies.

3.3 Reception Studies in Mainstream Cinema

Most ideological presuppositions behind filmic representations of cultures are often unmasked by means of textual and audience analyses. Hall's (1977) theory of reading media texts in particular has constantly been applied to media analysis (Morley, 1981; Ang, 1996; Livingstone, 1990; Lull, 1990) and researchers have ever engaged in analyzing texts by deconstructing them critically. Michael Real argues that in order to effectively apply analysis to reading media texts, three main actions must be taken. Thus:

> when we encounter a media text, whether violent, pornographic,
> or non-controversial, we do three actions almost simultaneously.
> We read, we comprehend, and we interpret. "Reading" means that
> there is a text made up of visual or aural symbols from which meanings

can be constructed; we comprehend by placing the text in some kind
of "frame", then; we interpret them by relating the sense of what is going
on to what the author seems to intend and to the extra textual points
of reference (Real, 1996: 103).

It is this framing of deconstruction that this study uses to explore the implications of Nollywood's representations of cultures. Hall's view as applied here is in terms of his encoding and decoding model of consuming media messages in relation to reading Nollywood films. In this sense, we explore Igbo and Nigerian cultures as represented in the texts to underline the characteristic dominant ideologies behind the films. On this note, Rojek, a Hall specialist, highlights that for Hall 'there is no space of representation, including theoretical space, which exists outside ideology' (Hall, 1984a, 11, quoted in Rojek, 2003: 91). Thus, on the presumption of this notion, we shall be teasing out the analysis of Nollywood's representations in order to examine the cultural frameworks and the general filmic representational mantras.

Morley in the 1980s 'investigated the different interpretative resources which various groups bring to their reading of "texts" ' (Kelly, and O'Connor, 1997: 3) and by so doing explored Hall's different modes of consumption on media audiences. In the end he was convinced that 'audiences consist of sub-cultural groupings, whose position within their socio-economic environments have some bearings on their meaning systems' (Gray, 1992: 6).

Ang (1985, 1989) also in her studies discovers that answers to qualitative questions are constructed in the form of interpretations of texts (Ang, 1989: 106). Especially in her *Reading the Romance,* she argues that, 'women fans of Romance novels put their reading efforts to a variety of educational, therapeutic and leisure purposes' (Schiappa and Wessels, 2007: 16). In reading *Dallas*, the popular American soap, Ang explores audiences' pleasure by focusing on the interactions viewers share with texts in what Gray calls 'its achievement of "emotional realism" for the fans' (Gray, 1992: 22). Livingstone's study of British viewers of *Coronation Street*, following audience research methodologies, highlights that viewers' interpretations can be linked to how they feel

about the characters they see on screen (Schiappa and Wessels, ibid: 16), while for Vares (2002), audiences' sense of taste in movies can depend on their genre preferences (Schiappa and Wessels, ibid: 17).

Given the varieties of researches in reception studies to interpret readings of media texts, Lull argues that 'what unifies the partial convergence of different traditions is a common interest in the qualitative features and processes of communication activity, especially the interpretations and uses of mass media that are constructed by audience members' (Lull, 1990: 14). In this study, Nollywood texts and audience members are seen as key elements in underpinning meaning to Nollywood by interpreting the filmic themes of cultures. The aim is to see how themes resonate with audiences' pleasures given the proximity of representations to their daily lives.

For 'Third Cinema' reception theorists, Stam and Spence, 'marginalized audiences tend to read mainstream films as racially coded, but such an aberrant reading can also proceed in itself in a racist fashion whereby the ethnocentric prejudices of a particular critic or an interpretative community can influence the textual readings' (1999: 249). Hence, they reckon that researchers must be aware of the cultural and ideological assumptions that movie spectators bring to viewing films and 'be conscious of the institutionalized expectations that make people consume films in certain ways' (1999: Op. Cit). This research is geared towards situating texts and audiences in interpreting Nollywood filmic (re)presentations. With this, the idea of aberrant reading of films, as suggested by Stam and Spence is being tested or even problematized in a significant way in this research.

Predominantly, debates in reception analysis have characterized media researches especially in the West over the years and have even problematized the notion of audiences. For Moores, 'there is no stable entity which we can isolate and identify as the media audience, no single object that is unproblematically "there" for us to observe and analyze' (1993: 1).   By this he indicates that the notion of audiences is a 'construct' and is fluid in nature. That means that it is always in a process and not static in character (Liebes, 2005: 358).

Schroder (1999: 38) maps out three main phases of audience scholarship in media reception analysis over the years. He outlines these three media audience generations as the 'encoding and decoding' discourse phase, starting with Hall (1974), then; the 'ethnographic paradigm' starting with Morley's research experimentations (1980, 1981; Ang: 1985; Hobson: 1982; Katz and Liebes: 1984, 1990); and finally, the 'current constructionist view' that began in the 1980s where scholars began questioning the premise of audience ethnography (Allor: 1988; Ang: 1989, 1990; Fiske: 1988, 1990; Grosberg: 1988; Lull: 1988) etc.

These three phases attempt to capture the progress made by scholars in audience research over the years. Particularly with Hall, the ground was charged with exploring media messages and audiences' interactions with texts. As said by Moores, 'Hall's essay attempted to account for the active consumption as well as the production and textual organization of media sounds and images. His encoding and decoding model are sought to successfully combine semiotic and sociological concerns – connecting up approaches to the study of meaning construction with perspectives on cultural power and social relations' (1993: 16). What Hall emphasizes in his essay is generally the different modes within which audiences consume media messages. In this context, he identifies the preferred mode, the negotiated mode and the oppositional mode as the three paradigms of making meanings of media messages. These modes we shall be revisiting when we analyze this study's focus-group audiences and their interpretations of Nollywood representations.

Building upon audiences' interaction with texts over the years of media analysis, Liebes like Schroder (1999), has undertaken to divide the history of audience and reception analysis into three stages using what he calls 'Ellis scheme' – where he (Ellis) uses the notion of three phases of 'scarcity', 'availability' and 'plenty' to interpret the history of television in the West particularly.

In these three phases, the understanding of reception analysis is that it has been in progress. In the first stage when television is said to be scarce, Liebes argues that 'communication researchers within the phase of scarcity were mostly concerned with effect. Assuming a helpless, passive audience, they went to work to examine their degree of exposure to cinema, radio, and television. Audiences were seen as watching to be influenced' (2005: 361), he argues. This stage characterizes the main stay of the 'effects studies' in Film Studies and Social Science researches.

Things changed in the second phase where Liebes believes that the tradition of active audiencehood evolved. In this phase, he outlines that, 'the study of audience activity, or involvement, or critical ability – all ways of describing the focus of communication research from the beginnings of the 1980s – looked at the ways in which audiences "read" or "negotiate the meaning" of media texts' (Liebes, ibid). Here, audiences are characterized as active and more so, with the powers of reading in different ways they prefer. This is when, as Ellis and Liebes argue, the television set was available to most homes especially in Europe and America. Thus, here 'the dominant paradigm [...] shifted from audience as users of texts to the process of reception, based on the idea that viewers are capable of creating a plurality of meanings, and allowing for the possibility of oppositional [...] readings' (Liebes, ibid: 361).

The last of Liebes's phases is the present age of 'plenty'. By this, he implies that the television boom has so much increased that preferences are made depending on choices, and people even have more than one television in a household. He therefore argues that 'arriving at the present phase of plenty marks a new insecurity for scholars [....] faced with the theoretical need to distinguish between television audiences and internet users, and the urgent methodological need to redefine the ethnographic turn' (Liebes, Op. Cit.). In this case, Liebes positions this last stage as a phase in progress. In a way, he signals a tension in this stage which is not noticed in Schroder's classifications since as she said it marks a new insecurity for scholars.

The description of all these phases shows that research into audience and reception analysis has been progressive and not retrogressive, and more findings will continue to affirm that 'there can be no single, generalized model of text-reader relations which applies equally and adequately across all audio-visual and print media' (Moores, 1993: 47). Under the current scholarship and environment, textual analysis and reception research can be said to have continued to map out understanding of interpretations of textual representations. For this reason, this research undertakes to study Nollywood texts and audiences to underscore the understanding of the notion of Nigerian cultures being represented. McQuail's view is insightful on this stand when he argues that 'communication is engaged in for the pleasure of reception as much for any useful purpose. The message of ritual communication is usually latent and ambiguous, depending on associations and symbols which are not chosen by the participants but made available in the culture' (1994: 51).

As a de-constructivistic research, this research considers texts and audiences as independent and active sites that give meaning to the rituals under study. While the texts are descriptive of the cultures, Nollywood spectators who make meaning of messages based on their storylines are also considered as having their own voices not merely by constructing the texts, but mainly by consuming and analyzing them. This is because it is assumed that 'it is not the material world that conveys meaning to us the way it is, but the language system that we use to represent our concepts' (Hall, 1997: 25). Films here, are seen as languages of communication and human language itself is fundamentally considered as a tool of discourse in analyzing these films. By this is implied that individuals explore the way films are (re)presented in coded signs by words and analyze them by expressing how they receive them as consumers. In practice, this is how this research engaged audiences in the primary fieldwork and how most scholars have conducted researches on Nollywood as we shall see shortly.

The generation of meanings in this context is understood from the viewpoint of Fiske (1990: 164) on the characteristic fluidity of the concept of interpretations in media audiencehood even as corroborated by Geertz (1973: 14). Fiske argues that meanings

exist in their circulation. Thus: 'meanings are always in process, always being made and remade, and are never completed facts. While it is always interesting and important to discover which meanings are made or preferred by texts and their socially situated readers, these meanings are never fixed, and final, but are moments in the circulation of meaning within society; indeed, meanings exists only in their circulation' (Fiske, 1990: 162). The generation of meanings by this understanding has yielded tremendous number of results both in textual and audience analysis which is why this research also employs such methods to studying rituals in Nollywood.

3. 4 Reception Analysis in Nollywood

Generally, reception and textual studies into African films are in dire need of scholarship. A few studies however have been done and too often focused on the canonical African cinemas (sponsored and distributed mainly in the West) and not specifically on Nollywood (Zacks, 1995; Schmidt, 1985; Pfaff, 1992; Petty, 1992; Murphy, 2000; Tomaselli, Sherperson, and Eke, 1995; Haynes, 1995; Adedeji, 1971, Akudinobi, 2001, Diawara, 1988, 1992, 1996, 1999; 1996, Nwachukwu, 1994, Bakari and Cham, 1996, Larkin, 1997). Most of these are opinionated journal articles that focus mainly on textual analysis to explore the aesthetics and cultural representations of the films of Africa as an exotic 'other'. Murphy articulates this sentiment when he argued that 'debates upon the nature of African cinema have too often been trapped within a reductive opposition between Western and African culture' (2000: 241). By this is implied that scholars are very much focused on comparative studies and analysis between the cinema of the West and those of Africa that they often do not go beyond exploring differences to examine filmic texts and their reception among audiences.

Nevertheless, it is only quite recently that attention has started focusing on Nollywood especially within the West African region even though there is yet a significant absence of scholarship into the industry and its activities. A few scholars, however, who are on the verge of breaking the silence of lack of reception studies in Nollywood include: (Haynes, 2000; Adesanya, 2000; Ogundele, 2000; Ekwuazi, 2000; Okome, 2000;

Garritano, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Oha, 2000; Larkin, 1997, 2000, 2002, 2006; Haynes and Okome, 1997, 2000; Adejunmobi, 2002; Nwachukwu, 2003; Lawuyi, 1997; Oha, 2001, 2002; Ofeimun, 2003; Owens-Ibie, 1998; Kunzler, 2007; Haynes, 2007; Okome, 2007; Onuzulike, 2007; Okoye, 2007; Dipio, 2007; Adeoti, 2007; McCall, n.d; Esosa, 2005; Akomfrah, 2006; Adesokan, 2006; Aderinokun, 2005; Akpabio, 2007; Oluyinka, 2008; Uwah, 2008; Omoera, 2009).

A lot of these materials however, are journal articles with the exception of the edited work of Haynes (2000) which invariably is the first book on Nollywood (Haynes, 2000: XVII). Thus, given the dearth of materials on the Nollywood industry, a lot of studies are innovative either by studying audiences' comments on Nollywood websites or writing an opinion on the phenomenon. On this note, a class of scholarly materials can be itemized as regards reception and audience research in Nollywood presently. These are the opinionated articles by authors who present private views on the industry in select journals without giving consideration to any kind of research, whether textual or audience-based; another is the group who focus on some select texts to tease out aspects of the society which can be classified as textual analysis and the last are those that deal with audiences and texts significantly by means of quantitative and qualitative primary research.

Haynes (2000) edited work on Nollywood contains ten scholarly articles that are qualitatively explored. These theoretically dealt with aspects of Nollywood's productions, themes and history of existence. With thematic textual analysis, some of the authors traced the influence of societal cultures on the filmic representations while underpinning the struggles of the industry to stand as a formidable national cinema industry. As Haynes outlined in his introductory remarks of the book, one of the aims is to signal the federal character of Nollywood within Nigeria (2000: XVII) while acknowledging that the work is only a preliminary contribution to the study of the nascent film industry. Almost all the authors rehearsed the background to the emergence of Nollywood before dealing with their specific areas of interest like ethnic productions where Larkin and Johnson explored the Hausa films, while Ekwuazi and Oha looked into the Igbo films and Ogundele and

Afolabi dealt with the Yoruba genres of the films. In general, the contributions of these underpin the progress of debates on Nollywood while paving the way for more considerations on the industry.

While there are so many articles that have theorized the aesthetics and representational quality of the films, most of these are neither textual nor audience-based. Majority of the works however use filmic themes and representations to argue points and theorize on the themes of the movies in relation to the Nigerian society. Owens-Ibie (2008) discussed Nollywood in terms of its history of existence and functions in the society. Following Arulogun (1979: 26 – 29) he outlisted four kinds of ways that Nollywood help further the cause of cultural identity. These include: as a 'means of relaying and reinforcing information meant to promote a certain reality', 'helping to shape perspective on a people's culture', 'covering issues in the school curricula' and as 'a major source of foreign exchange' (2008: 1-2).

Practically, almost every work begins by recounting the history of Nollywood and acknowledging the functions performed by the industry in Nigeria and across borders. In a way, these corroborate the four points mentioned above. For instance, Ofeimun (2003) who wrote to defend the films against much of their critics concluded that 'the home video has become the hegemonic means of defining the Nigerian sense'. By this he recounts the connection the films make with audiences and society by means of replaying their 'story in a way that no medium has ever managed to'. Oha (2002) did a textual analysis of some films to underpin the appropriations of native imaginations into the production of contemporary Yoruba films. In this respect, he argues that the boundaries between written and oral words collapse in the representations that emanate from indigenous imaginations since these 'transform paradoxes and tensions to strategies of hybridization and dialogue' (2002: 138). This is a view already seen in this study that acknowledges the fact that the Nigerian and Igbo cultures, like any other, as constantly dynamic and creolizing, whereby even the films today are translating communalistic cultures by means of technologies, hence collapsing the boundaries between oral and written cultures.

Okoye on his own, discusses the tension that engulfs Nigeria as a nation given dichotomized ethnic relationships between different zones within it. Using two films, he traces the tension this thesis foregrounded in discussing ethnicity in Nigeria and argues that it is 'difficult to construct a nation identity out of a restive and mutually antagonistic ethnic alignments' (2007: 7 - 9). His findings re-echo the point made in Chapter two that these films serve as a kind of public service machine that uses the issues of ethnicity to question the appropriateness of ethnic-relationships and cultures in the Nigerian polity.

Onuzulike (2007) studied Nollywood and its influences on Africa by conducting in-depth interviews with some audience fans both within and outside of Nigeria, alongside textual analysis of some select films. His study again re-echoes the findings of this present research by revealing that the body of songs, festivals and rituals as seen in the films are a representation of the Nigerian society. But then, he further argues that his findings suggest that 'repeated exposure to the myths and themes of the movies on Nigerian cultures should have influence on an individual's perception of Nigerian and African as a whole' (2007: 238). Thus, while his study is quite illustrative of Nollywood representations and audience attitudes towards the industry, it arguably fails to exorcise audiences of the power of the 'effects theory' as done here, but otherwise holds them passive to filmic influences. Thus, the point of this argument is that while it is possible for Nollywood audiences to draw inferences from films, the point remains that audiences have their own powers to reject media messages or to read them oppositionally as Hall would suggest. Dipio, by means of textual analysis teased out one of the significant tenets of communalism which borders on religion as a way of life for the African. Evidentially she argues that there is lot of religion in Nigerian films and traced this to its cultural roots by analyzing films in the religio-moral category from both Christian and traditional perspectives. This factor of religion in the life of Nigerians and their films is one tenet that will be explored more in Chapter five when we analyze the ritual of religious worship among communalistic Africans. Yet, while Dipio's study teased out the facts of religion and faith in Nigeria as cultural way of life, suffice to say that one would have loved the work to include an analysis of the Islamic religious practices of the Muslims in

the Northern part of Nigeria which none of the films analyzed dealt with in the context of the nation.

The argument over whether films concur with realities, no doubt, is problematic and have preoccupied film studies debates since time immemorial. And a lot of critics will still argue that films have no semblances with realities since they are artfully made. The position of this research however, is that whereas films are generally artworks and can fictiously be constructed, yet some are centered on true life stories, histories and cultures of a people and therefore cannot outrightly be said not to (re)present existential issues in some sense. In philosophical Epistemology, the main three theories of truth (correspondence, coherent and pragmatic theories) prove their arguments based on how convincing they implicitly apply to ontological realities. Thus, if any communication is aimed at giving knowledge or any kind of information to spectators, 'to be true' implies that it must either be coherent to reality, or it corresponds to it, otherwise, it must solve all jobs as required of it, hence, being pragmatic (Magee, 2001: 189). This is also what films do by means of 'abstracting realities' from their contexts and underpinning them in representations. For this reason, some are possible projections into the future like science fictions that task the human intellect rigorously in the exploration of possibilities, some are fictions that are imaginary creations of script writers; but yet others are true life stories like Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* directed by Alan Parker that recaptures the story of a family and country in the Old Ireland or Ken Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* that chronicles some part of Irish history in their fight for independence in the 1920s. In this sense, we speak of 'cultural realism' in relation to the context of some filmic representations that depict live situations in their storylines. Thus, by this is implied what Pfaff calls 'assertiveness, self-actualization and expression of [a] people' (1992: 31) in their manner of living or experiences.

Instances of African films reacting or representing African situational realities abound not only in Nollywood, but also, in most other African celluloid films. For instance, the ecological conditions of the continent was at a time problematic that in 1991 specifically, the organizers of the 12th biennial meeting of FESPACO chose as its theme, *Cinema and*

the Environment (Bakari and Cham, 1996: 14). Also, in 1973, Mustapha Alassane from Niger, produced a film, *Toula*, depicting the differences between the Western and the African ways of controlling drought which has been a major ecological issue in his country (Bakari, 1996: 13). By this, these films address socio-cultural issues and underscore the fact that films actually can underpin realities. *The Tree of life* (1989) and *Conchiglia* (1992) by Abdulkardir Said of Somalia were both ecological films as well on African stories and cultures. These positioned human beings as agents of the destruction of their environmental resources and challenged African viewers to a change of attitude. In *The Tree of Life* particularly, Abdulkadir depicts 'the potentially apocalyptic consequences of the practice of cutting down trees for firewood by making a man who normally does this dream that his environment has been devastated and reduced to dust and rumble without vegetation due to constant depredation of the trees. Hence, when the man woke up; he began to evangelize his neighbours against the practice of cutting down trees' (Bakari, 1996: 14). This is also the case with *Oil Village* (2001) and many other Nollywood films as will be seen here. Like Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth* (2006), these films take up societal issues in a way that engages audiences on practical and existential issues.

Particularly in Nigeria, researchers have continued to interpret how Nollywood films underpin cultures and existential issues especially in the context of Nigeria. Some works that deal specifically with audiences and their reception of cultural texts like Nollywood on this term include (Okome, 2007; Oluyinka, 2008, Akpabio, 2007). Okome's particularly is an opinionated article that offers viewpoints on the sites of consuming Nollywood and a little bit of textual analysis to underpin the existential references of the films particularly to Nigerian society. Oluyinka and Akpabio's studies mainly used a combination of methodologies to study audiences and their reception of Nollywood as well within and outside of the country. By means of their research, these discovered that Nollywood fans, in spite of being aware of the industry's shortcomings are loyal audiences to Nollywood at home and abroad. Following his findings, Oluyinka asserts that, 'the issue of identity, preservation of cultural heritage and resistance of dominant

western influence are clear factors contributing to the success of this [Nollywood] industry' (2008).

Particularly Oluyinka carried out his study on the Nigerian Diaspora in London by means of focus-group discussions, analysis of webblogs and chats, and interviews with video-shop owners. By his empirical data, the findings can be said to corroborate the results of this study's findings as we shall see later which include that 'the appreciation of the skillful use of language was a pleasure by the audiences especially some of the ardent Nigerian fans who argued to appreciate and teach culture through films'. On his own, Akpabio who conducted a quantitative research by distributing questionnaire to residents of 10 streets in Lagos came out with the view that a greater percentage of Nigerians favour Nollywood than other film products in the country. This in a way underpins Kunzler's notion of Nollywood as an 'industry of cultural substitution' in Nigeria as already seen in chapter two (Kunzler, 2007).

In most of the findings of the existing body of literatures in Nollywood, what one discovers is the tendency to recount the story of the emergence of the Nollywood film industry, its political economy, as well as the cultural aesthetics of its representations. A lot still needs to be done to explore especially how these films interact with cultures not only in terms of representations but also in terms of interrogations on most of the age long held communalistic rituals. To do this is one reason why this study is done from an insider's perspective where rituals are being investigated from a bottom-up paradigm. In the next sub-section, this study dovetails the understanding that in order to do a good analysis of the communalistic rituals, there is the need to have a good grasp of communalism not only from the films, but as they occur in the everyday society and as are celebrated in the Igbo speaking area of Nigeria, hence the evocation of Boudieu's notion of 'cultural competence'[2] in both audiences and texts.

3.5 Audiencing and Cultural Competence

According to Gillespie, the term 'audience' is used to refer to an analysis of listeners or viewers who come together, if not virtually, through shared consumption of films, television, radio, internet, music or advertising (2005: 1). These people come to the moment of their engagement with media text, with their knowledge of the world and a knowledge of other media products, which according to Bobo implies that 'the viewer in coming to view a film does not leave his or her histories, whether social, cultural, economic, racial or sexual at the door' (Bobo, 2003: 309).

By applying the word 'audiencing', this study is signaling the preferred type of relationship between an audience and a medium. McQuail in explicating the implications and meaning of an audience says it is 'a typically very large aggregate of detached individuals, anonymous to each other, with attention converging on some object of interest that is outside their immediate personal environment or control' (1997: 7). This therefore means that the concept of audience implies dedicated attention to a text whether as a listener, a reader or a viewer in the context of this research.

Different people interpret the concept of 'audience' differently. For Moores, the preferred word is 'audiences' denoting several people divided by their reception of different media and genres. (1993: 2). Radway on the other hand argues that 'the concept should be taken in its original form to denote an individual act of hearing in a face to face verbal communication' (1988: 359). The view here is that to be an audience involves a *presencing*, a 'now' activity that is done consciously and actively, whether by an individual or a group. Hence, the emphasis is on the word 'act' (as in activity and being active), rather than on the 'who' of it. By 'audiencing' therefore, this research implies a position and posture where the viewer is actively involved in the act of reading a text.

Since filmic representations consist essentially of media language and conventions (Lacey, 1998: 131), Bobo like some other authors, introduces the concept of 'discourse' to describe this moment of encounter between texts and audiences. Within this space of an inter-discourse, she explains that, 'cultural competencies come into play'. The meaning of a text is constructed differently depending on the background of the decoders.

Thus, 'the viewers' position in the "social structure" determines in part, what sets of discourse or interpretive strategies they bring to their encounter with the texts' (Bobo, 2003: 312). By bringing in the concept of 'cultural competencies' into the reading of filmic representations, Bobo subscribes to Bourdieu whose original idea it is. For Bourdieu, 'one cannot fully understand cultural practices unless "culture" in the restricted, normative sense of ordinary usage, is brought back in the anthropological sense' (1994: 444). In this, he is of the view that a work of art or what we might call a cultural artifact can possibly have meaning only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, in which it is encoded' (Bourdieu, Op.Cit, 445).

Bourdieu's 'cultural competencies' is needed in a study like this which engages audiences from African backgrounds to interpret the representations of their indigenous cultures in films. Unless one is equipped with the local knowledge of what is encoded, meanings of realities will be difficult to make. For this reason Anderson is of the view that cultural competencies can be called cultural power or cultural capital. In this instance, the currency of transaction is one's knowledge of culture. Thus, he defines cultural competency or cultural capital as 'the amount of cultural power possessed by an individual or social group in terms of language, skills, and other cultural acquisitions' (Anderson, 1997: 191). This argument calls to mind the reason for discussing Africa's cosmology and communalism earlier in this work from an insider's perspective.

Generally with audience research, the idea of communication is based on people's interpretations of messages. On this note, Liebes argues that 'it is important to maintain that audiences, and researchers in their wake, operate within the options and constraints of what is being offered – that is, in interaction with the medium and its social organization, with the attributes of the audiences determining those of the dominant media, and vice versa' (2005: 358). This point underscores that audiences generate meanings based on what they see, hear, or read. They come to this on account of their consumption of what is presented and their mode of consumption. But essentially, they come to cultural analysis with their competencies since they have the local knowledge to interpret encoded messages. For instance, in this research, it is inferred that audiences

know both Nigerian and African cultural patterns and can make meanings of representations easily. By cultural patterns is meant the factors that are 'normative to the extent that they represent the fundamental values, conditions, and practices accepted by the whole society or by particular sub-cultural groups' (Lull, 1990: 152). Knowing the 'cultural patterns' of the society is having the cultural competence that Bourdieu emphasized above. And this buoys down to the implication of doing a 'thick description' on the texts as suggested by Geertz.

'Interpretation' according to Geertz therefore means making cultures intelligible to 'outsiders', that is, readers and viewers, who have not experienced the gathering of the data from a primary research. For this reason, Geertz argues that culture is a context. It is something to which social events can be 'intelligibly', that is, 'thickly described' (ibid: 14). As will be applied here, it means making the findings of our focus-group interviews and primary research readily intelligible. In this instance, we shall not only analyze the textual findings in the reading of the films 'intelligibly' but also 'thickly describe' the concept and indicators of Nigerian cultures as made explicit from audiences' interpretations. Therefore, our 'thick description' will be interpreting the 'interpretations' of cultures as offered by focus-group audience participants as well as exploring the visual representations of them in the select Nollywood texts.

Since signs constitute the main edifice to be interpreted here, the idea is raised that reality is represented by being mediated in terms of pictures, sounds, and words (Dutton, 1997: 38), hence Nollywood films as well as audiences' views of these cultural representations are being 'thickly' interpreted by giving a nuanced analysis of even actions and views as well as exploring the mimetic codes in the select films. For this reason, such a thick description of materials which focuses on cultures will better be achieved by considering mainly the ritual celebrations of the indigenous Igbo people under study here considered from the viewpoint of their 'visual rhetoric' in films.

3.6 Explicating the Visual Rhetoric of Culture

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Vision implies the capacity of seeing; being able to know reality by making use of the sense of sight, while 'visuality on the other hand refers to the way in which vision is constructed in various ways' (Gillian, 2006: 6). By 'visual rhetoric of culture' therefore, this study applies the word 'visual' in the context of Mirzoeff's usage when he states that, 'visual culture is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning, or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology' (1999: 3). Visual event *ipso facto* refers to 'the interaction of visual signs, the technology that enables and sustains that sign, and the viewer' (Mirzoeff, ibid: 13). While film narratives are signs that audiences interact with, technology refers to the tool with which films are made or consumed. In this sense film narratives are means of making sense of the social world and sharing the visuals they present to make 'sense' (Turner, 2006: 99) of reality. Günter and Leeuwem advocate that 'communication requires that participants make their messages understandable in particular contexts. This is the reason why they choose forms of expression which they believe to be transparent to other participants (Günter and Leeuwem, 1996: 40). Hence, to achieve effective communication, every medium depends on some communication models - by this is meant, the conventions through which human beings make their meanings possible. A model is 'a miniature theory of the possible reading of a reality which relates to the basic elements of communication processes that contributes to a better insight of the structure and flow of the processes of communication' (Eilers, 1994: 11).

The visual model as applied to this treatise therefore refers to what is represented on screen as Nollywood films. Thus, 'because of a prevalence of iconic signs in visual media such as film, television and photography, these representations of the world can appear so natural that we easily see them as real. In this way, audiences can easily overlook the process of mediation that has occurred in presenting these images to us' (Rayner, Wall, and Kruger, 2001: 87). For this reason all audiences enter into the world of 'constructions' to decode meanings of representations in texts. Lacey (1998) suggests that since all media images are representations, one can only fully analyze them by deconstructing the ideological basis of their artifacts as well as the ideological basis of audiences' reading of the artifacts (1998: 129). Hence, it is in the context of

deconstruction in this study that we apply the phrase 'visual rhetoric' in relation to the fluidity of the many representations and argumentative opinions on the subject of culture in Nollywood and other mainstream cinemas. This view is informed by the fact that the 'visual' is a powerful art of persuasion and rhetoric itself 'is the art of using language to persuade or influence the human subject as applied to persuasive attempts directed to an audience, often in some formal or institutional setting' (Price, 1996: 248).

In *Visual Methodologies*, Gillian identifies culture as a crucial site by which many social scientists understand social processes, social identities, and social change and conflict. This, she argues by stating that 'over the last two or three decades, the shift in the way scientists understand social life has often been described as "the cultural turn" ' (2001: 5). This, no doubt, reflects the emphasis given to culture both in arts and in the academy specifically as the hub 'which embodies a society's way of life: its systems for producing meaning, sense, or consciousness, especially those systems and media of representations which give images their cultural significance' (Turner, 2006:59). This 'cultural turn' Hall argues, refers to, 'an approach to contemporary social analysis which has made culture a constitutive condition of existence of social life, rather than a dependent variable, provoking a paradigm shift in the humanities and social sciences in recent years' (Hall, 1997: 207 – 238).

Representations are typically imageries of cultures and attitudes to life experiences. For Elkins 'we are living in a deeply, increasingly, and perhaps principally visual culture. Images inundate us – *simulacra of simulacra,*[4] some truthful and others not, some still tenuously linked to everyday life and others widely divergent from us' (2003: 131). By this is meant that images are being (re)represented of our world around and about us in different fashions. While some come close to existential realities, others do not, and only the senses are left to make meanings of them. Thus, of the five senses, Lacey argues that it is sight that gives us the most detailed information since 'images are created in order to communicate' (1998: 5). For Gillian:

> there is an awful hype around "the visual" […]. We are often

told that we now live in a world where knowledge as well as many forms of entertainment are visually constructed, and where what we see is as important, if not more so, than what we hear, given the fact that we are now surrounded by different sorts of visual technologies – photography, film, video, digital graphics, television, acrylics, etc and that these images interpret the world of us, to us (2001: 1-6).

One major area of communications where media make most use of visualizations to represent or interpret realities in the world today is the filmic industries. Cinema particularly is 'an especially powerful visual medium, because a film can create a total world for its audience' (Gillian, 2001: 101). By creation is meant the making of meanings of messages through conventional symbols. Thus, meaning lies as much in the eyes of the beholder as in the talents of the creator, whereby the end result of all visual experience in nature, lies in 'the interaction of the forces of content (message and meaning) and form (design, medium, and arrangement); and second, the effect on each other of the articulator (designer, artist, craftsman) and the receiver (audience)' (Dondis, 1973: 104).

Following this argument, Mirzoeff believes that in the swirl of imagery, 'seeing is much more than believing'. Human experience, he states, is 'now more visual and visualized than ever before, from the satellite picture to the medical images of the interior of the human body' (1999: 1). From this instance, like many literary wars, 'representation wars' especially in the area of cultural stereotypes are occurring with increasing frequency both within and across societies, in part because new communications technologies are enabling more people to receive and compare a wide range of diverse and competing local, regional, national, and "global" representations of their own and others' lives' (Frow, 2003: 502). Particularly, within Film Studies, this phenomenon is observed in the apparent tension between mainstream cinema and Third World film industries. Thus, this research explores how this tension manifests itself in the competition between Nollywood and other Euro-American mainstream film industries in the representations of African cultures.

Historically, rhetoric is traceable to Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) as a form of argumentative discourse. This therefore involves language as a persuasive art (Killingsworth, 2005: 249) whether in terms of speech, writing or representations in films. Thus, since visual arts are languages of filmic representations of realities, making powerful appeal to the senses, they are persuasive and therefore rhetorical in nature. Plato calls arts like these abstractions of the 'real Forms', that is, of real realities (Magee, 2001: 29). It is therefore in the context of deconstructing the mediated abstractions of realities that this research undertakes to address cultural forms represented in films. Media representation therefore, as far as communication is concerned, is the key term for making meaning of realities [abstractions] which include human cultures. What this means is that human beings are symbolic creatures (*homo significans*) who make use of images (symbols and signs) to define their environment, actions and existence. As a social science concept, representation implies that individuals in societies retain or remember symbols which in turn stand for real experiences, and that they are able to refer to things by expressing themselves through the symbols they have learned (Price, 1996: 48).

Generally speaking, the concept of culture here refers specifically to those of the Igbos and Nigeria especially in terms of communalism as discussed. This is because 'culture is [usually] associated with the nation and the state and distinguishes "us" from "them", almost always with a degree of xenophobia so that culture operates as a specific source of identity' (Ross, 1996: 174). National culture in the context of Nigeria therefore refers to the things that are fundamentally cultural resources which give the Nigerian people a shared sense of difference that is endlessly reinforced, even outside conscious awareness, through the routines and rituals of their everyday life, and through symbolic displays of their values and traditions, especially as they are expressed in a dominant language (Hannerz, 2001: 153).

It is this notion of culture that this research investigates by means of Nollywood representations. These implicit African and Nigerian cultures therefore are implored in the context of what 'used to be' before the coming of the Europeans during colonialism, and what the situation is today in the post-colonial context. While the 'past' refers to the

pre-colonial culture where norms and customs are seen as the decrees of the gods and ancestors, and ritual festivals serve as the symbols of communal unity, the current post-colonial culture refers to the inevitable hybridized nature of the old traditions involving 'a dialectical relationship between European ontology and the impulse to create an independent local identity' (Tiffin, 1995: 95).

This whole study therefore is guided by the insight that 'visual communication is understandable more in the context of the range of forms or modes of public communications available in a society and their uses and valuations' (Günter and Leeuwem, 1996: 33). In this context, we are looking at what thematic inferences the Nollywood industry offers about Nigeria and Africa; and how audiences' understanding of them are significant to their knowledge of cultures. In this type of reading, Barthes' meta-discourse of the 'rhetoric of image' is evoked, where 'the variation in reading is not, however, anarchic; it depends on the different kinds of knowledge – practical, national, cultural, aesthetic – invested in the image and […] brought into a typology' (Barthes, 1964: 24). Thus, our site for analyzing this rhetoric is basically the films, from where we shall draw meanings and implications of their thematic representations.

The site of film narratives as Turner argues is at the simplest level to be analyzed within a context that is both textual and social. This implies that reading films to make meanings needs the viewer to be aware that 'the myths, beliefs and practices preferred by a culture or group of cultures that produce it will definitely find their way into those cultures' narratives where they can be reinforced, criticized or simply reproduced (Turner, 2006: 109). These values and beliefs form the filmic texts. Thus, different filmic texts and narratives are rich sources of information about a people and their culture which the filmic messages represent. Whether this is true of all texts depends on reading the encoded messages from the background of both the encoders and the viewers vis-à-vis the reality represented. This type of reading as O'Sullivan argues 'may serve to inform, reinforce or challenge stereotypes' (1994: 128).

Every film communicates some information about its background, thus by deconstructing them; we can underpin their meanings, whether aberrantly, ambivalently or closely tied to real life situations. McFarlane argues that 'whether it means to do so or not, any country with an even half-way thriving film industry, will inevitably reveal a good deal about itself to the rest of the world' (1987: 39). By this is meant that filmic images carry within them, national symbols and cultures that can inform audiences about their origin and also about the nation's particular notion of the reality being represented. Thus, as Street highlights in relation to British Films, 'cinema is now only one screen format among many which will continue to communicate images which contribute to our understanding of the complex and diverse experiences […]' (Street, 1997: 200) of people across the globe. Film uses symbols to inform audiences about realities. With symbols, national identities are framed and a people's culture is described, hence the site of film is one of meaning making of realities. Akudinobi believes that films are predominant sources of cultural and national information, but argues that it is complex with regard to nationalism. Thus, [filmic] 'symbols have a very complex relationship to nationalism' he argues. In a sense, it is the 'uniqueness' of some specific symbols that make them "stand" for a "nation" (2001: 132). The uniqueness of symbols therefore foregrounds their origin and adds authenticity to the significance of what they represent as we will, for instance, see with kola nut in Africa, or the ritualistic consultation of oracles in some Nigerian films.

The question of cinematic representations of Africa is the main thrust of this study's deconstructions. This is because there are currently complex ambivalences between Nollywood and other Western mainstream representations. As stated earlier, and re-echoed here, 'it is inescapably true that the position of black people in the image hierarchy has been framed historically by the ideological contours of race and representations' (1996: XVIII) by the West. Thus, a deconstruction methodology helps to unravel the ideological frame of mind behind these representations in order to read and analyze films from both Western and African ideological perspectives. As a matter of fact, 'the nation as a form of cultural elaboration (in the Gramscian sense), is an agency of ambivalent narration that holds culture at its most productive position, as a force for "subordination", fracturing, diffusing, creating, focusing, and guidance' (Bhabha, ibid: 3-

4). This concept of culture when localized at a time and place, according to Murphy, refers to 'the total body of traditions borne by a society and transmitted from generation to generation. It thus refers to the norms, values, standards by which people act and includes the ways distinctive in each society of ordering the world and rendering it intelligible' (1986: 14). Anderson (1997) includes the notion of 'ideology', 'subjective states', 'ritual' and 'discourse' in his definition of culture, while Crystal identifies it with worldviews. Particularly for Crystal 'culture emerges through the accumulation of many sources from a community: its myths and legends, its accounts of traditions and practices, and a vast amount of cultural knowledge which is all too inadequately summoned by the single word "heritage" ' (2006: 46).

Like Geertz and Turner, Hall believes that culture embodies meaning and is extremely public. It is, as he argues, 'nothing but the sum of different classificatory systems and discursive formations on which language draws in order to give meaning to things' (Rojek, 2003: 165). These concepts of culture when applied to Nollywood representations and Nigeria as a country, therefore, 'describe a history of experience that has been shared by a people in the context of a nation since each national culture expresses itself in a way that reasserts normativeness, gives vent to expression, encourages thought, and permits action' (Edelstein, Ito and Kepplinger, 1989: 33). And this, as Lull highlights, means that 'culture interacts with and assimilates symbolic power […] because culture is made up of not only the traditional values, durable features, and routine activities that form local living environments, but also a broad and attractive array of symbolic resources expressed by the mass media and other social institutions' (2000: 173).

The Nollywood filmic texts, while contemplating histories and stories, also explore the every-day life experiences of the people by representing their cultural and religious lifestyles alongside their ecological landscapes. Geertz in his study of the Javanese people highlights that 'culture is a system of socially established structures of meanings' (1973: 12), while Turner (1969, 1974) foregrounds cultures in almost all people's rituals. On this note Turner explores the ordinary functions of cultures in communities as rituals

which help individuals come to terms with the ancientness of their existence while projecting them to the future. This as Geertz implies are 'social dramas', celebrated by community members in a regenerative process that restores order at the excited fluidity of heightened emotions (Geertz, 1983: 28). This idea of social dramas in Geertz features prominently in his exploration of the notion of symbolic ritual processes in communities and will be revisited later as we analyze these 'rituals' fully.

3.7 Chapter Conclusion

Since the ideas around the notions of culture and representations are fundamental to this study, especially in terms of deconstructing communalism in the context of Nollywood films, we have established the working definitions of these concepts using key cultural theorists to guide our work. Culture is the way of life of a people. The 'rhetoric of culture' is philosophically implied and used here whereby the notion refers to the 'visual arguments' of film texts populated by thematic representations. After outlining its theoretical framework in this chapter, we engaged with different studies done across cultures in both Western and African cinemas, including Nollywood, to pave way for the grasp of 'culture' as exemplified by Geertz and Turner. Particularly in exploring other views on reception studies, this chapter outlined the different understanding and interpretations offered by existing literatures in making meaning of representations.

Geertz's concept of thick description and how it methodologically aids the reading of cultures was presented alongside the working notions of culture offered by Hall and Turner. Moemeka's communalistic communication is also explored to highlight the core arguments of communalism and its indicators as to guide the interpretive discourses of the select filmography as will be done in this study. Particularly on Turner's dialectics of ritual culture, we established rituals as the core elements of cultural indices that capture the quintessence of what a people believes in using the Igbos as core example and case-study. Thus, having established the overall theoretical frameworks of this research at this stage, the next chapter will be focusing on the methodologies used in gathering data from the primary fieldwork conducted in Nigeria between December 2007 and February 2008.

Meanwhile, the table below shows the different zones and states in Nigeria, with asterisks indicating the places where the focus-group fieldwork interviews took place.

Table 1.

Names of Zones in the Country	Names of States in the Geopolitical Zones
South West	Ekiti, Lagos, Osun, Ogun, Oyo.
South East*	Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo.
South-South*	Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers.
North Central	Benue, Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau.
North East	Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe.
North West	Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Jigawa, Zamfara.

ENDNOTES

[1]Morres (1993: 5) argues that 'effects studies confine themselves to immediately observable changes in human behaviour and leave the formal structure of media output wholly untheorized'. As 'a conventional

behaviourist psychological theory, effects studies consider the individual as a "black box" upon which the stimuli are enacted and to which he or she responds' (Bailey, 2005: 4). Thus, unlike the effects theory, this research considers more of the interactions of audiences with media texts and departs significantly from the viewpoint of both effects and gender studies, for instance, where Mulvey would 'consider the "gaze" in Hollywood films to be a masculine gaze and the female to be the object of the gaze' (Brereton: 2005). The idea here strictly speaking, is to focus on audiences' interpretations of the readings of cultures in Nollywood films.

[2]Cultural competence as espoused by Bourdieu implies that when Hollywood or any other Western mainstream media represents Africa, the possibility of error is there because they probably lack the internal competence of interpreting the people's way of life from the outside. Instances of where this mistake was done abound in the colonial period of Nigeria's history when the colonialists branded most cultures paganistic in the 1800s (See Omenka, 1999: 225) when they could not understand the logic behind them. Thus, the implication of this is that if Hollywood or any other media outside of Africa wants to engage in the representation of the cosmology and culture of the people, the need to possess the cultural knowledge of the society is paramount. Outside of this, they only breed propaganda, stereotypes and (mis)representations as visibly seen in most (colonial) films of the West on Africa. Akudinobi on this note calls for 'shared social' destiny which is a stretch on Bourdieu's 'cultural competencies'. By it, he means that this sense of shared social destiny and cultural practices should inform the overall representation of culture. He therefore defines African filmmakers as part of the 'cultural elites' who are 'crucial to the formulation, nurturing and orientation of specific national discourses' (2001: 124). Under this guise, there is the understanding of authentic African cinematic representations which refer to films made as 'social commentaries, reflecting social reality' in Africa (Esan, 2008: 5) other than most Western representations on the same themes that are stereotypically imbued. To this end, Akudinobi argues that, 'to the extent that African directors show marked concern for the regeneration of African cultural heritage, the incorporation of indigenous legend, aesthetics, and philosophical precepts in their works, most African films fall under the rubric of 'cultural nationalism' (2001: 125). Thus, the Nigerian Nollywood film industry has some competence over Western media in representing Nigerian cultures since they are more authentically positioned to identify with these elements of cultures. Generally, it is by Nollywood placing emphasis on the core characteristics and traditions of Nigerians that their nationalism as well as their authentic competence is founded. This 'derives in part from [...] the manner in which they relate to the construction of social realities, and the significant roles these play in exploring that contentious term 'nation' (Akudinobi, ibid, 139).

Chapter Four

4.0 Research Methodologies

4.1 Introduction

Wolfenstein (2002) in *Movie Analyses in the Study of Culture,* highlights that a movie analysis research on cultural representations should 'look for regularities running through all the productions of a culture: its religions, rituals, secular dances, myths, ornaments, and the like' (2002: 70). Particularly the methodologies used here were to explore cultural issues in Nollywood. The key idea was to underpin the meanings of their representations in the select filmography as well as audiences' interpretations of their meanings in focus-group interviews. In this context, this research was guided by the vision that 'research is an interpretative enterprise whereby the investigator uses observation and […] interviewing to grasp the meaning of communication by analyzing the perceptions, shared assumptions and activities of the social actors under scrutiny' (Lull, 1990: 183/184).

Even though a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches as recommended by Jensen (2002: 258) for social science research like this were used, it was mainly the qualitative model that is strictly applied in this study. This is because it is taken to practically have 'the advantage of focusing on the subtleties and nuances of communication processes' (Lull, 1990: 19). Thus, the following were utilized to explore the original objectives of this study: literature review, textual analysis, questionnaire and focus-group interviews as we shall now explain in detail.

4.2 Methodological Frameworks

Like every other social science research, we began by reviewing current literatures and theories on representations to structure and guide this study. For this reason, some rigorous explorations of some key concepts were done, especially the concepts of communalism, third cinema, and ritual process as seen in Turner (1969) and Geertz (1977). Upon completing the theorization of these themes and concepts, we also undertook to review the different strands of studies done in reception analysis and especially on the Nollywood phenomenon which is still a new area in film studies. It was

after this that I ventured into the textual analysis of some select films (see filmography) in order to interpret and frame the representations of Igbo rituals in this present work. By looking at these films, I set myself mainly to underpin the indicators of rituals in communalism as outlined by Moemeka (1998) and Onwubiko (1991) in the theoretical framework chapters [two and three].

The select films were chosen because they form a unique part of Nollywood's productions and have themes that characteristically reflect the understanding that have been mobilized in this study which arguably resonate with audiences given the proximity of these rituals to their lived-in conditions. After the textual analysis, I went into conducting the focus-group primary research in Nigeria.[1] Fifty six participants were interviewed in eight sessions across four major institutions in the South-East and South-South geopolitical zones of the country. Added to these were two in-depth interviews with Nollywood actors and stakeholders done in Dublin.

4. 2. 1 Textual Analysis

Generally, by means of textual analysis, this study sought to identify ways in which texts are encoded with messages that are communalistic by deconstructing them in the light of Geertz 'thick description' (1973) especially in 'the sense of who we think we are' (Turner, 2006: 170) as Nigerians and Igbos in particular. For this reasons, it looked at Nollywood film aesthetics and narratives to explain culture, rituals, environments and characters and the implications of their screen acts and themes, not only in the context of the pre-colonial era but also in the post-colonial structures of the Igbo society. Themes like hospitality rituals, funeral rituals, love-life, religious experiences and socio-cultural patterns of celebrations were particularly looked out for in the films.

I applied visual analysis especially in the context of doing this since I analyzed the cultural codes of the Igbos as represented in the films, having mobilized the concept of 'cultural patterns' earlier when discussing communalism and cultural competence (Bourdieu, 1994) in chapter three. In this context, this research focused on those themes

that depict mainly the cultural indicators of communalism which according to Berger are the 'complex patterns of associations that all members of a given society and culture learn and which play an important role in people's lives' (Berger, 1998: 26). In this way, analyzing the filmic texts then meant that they were seen not to create meanings alone but to have the contexts of productions and uses brought into them to make meanings of 'realities' (Gillespie and Toynbee, 2006: 3) from the perspective of the Igbo society.

Discussing rituals in the Nollywood films occurs on two levels and it is appropriate to say that the interest of the textual analysis here resided only on one. This refers to the notion of rituals in the film industry that depicts communal village ceremonies and festivals and show how people live and celebrate their cultures. This concept of rituals is applied to the deep social ecology of communalistic societies of the Igbos whose cosmologies were delineated earlier in this project. These are the ritual types that Rothenbuhler (1998), Real (1996), Turner (1974), Uzukwu (1997), Faniran (2003) and Uwah (2005) discuss as originating in communities and reflective of people's myths and aspirations. These rituals are confined to members of particular societies and express shared worldviews and beliefs and are an organized affirmation of the people's existence as a community: their joys and sorrows, their fears and aspirations, their myths and stories, and generally the tale of where they are coming from and where they are going.

The second notion of rituals in relation to Nollywood is on filmic themes and storylines which reflect scenes of using human beings for ritual sacrifices in order to become wealthy. Typical of this representation is cultism which is somewhat antithetical to the lived-in experiences of African society. In films like *Rituals* (1997) and *Hunters* (2006), this theme is constructed as frivolous and showcases people's uncanny attitude to others for the sake of monetary wealth. While in the film *Rituals*, depictions are made of how people willingly join secret cults for the sole purpose of getting wealthy, in *The Hunters*, Jack (Andy Okonkwo) thought he had sacrificed one of his two sons when he died by accident, only to be told that he has still to sacrifice the second one since the first was not specifically sacrificed to the cult. That would leave Jack childless which he dreaded and had to go on the run from all cultic activities, even though the other cult members hunted

him to comply with their demands. In this type of secret rituals in the films, the perpetrators arguably are murderers and terrorists of their communities in practical terms. Their tactics for instance, as represented particularly in the 1997 Kenneth Nnebue's film *Rituals*, showcases where a rich cultist resisted cure to his ailment until a human sacrifice is offered to placate the goddess of his cult which he worshipped alongside other cultists. Representations like these problematize the definition of cultures in Nollywood filmic texts. Participants at the focus-group primary research were quick to indicate that most representations of Nollywood can hardly be termed African culture. Particularly, they pointed to the uncanny attitudes of ritualists and their romance with human blood which they decried as not part of Nigerian cultures, or are at least over generalized in the movies. One respondent argues that 'all these love films and the rest of them are over the top. They don't really depict our cultures [...], these ritual killings are not part of us'. And for another student of Imo State University, 'sometimes Nollywood goes too far with exaggerations of some issues in the society [...]. In most campus films [...] they place students in a kind of big houses [....], in some others, they make it seem like students live in expensive houses, ride big cars [...], and they go far into extremes in the way students shoot guns [...]. I think students don't generally shoot', he concluded.

This second notion of rituals nevertheless became prominent in most Nigerian movies especially in the 1990s under the military regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha when economic hardship was rife everywhere and people could do anything to get rich including using their loved ones for ritual sacrifices. For this, there is the representations of young men sacrificing their mothers in order to become wealthy in films like *Blood Money,* or their wives, as happened in *Living in Bondage* (1992). In *Blood Money,* Mike Mouka (Zack Orji) is faced with repaying his bank the sum of 2 million naira and because he had no way of redeeming it, joined a secret cult which eventually demanded him to present his mother for ritual sacrifice. Doing this did not leave him with peace but made him become paranoid as he continued to be tormented by the apparition of his mother. Perhaps, this was Nollywood's method to moralize on the outcomes of such cultic activities, since these movies at their final closures often depict regrets and sorrows as the lot of the perpetrators of the evils of ritual sacrifices. Generally,

the interest in the textual analysis of this thesis was not on the second notion of rituals, but on the communal village ceremonies that celebrate the myths and stories of the people as already said.

Out of the numerous rituals of the Igbos (see appendix D for samples of other Igbo rituals), this research focused only on five key rituals that are often celebrated among the Igbos. These key rituals that were analyzed in this study include: *Iri-ji* (new yam festival), *Ime-oji* (presentation and breaking of kola nut), widowhood rituals, symbolic dancing, and religion and worship ritual as were highlited in the introductory chapter. The argument here is that while, not exhausting all the Igbo rituals under these five themes, they are really significant to underscore the meaning and implications of rituals in the films that explores not only Moemeka's claim that Africans communicate communalistically but also affirms the assumption of this thesis that the Nollywood industry has been able to go 'from [community] rituals to the films'.

These selected films depict the ritual myths of the Igbo society and tell stories that resonate with their history and experiences of life. They are therefore selected according to their thematic representations that reflects the rituals being studied here and in this way they show the diversities of rituals among the group as a people as well as explore the different kinds of aesthetics that characterized each theme and ritual celebration depending on whether the culture is in the pre-colonial or post-colonial context. Thus, among the reasons that underpin the specific choice of them are the frequency of their representations in Nollywood which is very constant and the fact that in real life situations, they are entirely part of everyday activities. They celebrate the core moments in the lives of the Igbo people as a society and are looked upon as distinguishing them in a characteristic manner by which they are carried out. Even though the films belong to different genres that are operative within Nollywood, the aim of their choice was not to discuss them from the viewpoint of genres as Ging (2006) did in her study of 'Marginalized Masculinities in Irish Cinema', but to signal that these categories (see: Oluyinka, 2008) are significant in the film industry that they relate to the different aspects of the Igbo society.

Tobin (2000), in *Good Guys Don't Wear Hats* presents a picture of how representations are decoded by exploring the 'reading' of films to analyze cultural constructions of different nationalities. His framework of analysis is adopted by this research to undertake the textual reading of the select Nollywood films as well as audiences' interpretations of filmic representations. *Good Guys Don't Wear Hats,* which eventually became the title of Tobin's book, was an original answer of a pupil-respondent to the question, 'who are the good guys in the film?' This was a follow up response to that inquiry and underscored the bad guys in the film as those who are mean by having their eyes covered, like the *Asian eyes,* as against the corporately dressed good guys without hats on, whose 'eyes' and looks are elegant. In this book, issues like *Jews' nose, Blacks' skin, Asians' eye* are repetitive motifs with which the school children analyzed filmic characters and cultures therein represented in terms of emphasis on the 'good' and 'bad' people in the film.

In revisiting Claude Levi Strauss' findings in reading *The Raw and the Cooked* (1996), Tobin was poised to review Strauss' hypothesis that the beliefs and values of a culture can possibly be elucidated through the identification of core binaries. He therefore wanted to know the core binaries that the *Koa* pupils made of their world through films. The procedure was to screen video clips and explore their readings made by the respondents. He summed up his findings, thus:

> Many of Disney's children's movies, including *Swiss Family Robinson*, contain offensive racial stereotypes, especially in the characterization of the villains. There is a danger that young children, lacking experience in making sense of the complexities of media representations of race, may be confused and misled by these stereotypes [...]. One especially pernicious form of such injury is when the minority-group child, identifying with the aggressor, is seduced by the racial semiotics of a film into seeing people who look like her as ugly or evil (Tobin, 2000: 55).

Even though Tobin's focus-group participants were pupils, it still reveals how impressions can be formed and decoded through media representations. In this present study, the main respondents however, were adult participants to whom the concept of

Igbo's cultures particularly was assumed to be well known. Like Tobin, this research applied the methodologies of analyzing ritual representations from the perspectives of audiences and those of filmmakers.

Following the findings from his focus-group interviews with pupil-respondents, Tobin argues for a rigorous and sophisticated method of textual analysis since he believes that focus-group participants, especially children [as he used] can often times be problematic in their interpretations of social issues in the light of what he called 'slips' or 'double-voiced' (2000: 12). Certainly, this is not only problematic in textual analysis generally but can also be ambivalent especially when researchers are faced with considering the implicit correctness of what they perceive respondents to be saying as different from what they mean. Again, this can further be problematic even from the context of a researcher's own interpretations in terms of battling to be sure that he or she is faithful to the respondents' answers even contrary to his or her *a priori* assumptions. Thus, the problem of objectivity in interpreting audiences' responses can be a difficult issue especially where there are possible underlying variables that could impinge on researcher's understanding of what participants intend to mean. For instance, Tobin signals two kinds of possible interpretations that could be made using focus-group slippages in the context of Freud and Voloshinov (Bakhtin) interpreting children's answers. While Freud might read the implication of 'Chinese eyes' in the Koa children's response to his focus-group question as 'a symptom of an identity conflict and unconscious expression of the ambivalence about being Asian American, Voloshinov [Bakhtin] would read it as a local manifestation of the conflictual and incommensurable discourses on race and ethnicity that exist in the larger American society' (2000: 13), Tobin agues. For reasons like this, Tobin argues for respondents' interpretations to be seen as 'discourses' that must be carefully analyzed with the knowledge of the possible inflection of the social spaces of their environment brought into their answers. Thus, he considers social spaces as 'culture-like entities located in the larger real cultures' (2000: 12) whereby audiences' 'slips' can be seen as windows onto the conflicts and tensions of the larger society to which they belong. This view is considered here in my analysis of Nollywood audiences, knowing that the audience-participants in underpinning their

interpretations of cultures, more or less, do so from their experiences as members of the community.

Since the focus-group participants of this present study were adults, the difficulties of different sites of 'aporia' [doubt] as Tobin suggests, did not arise, as participants were taken on their terms as adults and hence to imply what they say. Even though, it might be generally difficult to argue that these audiences might not have 'double-spoke' on instances of answering questions as Tobin states, it suffices to say that since this study was done in compliance with media ethical standards in social science research which emphasize truth as a quality in reporting facts, the primary data analyzed here were basically teased out as they were presented without imposing researcher's presumptions or doubts on them. In other words, it is done independent of this researcher's views in a way that allows audiences have their own voice and be seen to express it by themselves. In this way, there was the openness to what answers participants came up with and manuscripts were made to help make sure that both concepts and interpretations of cultures by means of what Patton calls 'inductive analysis' were well documented. By this is understood that 'the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis are made to come from the data generated during these interviews rather than being posed on participants prior to data collection' (Patton, 1990: 390-391). For this reason, the key phrases and terms (indigenous concepts) generated by participants in the focus-group sessions were 'thickly described' to elucidate the essence of their opinions.

4.2.2 Selection of Films

A category of films were chosen (see filmography) and analyzed in this study's textual analysis. These include films that belong to some of the different genres operative in Nollywood. These categories contribute significantly to unraveling the different lifestyles and socio-cultural experiences of the Igbos in their ethnic and national contexts. While the comedies were selected to analyze the entertainment culture of the society, the thriller films were used to analyze the dynamics and paradoxes of the modern day Nigeria in the wake of new socio-political trends, technologies and 'second orality' (Ong, 1982: 45).

The romance genre films were read to interpret the structures of everyday relationships especially between the opposite sexes, not only in the texts but also in the Nigerian society, and therefore offered a way of understanding the aspirations of the young in today's Nigerian culture. The historic-epic films on their own were used to understanding what underlies the history of the Nigerian society, pointing back to the earliest encounters of the West with Africa in the wake of colonialism, slavery and missionary evangelizations, while on the other hand, the mythic-parable films were evoked to identify the cultural traditions and customs of the people in the rural society, long before civilization. Finally, with the religio-moral category of films, we elucidated the people's attitude towards religion and ritual worship. For instance, Haynes and Okome argue that in these films it is possible to see the spectacle of luxury which is normally accompanied by a moralizing commentary which appeals more to traditional values (2000: 79). Instances of this point were rehearsed in this study by audience-participants who used the films to explore moral and religious values of the society.

Following the understanding outlined earlier in this study by explicating the 'visual rhetorics of culture', this thesis applied visual analysis mainly to deconstruct filmic themes and actions as seen on screen. The idea was to explore how these films are made from a bottom-up root paradigm of movie productions where themes are seen to focus on societal issues. In other words, while the Igbo cultures are influencing the films, these films are also exploring the cultures. Thus, the ritual data in the films were used as significant visual materials to attest to the presence of these cultures in Nollywood productions.

Particularly for the focus-group interview sessions, the film *Coronation* (2004) directed by Ifeanyi Azodo, was chosen because of its symbolic theme and ceremonial activities that it represented which are prominent among the Igbos. Specifically the ritual of conferring title to village leaders which involves celebrations that reflect communalistic practices as espoused in the theoretical framework on communalism were teased out, for instance, the presentation of kola-nuts, communal dancing, greeting patterns, and the conferment of the *ozo* title on some members of the community. This film can be called

a cultural tale that combines village politics, a traditional title-taking ceremony in the South-East of Nigeria, and the quest for power and authority among the people. It was selected mainly because it represents a theme that audiences are familiar with and the idea was to use it to generate discussions around cultural representations and from there move into this study's research questions as contained in the approved question guide for the primary research.

Coronation is set as a critique of the *ozo* title in the Igbo community of South-Eastern Nigeria. Given the symbolism of this ritual in this film and the celebrative mode of the participants in the ceremony, and guided by the director's use of typical cultural costumes, the film reveals communalistic indicators that this study has so far thematized. It is the story of Akwaika, a wealthy young man who desired by all means to belong to the *ozo* cult in his community. Originally, a poor man, trained by his brother and uncle, Akwaika becomes rich and forgets all those who helped educate him. His only desire was to become more respectable in the community by joining the group of the law makers, traditionally called *ndi ozo.* This was necessitated because at one occasion he discovered that though being wealthy, the *ozo* group discriminated against him during the *iri ji* festival, as they could not allow him sit in their midst and enjoy the festivities of the new yam festival since he was considered an 'uninitiated' member of the society. In this light, the cultural norm of Igbo communalism is implied whereby the difference between the initiated and uninitiated in the society is what this film represents in this sequence. The message is that Akwaika has to belong to this revered group of elders if he is to enjoy their class, status and company in the society.

Showcasing the differences between the rich *ozo* title holders and their poor relatives is where this film satirizes the cult as unbecoming. In other words, the screen actions of this movie question the relevance of this communalistic culture by depicting the extent this class of people go to achieve this title. In the case of Akwaika, bribes had to be given to other members of the cult to recommend him and some who opposed him or refused to be sponsored by him got killed by his agents who were deceived because of his wealth. In the end, even his brother Okonta, was killed [by him] for standing on his way to the title

taking preparations. *Coronation* therefore, while representing this aspect of the Igbo's cultural life at the same time expresses people's disgust [especially the poor] at the anomaly of the society where the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. The scene that reveals this is the gossip sequence of three girls at the village stream, where they had gone to fetch water. One of them in attempting to describe how powerful *ozo* Nnabuenyi (Pete Edochie) is, and how philanthrophic he is, points to his spending a lot of money to bury his only brother who died in poverty. Others retorted in dismay to this thinking by highlighting that he (Nnabuenyi) was actually trained by that his brother and he left him to die without care, only to spend fortunes at his funeral rituals for the public to praise him as a rich *ozo* title holder. The expressions of these discussants therefore give a clue to the feelings of members of the society and invariably of viewers who nevertheless have seen the real paucity of the *ozo* society. Asked by one of them, 'is the *ozo* title after all an achievement?', the other two replied, 'don't mind men…some of them are fools', 'but don't you know of the respect and regard to them in our society?'

Implicitly this discourse by these three girls betrays the sentiments of people in communalistic Igbo society whereby while some oppose the rich who forget about their poor relatives, others revere them as successful, especially when these are recognized by the community as their local elders coronated with a chieftaincy title, an *ozo* title or an *nze* title. In this film, *ozo* Nnabuenyi even betrays the reverence of the society to this title when he shouted at his wife for advising him to help his poor uncle with some money for eye treatment. He (Nnabuenyi) retorted, 'do you wear a red cap?' implying she should not be contributing to their [*ozo* Nnabuenyi and his poor uncle, *ozo* Okudo] discussion since she is not an *ozo* titled person in the society. The implication of this is to depict how patriarchal the Igbo communalistic society is while at the same signal to the characteristic symbolic activities that shroud communal rituals and the significance of the *ozo* title among the Igbos in particular. Choosing to start focus-group discussions with this film in this study is to elicit audiences' reactions to the film, to the cultures, to the ritual of *ozo* coronation and to progress into other themes studied and analyzed here. Suffice to say on this point that one of the key findings is that audiences reacted with mixed feelings as seen in the three girls mentioned above. While some think that the title taking ceremony

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is cultural and requires reverence, others believe it is no more of any relevance to the society given the compromises they make of their status and the way they bribe their ways into it and sometimes use their positions to do harm.

However, guided by the motivating objectives of discovering how Nollywood serves as a medium of cultural representations, the questions asked audiences revolved not only on this film, but also around different other themes of Nollywood as well. Particularly for students, the notion of interviewing them was to get their feelings and interpretations of meanings on ritual themes and representations and their attitudes towards the film industry. Since focus-groups 'ordinarily impel participants to think about and stay with the subject being discussed in a way that generalizes about themes, messages and characters' (Liebes and Katz, 1990: 28), we made sure to explore their answers on each theme of the questions raised. Tobin suggests that qualitative research be considered a rule of thumb especially on day to day topics, hence; focus-group discourse was applied specifically to tease out Nollywood's themes which more or less hinge on the different aspects of the everyday life in Nigeria, especially those of the Igbos. Thus, according to Tobin 'if your research is on a topic that people commonly discuss with others, do group interviews [...]. A good portion of the pleasure and meaning we get from movies come from talking about them' (2000: 141).

4.3 Audience Primary Research

Ideally, 'the idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select informants that will best answer the research questions' (Creswell, 1994: 148). According to Patton, this is to allow us enter into the other person's perspectives which 'begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit' (Patton, 1990: 278). For this reason, focus-group interviews were chosen for this study to compliment and/or problematize the findings of the textual analysis already done on the select films to explore the meanings of Igbo rituals as represented in Nollywood.

Generally, this was not a study framed on the classical experimental techniques of checking laboratory effects, as in control experiment where one looks out for film influences on viewers, only the visuals and their themes were deeply analyzed. The interview sessions were dialogical and interactive in order to challenge the passivity of audiences and lead them towards their own construction of meanings of the cultural representations they consume in Nollywood. Here, interviews were conducted in the light of what Seale suggests they should be: 'social encounters, where speakers collaborate in producing retrospective and prospective accounts or versions of their past or future, actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts' (2004: 15) as we shortly will discover when we present the findings fully.

Again, since it was not a gender-based study, the idea was to make the interviews a mixed-sex research that is highly inclusive and representative. But this was not strictly followed, for instance, since only female participants took part in the School of Nursing, Mbano focus-group sessions and more of males than females in the Centre for the study of African Communication and Cultures, Port Harcourt. Other than these, every other interview were gender-mixed sessions. And since the participants were assumed to be already at home with Igbo cultures and with one another, given the less formal structure of the institutions, these focus-group interviews were made to be less official in eliciting their opinions. This therefore guaranteed participants' fair presentation of their views in the interview processes as well as offered the opportunity to gain information of their diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and cultures in spite of age differences, background and social status. Bailey calls research like this 'a cross-sectional study whereby a cross section of the population is being researched at the same time by involving a broad sampling of persons of different ages, different educational and income levels, different races, different religions, and so on' (1994: 36).

Since the issue of ethics in social science research is becoming a huge area currently due to possible abridgments of people's human rights that ought not be violated at all, this study was made sure to be conducted within the parameters of media ethics standards. By this is meant that having completed the media ethics modules in the MA studies, this

researcher made sure to approach the different research environments and participants guided with ethical principles demanded for such encounters. And even though efforts were made to inquire about seeking approvals from the ethics' board of the different institutions used in this study, it was found that such boards were non-existent among these chosen institutions, hence this researcher was left to do only what is ethically appropriate in terms of what is observed in social science research as the usual practice and especially following the standard of practice in the Dublin City University [which is his current university]. On this note, the entire study was conducted in a in free and fair social [public] environment with able-bodied adults who were considered not to be in any danger of harm at all by participating in the research process given their environments and numbers.

4.3.1 Selection of Research Participants

To supplement the textual analysis of this study, eight groups of participants were selected from the following four major institutions that formed the basis of this study's audience primary research: School of nursing, Mbano Joint Hospital, Imo State; Imo State University, Owerri; Centre for the study of African Communication and Culture, CIWA, Port-Harcourt City, Rivers State; and the Holy Family Parish Youth Outreach Centre, Woji, Port-Harcourt City, Rivers State. Out of all these, fifty six participants took part in the eight focus-group interviews. The institutions were already known to me and the assistants were chosen from among them to help organize the participants, the interview locations and the video recording and taping of the interview processes. I made sure to have two assistants selected from each institution to liaise between the participants and myself before I could travel down to Nigeria for the overall interview sessions. These
 agreed and did help facilitate my project by getting volunteers to participate in the interviews. Only one personal assistant was chosen to follow me to all the eight sessions since he did most of the video-recording works and helped organize meals and remunerations to participants after each session. Initially, I made contacts with these institutions and assistants through phone calls and mentioned to them the fact that I was

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planning to come home and carry out my research among their students. Out of the four institutions however, were audiences from the rural and city environments, and even from different parts of the country. But since the intention only focused on the analysis of cultures in the films, the notion of discrepancies between the rural and urban consumers of media products was not hugely considered. Thus, as far as communalism was concerned, this research only engaged participants to interpret cultural representations from their perspectives as audiences.

Generally, the original idea of exploring rituals in Nollywood was aimed to be investigated by means of filmic texts and audiences from across the different parts of Nigeria. But given the lack of enough fund to cover transportation to all the six geo-political zones alongside time factors for this study, it was problematic to pursue such a goal. I decided to use the above mentioned institutions and church instead to explore the hypothesis of this study. Some of the factors that necessitated using schools and universities include the facts that these institutions were not ethnically centered and welcomed people from all parts of Nigeria, hence the chances of getting representatives from also across the different zones of Nigeria. Again, it was more economically feasible as it does not warrant me taking flights across the different parts of the country. Added to all these is the fact that young people, mostly students are considered to be the most avid consumers of Nollywood in Nigeria (Okome, 2007; Akpabio, 2007). In this case, both studies by Okome and Akpabio indicate that it is the younger generation in Nigeria that devote most of their leisure to watching and discussing Nollywood films and was even affirmed by this study's findings. For instance, when asked in the interview sessions 'how many times do you watch Nollywood films in a week?', 37.1% of young participants agreed to watching at least one in a week, either for relaxation or because it has been recommended to them, more than any other age group. Overall, they get their films by renting them or joining video clubs, if they cannot borrow from family friends or neighbours. Hence, all consumptions in this study's sample were considered 'home-based', given the availability of domestic media technologies like the DVD and VCD players and television sets.

Even though the average age of respondents falls between 19 and 54 years (see appendix on respondents), the majority of them were in their twenties and confessed to consuming films within family circles and with friends occasionally. 88.6% were aged between 20 and 34 years, while 7% only were between 35 and 54 years; and 3.9% were between 18 and 20 years. 52.0% are males as against 48.0% that are females. Unlike the films actors, students generally argued points that problematized each other's views apart from a few areas where they shared consensus. In this way the social practices and cultural dynamics of students as they interacted with Nollywood texts were observed and taken note of throughout the sessions. The fact that these research interviews were conducted among youths apparently of the same age bracket invariably amounted to generating a homogenous data in terms of participants age-group and social class as will be seen shortly. However, it contributed immensely to the overall dynamism of the focus-group interviews since it made the participants feel at home with each other and the research environment.

It was also problematic to use the traditional random sampling procedure here because of several other reasons. Firstly, this researcher was arranging the interviews from Ireland with the help of assistants whereby communications was only by telephone conversations and emails, which made it impossible to notice when instructions were not adequately followed. Again, the number of participant-volunteers kept shifting and changing on regular basis that not much could be done until this researcher was in Nigeria. Thus, given the problematic nature of sampling, it was decided to use only volunteers which amounted to conducting only two focus-group sessions with each institution on different dates.[1] Generally, most participants as consumers of Nollywood films reflected an appreciation that they know what is implied by culture in this study. The films resonate with their experiences better than most Western abstract storylines because they are built on their innate socio-cultural experiences, they highlighted. In this case, the village politics of communalistic society which explores the dynamics of spiritual authority between the elders, ancestors and deities, is a familiar background to their interpreting rituals and cultures in the films. Below is the summary of the focus-group key findings

which dovetails their industry of preference, rate of consumption of films, sites of viewing, accessibility and technology of consumption in Nigeria.

Table 2: Summary of Respondents' Key Answers on Nollywood

1. Preferred Industry

Which Films do you watch most?	Percentage of Users
Hollywood (American)	30.6%
Bollywood (Indian)	0%
Nollywood (Nigerian)	69.4%
None of the above	-

2. Loyalty and Fandom

How often would you watch Nollywood film?	Percentage of Users
One film per week	37.1%
One film per fortnight	16.3%
One film in a month	4.0%
None of the above	16.3%
Once per day	2.0 %
Two times a week	18.3%
Three Times a week	4.0%
Four Times a week	2.0%

3. Site of Consumption

Where do you normally watch Nollywood?	Percentage of Users

In the Cinema	2.0%
At home	89.7%
In friend's house	9.3%
None of the above	-

4. Accessibility

How do you get access to Nollywood	Percentage of Users
Renting from video shops	57.0%
Buying from movie stores	37.0%
Downloading from the internet	4.0%
Any other (Television)	2.0%

5. Technology of Consumption

What media technology do you use to watch films?	Percentage of Users
DVD player	41.7%
VCD player	51.8%
VHS video player	0.0%
Computer	6.5%

The findings of research also indicated that there are massive uses of Nollywood films made by audiences. But suffice to say that by these findings, while most students prefer Nollywood films to any other industry, some like the Hollywood films more than Nollywood. Again, most films are viewed on DVD and VCD machines as could be seen in the table above, thereby indicating the popular mode of consumption as the household or family setting as argued in Chapter two. Some participants said they watch Nollywood films more than what was indicated orginially in the number 2 column of the questionnaire. These therefore supplied answers used to tease out their consumption rates in terms of the phrases they used such 'as much as I want', 'often', 'rarely' and 'as much as I am privileged in a day or week'. What Nollywood does with rituals particularly for

these proximate audiences can be likened to what Michael Real (1996) asserts as the functional role of rituals in the general sense. Here, rituals can be understood from the thematic definition offered in this thesis as repetitive actions or in terms of Turner's notion of 'social dramas' which underpins that they revitalize and recalls people's myths and life experiences for them through the films.

4.3.2 Questionnaires (See Appendix A)

The questionnaire for this study was designed as part of the overall research techniques to reach a large part of the Igbo population sample. Particularly in this project, it was given to the interviewees to elicit their backgrounds before the focus-group discussions started. This means that the questions were structured in a multiple choice style to allow respondents select answers from a cluster of options and fill in their specific details where needed. Since this research was mainly qualitative, as already explained, the questionnaires on a general note were used to elicit answers that offered me the confidence of crosschecking participants' contributions at any stage of the transcriptions and analysis of data generated. The whole interviews were video-recorded as an accurate method of ensuring the preservation of data generated as well as an aid in the difficult process of interview transcriptions. Added to this were handwritten notes taken in the process that also serve as a check on essential issues that might not have been clear to me in the interview process. By standardized open ended questions used only at the tail end of the questions asked in the questionnaire, each respondent's answer to the same questions were organized and centered around thematic topics (Patton, 1990: 285) as outlined in this study's question guides.

4.3.3 Question Guide for Students

1. Personal feelings about Nollywood film industry.
2. The individuals' favourite type of films: Hollywood or Nollywood.
3. The technology of consumption: home-based or cinema centers.
4. Indicators of Nigerian culture in Nollywood texts.

5. Significant representations of peoples' concerns in the films' storylines.

6. Strategies of film production and circulation: any sponsorship?

7. Has Nollywood encoded any story that resonates with your experience before?

4.3.4 Question Guide for Nollywood Film Actors

1. Indicators of Nigerian culture in Nollywood texts.

2. Significant representations of the peoples' concerns in the films' storylines.

3. Personal feelings about Nollywood film industry.

4. Strategies of film production and circulation: statistics?

5. Indicators of Nigerian cultures in Nollywood films?

6. Differences between Nollywood and Hollywood representations.

7. Sponsorships and censorships?

8. Political economy in the Nollywood industry: productions (digital/celluloid/studios).

4.3.5 Focus-Group Interviews

Believing with Lull (1990: 21) that 'naturally occurring conversations can serve as a means for seeing the subtle ways that ideology is woven into normative interaction by examining audience members' (Lull, 1990: 21), this study used qualitative questions to explore the construction of meaning in the form of interpretations of texts by audiences (Ang, 1989: 106). Here 'different interpretative resources which various groups bring to their reading and discussion of "texts" ' (Kelly, and O'Connor, 1997: 3) were considered important in understanding the Nigerian Igbo cultures. And since one of the most important advances in recent audience studies is the growing recognition of the importance of the 'context of viewing' as Morley highlights (1992: 184), the screening of a film clip to stimulate discussion with focus-group participants was carried out in the course of conducting the primary research. Each interview session took an average of 1hr 30mins with each group of respondents made up of seven to eight individuals.

Initially, a group of seven to eight participants are invited into the recreation room, specifically prepared by a group of assistants for the focus-group interviews. Immediately after brief introductions and explanation on the research, these were served with questionnaires to fill in, followed by the screening of a clip from the film *Coronation*, chosen because of its cultural theme, and screened for a period of 10 minutes to stimulate discussions and systematically lead participants to discussing the research themes as contained in the question guide.

Classically, the main focus of this primary research was in determining audiences' opinions on Nigeria and Igbo's cultural representations as seen in films. In this case, it was taken that there is an on-going significant intertextuality between audiences and texts in a manner that acknowledges Hall's tripartite modes of reading media messages in order to create meanings. According to Hall, 'the consumption or reception of the television message is thus also itself a "moment" of the production process in its larger sense, though the latter is "predominant" because it is the "point of departure for the realization" of the message' (Hall, 2003: 53). Television can be substituted here with Nollywood, because it is the television screen that is used as an interface in watching the [Nollywood] films.

Particularly among the Igbos, and yet among most Nigerians, the availability of new domestic technologies can be said to have aided Nollywood's reception and consumption which these audiences attest to. For Ogundele, in the Nigerian context 'by the end of the 1980s, video players had become the dominant technological medium of popular culture and entertainment in most urban centers' (2000: 96/97). And this for many years has remained the main technology for movie consumptions at homes in the country complemented by the Video Compact Disc (VCD) and digital video disc (DVD) technology with which these films are consumed on television. Especially in Nigeria, many factors point to this preference of home consumption of films to cinema attendance. These reasons range from the economic to the social problems in the country. With the military decree that aided the collapse of the cinema halls in 1972, not many of the cinema centers were been maintained and effectively managed. Again, given the nature of the adverse economic impacts on the country in the 1980s, only a small number of

people can afford to spend their meagre incomes at cinema halls. Added to all these factors, is the uncertain nature of the provision of security at nights in the cities and their streets, especially when and where there is constant failure of power supply. So, Nollywood arguably serves as a kind of a cinematic version of a public service broadcasting system for Nigerian audiences at homes rather than in cinema halls.

As was attested to by the findings of this research, these technologies have not only liberalized the consumption of Nollywood and other film products in Nigeria, but also have 'influenced the [Nigerian] way of producing them' (Vital and Willemen, 2006: 283). In another way, they have promoted 'female viewership' of Nollywood in the country (Haynes and Okome, 2000: 73) in a very positive way. And in that way, they have facilitated time-shifting in movie consumptions whereby 'films are played at more convenient times for families by themselves' (Levy and Gunter, 1988: 17). An instance where this home technologies has liberalized female viewership of films in Nigeria is especially in the [Muslim] Northern part of the country. Given their common practice of the Islamic system of *Kulle* (female seclusion) under the Sharia law and custom, which restricts women from leaving their homes during daytimes and frequenting mixed-sex spaces (Larkin, 2000: 226), cinema going activity was considered outside the normal female practice in the North of Nigeria. As Haynes highlights, '[northern] cultural norms are different from and much more restrictive than those of the South [...] and this situation has become highly politicized with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the imposition of Sharia law in the North' (2007: 5). For this reason, the women who frequent cinema centers were considered to be morally depraved since cinema was seen as a condensed sexual space and an arena of pleasure and made many to withdraw from public cinemas which currently the video technology has revolutionalized for them. Larkin's account of how a Hausa audience, coming from this quite strict Muslim background views the home video *In da so da k'auna (Where there is Love, there is Respect/The Soul of My Heart* (1994), is illuminating on the appreciation of Nollywood among the [Hausa] people these days [in their homes] that would not have been possible for women given cultural strictness over going to public cinema centers in the past.

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> Much of the action of *In da so* takes place in rich, comfortable
> houses of the new elites that mimic the contemporary iconography
> and settings of Bombay cinema and Lagos-based videos such as
> *Glamour Girls*. The youths with whom I watched the video kept up
> a running commentary on the furnishings, carpets, condition of the cars,
> and clothes the characters wore. In an interview, Ado Ahmad told me he
> paid the main actress a bonus for every different outfit she wore during
> filming. When he later screened the video in Sokoto, one audience
> member counted the number of outfits she wore. "Some people are only
> interested in clothes," Ahmed shrugged (Larkin, 2000: 235).

As an important concept in the study of media messages, Hall outlines three approaches to explain how 'representations' of meaning through language (film) works which was explored as we conducted the focus-group interviews among audiences. These three strategies he calls: the reflective approach, the intentional approach and the constructionist or constructivist approach (1997: 24). While in the first theory, 'meaning' is said to lie in the object, person, idea or event to reflect the true meaning of things in the real world; the second is where a speaker or an author imposes his or her own unique meaning on the world through language. The third is where audiences construct their own meanings using representational systems (Hall, 1997: 24). These three approaches were explored in reviewing Nollywood's audiences by means of focus-group sessions as said and identified three other types of audiences that help construct audiences' attitudes in Nollywood.

These emerged from the focus-group dynamics through signs and codes, and answers given at different instances and sessions. These include the fans that love movies and are pleased with the industry's existence and productions because of the 'nationalistic' identity they afford them as Nigerians. In this way, they agree with the reflective approach of media messages since they use the films to review their contexts as citizens and also to affirm themselves in their cultures. Others are those who stumble into films 'occasionally' by flicking through television channels and use them to explore what is happening in the society and are identified as the constructionist or constructivist audiences; and then there are the typical differential viewers who watch to critique films in terms of their quality by comparisons to foreign productions. In these three groups, we

see those who agree that the films are a reflection of what is 'happening in the society', those who impose their meanings to the films, and the last, who are not bothered by whether the films signify anything or not. One thing is that these three kinds of fans had presence in all the focus-groups sessions both in the city (Port Harcourt, Owerri) and in the rural area (Mbano). The only difference lies in the percentage and number of each group's representatives in each session and institutions which really varied.

The availability of most Nollywood films in English, especially *Coronation* that was screened for 10 minutes before the interviews, made it easy that these sessions were conducted in English language and since most were students, they had no problem expressing themselves in the language, which often came across as their attempts to showcase the ability of being capable of speaking fluent English among themselves. Kunzler attests to this when he said that when English is used in the Nollywood films, it is the Nigerian type of spoken English that is used, which is more acceptable even to non-Nigerians from other English speaking African countries than the Hollywood English (Kunzler, 2007: 7) and as these participants related, the films make them learn English for they really did speak the [Nigerian] English language all through the interview sessions.

While focus-group research specifically 'focuses on learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world and the meaning it has for them' (Sharom, et al., 2002: 4), the objective of this study in data collection was to 'see what sense speakers make of [Igbo] cultures [as represented] in the texts and to create a comprehensive record of participants' words and actions' (Carla, 2001: 16) which was a core protocol of the whole interview sessions. By employing this technique, this study also sought to bring into the entire analysis the attitudes of audiences in watching Nollywood films: their pleasures and resonances with filmic themes and their concept of Nigerian and African cultures by means of textual representations. In this way, it was 'the very give-and-take interactions that led to spontaneous responses from session participants which provided insights, without disrupting underlying group assumptions, meanings and answers that were

socially constructed rather than individually created' (Berg, 2001: 112 -115). Thus, fundamentally this is where this research comes through as from an insider's perspective.

The researched – researcher dynamism that often shrouds a study like this can sometimes be problematic in nature and context. As Tobin argues, the presence of an interviewer is often a contextual factor (2000: 141). And in my case, it will be more problematic to deny that my presence could have affected respondents' answers since they were aware of my being a priest and an academic studying abroad, and at the same time much older than them. But how these influenced their docility or shyness throughout the interview sessions however, did not come through easily as most participants seemed to be relaxed and argued their points freely throughout the interview sessions. It was even difficult to tell of the differences in social contexts with the Imo State University students in Owerri between the interviews and the lunch time, when they were all invited to 'Mr. Biggs' in Ikenegbu-Owerri, [fast food restaurant] for lunch. They still engaged this researcher in arguments on the themes already discussed with such energy that would ordinarily characterize open door recreational discussions among Nigerians. However, this does not mean presuming the absence of possible difficult variables in the whole interview process, but suffice to say that not much variables can be said to depreciate the findings of this study either, as every effort was made to distance oneself from the answers of participants even in the transcribing of the interview data.

The presence of video cameras by some research assistants who were not members of their group also did not seem to have engendered unwanted variables in the interview process. It rather seemed to have contributed to the desire of participants to even contribute more and freely. On a number of times, most participants would re-introduce their names before they make their contributions and at times be speaking directly to the camera 'as if they wanted to be seen and heard'. Especially among the students of the School of Nursing, Mbano, this phenomenon happened in the two sessions of their interviews. In the city of Port Harcourt however, while no questions were asked about video-recording of the interviews, participants could not be said to be over excited to be videoed and conducted their sessions as if the videoing never took place. A few of them

however, wanted to compare the [interview] camcorder with what they see locally in Nigeria afterwards and made comments on a general note.

4. 3. 6 Transcriptions of Data

All the interviews done were personally transcribed by me and crosschecked with the jotted notes I took while the sessions were on. This helped me to ascertain the veracity of what I got. And since the facial expressions of the interviewees were part of the process, the transcription also helped to remark their particular gestures and expressions that followed direct and distinct comments and contributions of the interviewees. Since with the assistance of some helpers the whole interviews were video-recorded, I had to transcribe all of them by myself to be sure that the impressions the interview answers and video recordings made on me are duly articulated and brought into play in the data analysis. Generally, the interview sessions were recorded in twelve 60-minutes mini-DV premium camcorder tapes, adding up to a total of seven hundred and twenty minutes of video recording which were fully transcribed. And since I would like to have everything preserved I uploaded the recorded videos to my computer and safeguarded the interview tapes for possible future references. Meanwhile, I left a copy of the questionnaire and interview schedules with one of my assistants incase I might have the need to refer back to them.

Parker argues that every focus-group should be able to 'make explicit the way different members of a little life-world represent themselves to their "own" community and to the outside world, but always with a view to putting those performances into question, making them strange and asking who benefits' (2005: 39). In analyzing the data from these interviews I looked closely for the words and phrases audiences used to express their views on rituals and communalism in particular as represented in the films. While it was considered possible that audiences can sometimes be hypocritical in the answers they give to research questions (Tobin, 2000: 22), this study however decided not to build on such presumptions but to interpret audiences' answers as raw data in their purity underpinning the research findings. This was mainly because the research participants

were adults whose words were taken to mean what they implied. In this way, the construction of knowledge through audiences' answers was considered a 'discourse' fundamentally and is entirely 'data-driven' in essence as suggested by Tonkis (1998: 251 cited in Seale, 1998) in the whole exercise of analyzing this study's qualitative findings.

4.4 Chapter Conclusion

These methodologies aimed to uncover the ambivalences shrouding the media image of cultural representations in Nollywood. For this reason, the cultures of the Igbo society were been investigated by generating data from Nollywood's actors and consumers alike. To do this, we adopted a structure of combining both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, but used mainly the qualitative technique to understudy the phenomenon of culture in filmic texts, while retaining the quantitative data as a way of crosschecking the overall findings.

Having established these methodologies, our next chapter will focus on the findings of the textual analysis of the select filmography as said, to tease out the cultural indicators of some aspects of Nigerian and Igbo cultures, defined and analyzed in this thesis by the concept of communalism especially as theoretically reviewed in Chapter two. We will do this by exploring the chosen five key rituals to underscore the significant meanings and implications of them and how by their filmic representations, Nollywood currently constructs storylines from a bottom-up paradigm of cultures. Thus, in the next chapter, we will be applying ourselves to analyzing both the positive and negative aspects of these traditional rituals (cultures) while showcasing instances of communalistic communication between the spiritual and human worlds as experienced in African cosmology and communalism which we examined in the literature review sections. This therefore will be summed up by making allusions to the interpretations of these cultures both in their primordial and post-colonial contexts of the Nigerian society as represented in the films and later by indigenous audience analysis.

ENDNOTES

[1] I conducted the primary research of this study in Nigeria in four institutions namely, (1) School of Nursing, Mbano, (2) Imo State University, Owerri, (3) Centre for the Study of African Communications and Cultures, CIWA, Port Harcourt, and (4) The Holy Family Parish Youth Outreach Centre, Woji, Port Harcourt Two other in-depth interviews were done in Dublin with some Nollywood actors when they came for the Dublin African Film Festival in April 2007. The dates of these fieldwork interviews are as follows: Mbano – 5/12/2007, 6/12/2007; IMSU – 13/12/2007, 18/12/2007; CESACC – 10/01/2008; 11/01/2008, Holy Family Parish Youth Outreach – 14/01/2008, 15/01/2008; Dublin – 21/04/2007.

Chapter Five

5.0 Rituals in Nollywood Igbo Films

5.1 Introduction

Among the many films in Nollywood that represent rituals are: *Coronation* (2004), *Bless Me* (2005), *Festival of Fire* (1999), *Igodo* (1999), *Last Ofala* (2002), *Omugwo* (2004), *Widow* (2007), *Little Angel* (2004), *African Heroes* (2005), *Things Fall Apart* (1986) *Fool at Forty* (2006), *Oil Village* (2001) etc. Igbo rituals are deeply reflective of communalism and this is realized in these movies. As a way of life of Nigerians in general and Igbos in particular, communalistic rituals refer to cultures where things are shared and are communally celebrated which depict commonness as its traditional roots (see chapter two). In Nollywood films, this brand of culture comes very much to light by the celebration of rituals and festivals among the Igbos. In most instances, the people show their beliefs in themselves and in other beings which include ancestors and the gods. They also depict how they live and interact with one another in greeting patterns, ceremonial activities, exchange of goods and services, and the overall lifestyles of the people. The notion of being in existence is founded on communalism whereby, every being is considered to be related to one another. For this, life is considered as a force and what affects one member of the community, affects the other, hence the notion of kinship and extended family relationships are considered fundamental in all cultural undertakings.

In this section of our study, having foregrounded the nature of our textual analysis, we analyze Nollywood filmic representations of these communalistic cultures after the theoretical framework established in the earlier part of this work. We do this by signaling and interpreting the chosen five key rituals being studied here that are prominently celebrated in the South-East of Nigeria, where this researcher comes from. We also explore these cultural rituals in a way that justifies Geertz's notion of 'thick description' wherein details are given and realities are thickly described. This will include showcasing the worldviews, thoughts and belief patterns of Africans and Nigerians in particular, through the films, as a justification of the cosmologies of Africa as discussed in the theoretical framework chapters.

5.2 *Iri Ji* Festival

Iri ji is an agricultural festival dedicated to the god of the farm especially among the Igbo tribe and some other parts of Nigeria (Ibeh, 2003). It is the celebration of harvest in thanksgiving to mother earth for providing rich food. It is an annual community ritual held at the onset of the harvesting season, mainly in the month of August. Its other name is the feast of *Ahiajoku* which traditionally denotes its ancientness in the hands of ancestors who worshipped the farm god. 'The purpose is to thank the yam god (*Ajoku*) for the harvest of yam and it features the slaughtering of animals and spilling of their blood in shrines (*Ihu mmuo*) with incantations and prayers to the yam god for a bountiful harvest. Feasting is with cooked yam, chicken, stockfish, *nshiko*, *ugba, usu* and palm wine (Ibeh, 2003: 18).

In most Igbo films, this ritual is often showcased and resonates with the people of the Igbo speaking area and some others of Nigeria that hold such ceremonies. In *Things Fall Apart* (1986), which is a film adapted to the 1958 bestselling novel of Chinua Achebe,[1] with the same title, the feast of *Iri ji* is celebrated with its concomitant rituals and symbols. The film portrays the romantic spectacle of the environment where Okonkwo and his wives appreciate the land for a rich harvest and prepare for the ritual celebration of the new yam festival following a week long term of peace and reconciliation with one's neighbours as enshrined in the customs and tradition of their land, Umuofia. There is the exotic display of sunlight shinning bright as Okonkwo and his wives work in their farm. Okonkwo checks his trap and feels happy that he has caught 'bush meat' for the festivities. The ground is dry signifying the dry season in Igbo land when most farmers relax and eat their farm products for the year while celebrating the communal festival of harvests like the Iri ji ritual. However, that Okonkwo works still, very close to this ceremony foregrounds him as a very serious farmer also seen by the type of hounds he makes in the farm. What points again to his enthusiasm and energy is the fact that he went to farm without even a breakfast. This is only noted by audiences who see his wife approach him and invite him to breakfast by saying, 'your breakfast is ready'. By this invitation, the place of women in Igbo communalistic cultures is been depicted as in the

domestic arena which often translates to services to the male folk. Nevertheless, this seem to be changing currently given new realities as will be seen in chapter seven. However, the ritual of the new yam festival in the Umuofia community and in this film is been proclaimed by a week long term of peace and reconciliation with one's neighbours. It is also a period of communal relaxations when peace is considered profound and sacred and therefore should not be contaminated by speaking harsh words, not to talk of fighting with a kinsman or a neighbour. The path ways are seen to have been weeded for unknown guests who would come from every path of life to the ceremony. Rich foods are also cooked in excess for whoever calls around Umuofia. Ekwefi, one of Okonkwo's wives is seen preparing yams and all the three wives present Okonkwo with different yam dishes.

The next of this seasonal celebrations in the film is the wrestling contest where all people went to the village square to watch people display their strength. The drummers were at their best and the egalitarian nature of the Igbos and the ritual of new yam festival could be attested to with every rigorous cultural movement. The whole of the community rejoices and children are seen feeling good under the moon light that shines brightly above their heads. It was at this season that Ikemefuna is seen leading the children of Okonkwo's compound in story tellings, about the Elephant and the tortoise. In this story where the tortoise tricked the elephant and brought him the king of animals what Ogundele (2000), and Onwubiko (1991) said about the tripartite nature of Igbo cosmology can be said to be underpinned. Commenting on this understanding generally on African ontology, Tomaselli et. al. argue that 'ontologies shaped by orality assume that the world consists of interacting forces of cosmological scale and significance rather than discrete secularized objects' (1995: 18 -35). In other words, this notion of reality underlies activities in African and Igbo communalism. Drawn from Ong's definition of 'orality' Oha calls this differential ontologies 'indigenous imaginations' and defines them as 'constructions or frameworks of beliefs which have originated from a people's worldview [and] is part of the epistemology of a people, which is acquired along with other aspects of culture [...]. In a sense, this may be culturally relative and difficult for an 'outsider' to understand, but for the indigenes or 'insiders', it is an authentic way of

explaining, comprehending, and intervening in processes of human existence' (Oha, 2002: 121 -142).

The new yam festival actually gives a clue to what ritual ceremonies are like, in a communalistic society like Igboland. It also buttresses the African sense of the cosmic time as cyclic, rather than linear. The cockcrow at the opening credits of the film served as an indication of the arrival of a new day. So also, the seasons are seen as proper pointers to the ordered nature of times. In their worldview which reflects harmony with nature, the seasonal cycle denotes for the Africans, self sufficiency, completeness of a routine, and plenitude. The times revolves round the cycle which implies that life is renewed annually according to the rhythms of nature. Thus, the people celebrate these realities through their communal rituals and festivals like the new yam festival and their observation of the 'holy week' or 'week of peace' in preparation and readiness of heralding the year's farming season. In this renewal, Eboh presents a logic that shows how the African worldview and communalism are tied to an interrelated structure of realities and inescapable network of mutuality with both the physical and the metaphysical. For instance, the trees shed their leaves once a year and a snake sloughs also once in a year (ibid: 22), indicating times and seasons, he argues.

This week of peace is considered the most sacred week in the community that celebrates the ritual throughout the year's cycle. In this week, the footpaths are weeded for visiting guests by community works. Rich foods are cooked and children are seen sharing stories under the moon light in the evening times after supper. *Ikemefuna,* the 'adopted' son of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* leads the whole of Okonkwo's household in story tellings during one of the nights of this season. Achebe, in his novel, highlights that 'the feast of the new yam festival was held every year before the harvest began, to honour the earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan. New yams could not be eaten until some had first been offered to these powers. Men and women, young and old, looked forward to the new yam festival because it began the season of plenty – the new year' (1958: 32).

In the pioneer blockbuster of Nollywood, *Living in Bondage* (1992), by Kenneth Nnebue, the similar setting to *Iri ji* festival occurs depicting the background of filmic themes in village rituals. The scene is the feasting ceremony that brought all and sundry together in what was to be the conferring of chieftaincy title on Andy, the protagonist of the film, who used his wife, Merit, for ritual sacrifice and became rich. He became involved in a cult that demanded him to sacrifice his wife and eventually became a multi-millionaire in his community that was going to honour him in a manner that affirms what Ekwuazi calls the 'high premium community places on individual's achievement' (2000: 134). This community has already gathered and began feasting on the 'yams' and dances when the apparition of the deceased wife of Andy appeared and inflicted him with instant madness that disrupted the occasion.

Iri ji festival as a matter of fact is communalistic as it is cosmological. By this is meant that the worldview of Africa as founded on the notion of wholistic interactions between the human world and the spirit world is acknowledged. In typical traditional celebration of it, the god of the farm (*Ajoku*), is evoked for protection and plentiful harvest for the next farming season. Thus, there is feasting that unites the human communities, the crops being celebrated (yams) and the reverence given to *Ajoku* (the farming deity). In this context, the festival is interactive of all 'forces' in the land and more so, honours the cyclic season of the year. The cyclic season of *Iri ji* festival is usually the dry season in Nigeria, which is the harvesting period when people celebrate their farm produce with pageantries. Eboh argues that the 'cyclic symbols synchronize with the African worldview which reflects a deep perception of humanity, harmony with nature and spiritual-moral force' (2004: 19). It underscores annual activities in their cycles, hence the notion of cyclic time. Instances of cyclic seasons in the West include the different four seasons which manifest themselves at particular periods of the year. In Africa, as in other cultures, these seasons are ritualized and celebrated symbolically by connecting them to mother nature.

As in every communal ritual, *Iri ji* festival is celebrated at different levels like Christmas in the West. It involves all individuals and can be celebrated at the family level, kindred

level, local government level as well as at the state level. It is socio-cultural in character and draws people from all walks of life to ancestral village squares or designated places in the communities. In this instance Eboh asserts that 'festival is a sign of unity and goodwill among the people. It demonstrates the interrelated structure of reality, that life is interrelated' (2004: 116). What this African sense of unity and communion depict is that 'no individual, whether man or spirit is self sufficient. Each needs others for a balanced existence. The spirits need human beings for sacrifices while human beings need the spirits for protection, increased harvests, good health, etc' (Njoku, 2006: 62).

The notion of sacrifice is significant in African cultural celebrations. It is a way of communicating with the gods and spirits. For this reason, there are priests dedicated to the shrines and deities as already discussed, who offer these sacrifices on behalf of the community. The sacrifices however differ in shapes and contexts, but for the new yam festival, which is joyful, the sacrifices to *Ala* the earth goddess or *Ajoku*, the yam god are some portions of the day's feast: yam, chicken, kola-nut and drinks dropped on their shrines or poured to the ground, whereas for other occasions, the demands (by the gods through their oracles) might be different. This type of ontology and connections with the spiritual beings underpin communalism and its indicators as expounded in the theoretical framework chapters. By representing the communal rituals in films, Nollywood extends them in a way that engages audience's memory in a re-negotiation of their cultures and rituals, sometimes hybridized in current socio-cultural contexts. This also evokes nostalgia especially in the elderly, whose memory of the celebrations, forms an anchor for further interpretations of the filmic narratives. In this way, Njoku argues that, 'this interpretation of social relationships has been captured vividly by the various home video productions, which are viewed in Nigeria (and beyond) since the 1990s' (Njoku, 2006: 77).

Nollywood films generally build their themes upon stories that are proximate to people's real practical lifestyles and cultures. The films present cultural patterns as normative to Nigerians, and are accepted by the society as significant values (Lull, 1990: 152). Thus, when celebrations are shared by groups or sub-cultural groups, they depict what the

people believe in. In particular reference to communalistic celebrations, contradictions in life events are often resolved through them. This is what Turner's 'ritual process' highlights as was explored earlier. The use of yam crop for this celebration also is significant since it is considered the king of all crops. This is because it is the most cultivated food in Nigeria. To be able to cultivate more yams than others especially in the Igbo speaking area of Nigeria merits one a traditional title, called *Eze-ji*. This is the community's way of promoting farm works among the people who daily face the task of providing for themselves and their families in a country where the luxury of 'social welfare' system as in the West is unknown.

In the next reading we shall undertake, we are to interpret the ritual of widowhood practices in Nigeria, especially in the Igbo speaking area of the country as well. These are rituals carried out traditionally for the passage of fallen members of the society from the human plain to the land of the ancestors and spirits. These funeral rites of titled people and widowhood practices are arguably some other themes of village rituals that are frequently incorporated into Nollywood filmic storylines and easily resonate with audiences whose cultures they depict.

5.3 Funerals and Widowhood Rituals

In African cosmology, death is considered a passage from the earthly abode to the realm of the ancestors (Onwubiko, 1991; Ewulukwa, 2002). In order to bury the deceased member properly, the living relatives have some rituals to perform to enable the peaceful passage and admittance of the deceased into the circle of his or her ancestors. These rituals may differ from one community to another in the manner of their celebrations, but they are meant to confer the same meaning of effective passage to the underworld where the ancestors continue to live as the *living dead* to overlook the activities of their living relatives. In *Things Fall Apart* for instance, the funeral rites of Ogbuefi Ezeudu dramatize this belief in the celebration of the rite of passage.

The late Ogbuefi Ezeudu was a chief priest of the clan, an elder and a warrior. As soon as the festivities have begun for his funeral rites, the village masquerades are seen parading the length and breadth of the land in the middle of the night to announce his demise according to Umuofia custom. This is the ritual way of sending spirits to hover around the entire community when a great event has occurred. For this reason no one is expected to be seen outside especially women and children. The drums are repeatedly sounded and guns are fired in a frenzy. All titled elders bravely gather round the compound of the fallen hero mournfully. As tradition warrants, they are to pay their last respect to him and join the deliberations on consulting with the oracles on the manner of the burial rites. In this film, Okonkwo walks his way through to where Ogbuefi Ezeudu was laid. There he stood still for a moment like a wandering adventurer, did a little bit of dancing to the raving sound of the drums and flutes, shouted the praise-names of the fallen hero, and lifted his gun and shot the air.

The drums are significant cultural tools of communication in Africa alongside the flute, the gong, and other traditional musical instruments especially at funeral rituals. The 'talking drum' is called *Ikoro* or *Obodom* in the South-East of Nigeria. It is described by Wilson as the 'message bearer' (2005: 40). On its cultural significance, every autonomous community is expected to have a wooden drum played at important occasions like burials of titled people to communicate messages at the order of the traditional ruler or the elders of the community. Moemeka describes this significance as was used to announce Ogbuefi's burial rites, thus: 'when the flute and drum are used for purposes other than entertainment, they are acknowledged as emergency communication channels. In this capacity, they play the surveillance role, informing the community of impending dangers, of the death of the leader, of possible catastrophes, of flagrant violations of taboos, of visits of important dignitaries, of declaration of wars and of summoning the community to emergency meeting' (1998: 135).

The typical symbolism that shrouds this rite of passage, especially funeral rites, is announced by the beating of the drums. It is the instrument used to signal the demise and coronation of kings, traditionally called the *Igwe*.[2] In the film *Ofala* 1 & 2 (2002) the

scene of this passage is treated sacred which reveals the reverence with which the actions and words of a dying ancestor[3] are held. For instance, the king in this film announces the choice of his son as a successor to his throne with symbolic blessings and coded words before his council of elders:

> the lion can never win a wrestling contest with the tortoise.
> Like the dew that trickles and laughs in the morning, even so
> is your laughter. You will never go wrong. He who carries a
> burden in his heart is like a hunch back. The ancestors beckon
> on me. I have lived a good life. Like the iroko tree, my branches
> are spread wide. It is time for the lion to go. My son, you carry
> the seed of the harvest. You carry the water of life. You, it is
> that will be the next *Igwe*.

Thus, the rite of funeral in this film does not only reflect the symbolic ritual of the communalistic rite of passage under review, but also corroborates one of the indicators of communalism. It shows the strong use of proverbs as a cohesive system of language. By this is meant that while the elders or those with the necessary cultural competency can easily comprehend the meanings of the *Igwe's* coded words and their implications, the 'uninitiated' (those without the cultural competence) will find it hard to appreciate the implications of the dying king's wishes and words.

It is in the context of the above scenario that Bourdieu's notion of cultural competence and Geertz's thick description are evoked in this study from an insider's perspective. By saying the 'ancestors beckon on me', the king signals his death as a passage to the land of the ancestors, not so much a passage to heaven or paradise as is the case in Christian belief and theology, where dead people are thought to return to God in heaven or be damned to hell depending on how they have lived. And by referring to 'time for the lion to go', he remarks on his status as a king, an elder and a warrior, who, formerly was strong like a lion, but is now weak and about to depart from this world. He has lived and achieved so much, with so many children and grand children around him, hence he said: 'like the Iroko tree (a very strong tree that spreads its roots and branches across a big expanse of land in tropical Africa), 'my branches are spread wide'. Not only are men accorded these rites of passage, titled women also get ritualized funeral ceremonies even

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though in some instances, they could be expressed symbolically in different ways. On this note, one area that needs mention due to its high representations in Nollywood films is the village rituals of widowhood practices especially on women.

The film *Widow* (2007) particularly is dedicated to this theme and explores the dialectics of this tradition in some parts of Nigeria. It is premised on the fragmentary structure that undermines and problematizes the purity of old traditions vis-a-vis the glories of elitism and influence of westernization in the country's traditional cultures. Here, a young widow is urged to be 'inherited' by the next of kin to her late husband who invariably is her brother-in-law according to traditions and cultures. In this case married women are considered as 'properties' bought over by the performance of traditional marital rites and payment of bridal dowry by the in-laws, and therefore, expected to be perpetually 'loyal' under every customary traditions in their marital villages, no matter how harsh they might be. In this film, Nnenna, (Stella Damasus), the victim of this old tradition, opposes the widowhood practices to the chagrin of the entire community whose rituals they are.

The establishing shot comes up like a rehearsal of woes undertaken by a crime journalist reporting incidents of wrong doings meted out on an innocent victim of a sad story. Like a documentary film Nnenna brings audiences into her life history by telling how she has suffered as a widow in rags, with tears streaming down her cheeks in front of the screen and viewers, concluding with heavily loaded sigh and words 'this is my story!'

Chima, her husband has just returned from abroad and opened a pharmaceutical company in Nigeria which ordinarily would merit him a title of success. The company was a huge landmark that the family counted among the wealthiest in the community. But suddenly tragedy struck when Chima died at their breakfast table after a brief cough. Like in most old communalistic cultures, Chima's brother (Peter Bruno) according to tradition was to inherit Nnenna as a wife, which both Nnenna and her late husband could not have thought possible. Hence, Nnenna's outright rejection of both the brother in-law and the widowhood custom.

Directed by Aquila Njamah and Kingsley Ogoro, this film recounts the ills that women-suspects undergo at the deaths of their husbands. Not only that curses are placed on them publicly, the community often demands them to carry out some heinous rituals to prove their innocence in the deaths. For Nnenna, like many other widows in the old fashioned patriarchal communalistic society of Nigeria, drinking the water used in bathing the deceased husband is mandatory without any consideration to hygiene and safety. Again, sleeping alone in a dark room with the deceased for three days and shaving all hair to mourn the dead, etc are some of the punitive customs traditionally meted out on her.

Being filmed with the explicit political intention of questioning old traditions and cultures, *Widow* calls up contemporary questions on reading such pernicious traditions in the name of communalistic cultures and rituals. And using Nnenna as the heroine of the film, the social customs are called to a confrontation with modernity and civilization where audiences by their position as witnesses become the impartial judges who are encouraged to question the cultural values of such rituals. Like a woman in anguish soliciting the support of others under the pain of such unacceptable cultures, Nnenna asks audiences alongside those demanding her to shave off her hair, 'is widowhood not enough punishment to me? Is it our fault that we are born women?' On this note, Oha remarks that Nollywood films by couched words 'articulate the fears, hopes, and dreams [...] in Nigeria, and are even held by audiences to be of an educative value' (2000: 196). This didactic nature of Nollywood movies comes to mind in answering Nnenna's questions either by her hearers or by movie audiences who understand these cultures as inhumane and descriptive of some people's lived-in situations.

The film, *Saving Alero* (2001), is another artifact that recaptures this same theme where a young married lady is communally punished because she was thought to have killed her husband who had died accidentally. Also this is the case in *Hear My Cry* 1&2 (2005) where women as agents of community institutions take part in enforcing these rituals that treat them as second class citizens of their communities. An example of this women group is the *Umuada* or *Umuokpu* cult[4] that meted out the punishment on Nnenna.

The *Umuada* or *Umuokpu* cult is a society of women born in a community and married outside of it. These return at historic periods to their ancestral homes to participate in village celebrations and ceremonial rituals. In such instances, they make peace between neighbours, punish those who are at wrong, and adjudicate cases between village members and other groups. They are a significant group at the funeral of village members, hence they can attest to what is right and wrong in the community. Rooted in culture, this group administers the widowhood rituals on the wives of deceased villagers who they think must have contributed to the death of their husbands by not taking appropriate care of them. By hinging on rituals and traditions like these, Nollywood represents these practices. Like Akudinobi opines, this is cultural nationalism in action on the part of the film industry, whereby films centre mainly on the issues of the nation's cultures. Thus, he argues that these films are, 'a synthesis of various intellectual histories, protest traditions, specific cultural aspirations, and unique lived experiences' (2001: 124).

Ewulukwa highlights the scandal of women enforcing this ritual on others as wrong by stating that 'the study of widows reveals the painful position of women as both the defenders and the victims of this culture [...], a disturbing paradox exists in the fact that African women have been the prime agents for the perpetuation and enforcement of gruesome widowhood practices' (2002: 430-431), she reveals. This is problematic because while the ritual betrays the tenet of communalism that considers the community as supreme, it also foregrounds the urgency needed to combat the ignorance of those who deny themselves and others the fundamental human rights to freedom and privacy at such depressing moments of loss.

The war of secession that left Biafra, the present day Eastern Nigeria impoverished between 1967 - 1970 is the starting point of the film *Hear My Cry* 1 &2 (2005). It can be read as one of Nollywood's attempts to resurface the post independence tragedy that is often avoided by mainstream media in Nigeria, for fear of agitating reactions from those who lost people during the war. Nevertheless, the film also highlights the plights of women thought to be widowed in the war as well. Even though representations like these depict situational circumstances at the heart of the war, there is no doubt that by focusing

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on them, Nollywood encodes cultural and historical themes of Nigeria and Africa while raising consciousness over issues of communal concerns at the same time.

The film starts with a cry that echoes from a distance, depicting woes and worries as the outcomes of the war, while revealing mishaps side by side on the screen. The South-East of Nigeria where the war was fought is represented as been devastated and in ruins in this opening sequence. Sick children are seen around crying near the corpses of their parents and other war devastations. First, there is the establishing shots of the war damages and then, the idea of families leaving homes for bushes to hide from aircrafts and machineries.

Starring Chuka (Amaechi Mounagor), Emilia Azu (Adaku), and Desmond Eliot as Agha, *Hear My Cry*, directed by Uzee Madubuogwu is a film that brings to reality the after effects of the war on the communalistic cultures in the face of devastating crises. With the loss of almost everything, crime rates were rife and life became a very basic and crude reincarnation of the survival of the fittest. The lack of communication between families and most soldiers in the war made it possible to think that non–returnees are all victims of the war. And this is the crisis of Chuka's family.

Believing that his brother, major Obi Okonkwo, was killed in the war, Chuka decides according to an erstwhile tradition to 'inherit' his brother's wife, Adaku. To this, Adaku does not agree and is asked to leave the house with her two children. Defending traditions, the screen uses Chuka to explain to both Adaku and viewers the implication of being widowed in the community, which includes being remarried by the male next of kin to the deceased husband in order to reproduce children in the deceased's name. This is to perpetuate the lineage and memory of the deceased member in history and is the basis of strong persecution on the early Christian missionaries in the Eastern part of Nigeria who opposed it as an alien culture.

In her land of exile, Adaku becomes sick and dies, while Chuka who is keeping custody of her two children gives Uju (the girl), out to an arranged marriage. Being quite young,

Uju had no voice to defend herself. Her brother, Agha (Desmond Eliot), tries hard to fight the injustice of giving away the sister's hand in marriage, but was overcome by Chuka and the gathered in-laws who proved too strong for him. In this film, the viewer is made to witness the injustices of the powerful over a helpless young girl as it introduces intrigues in the house Uju is brought. Her purported husband is dead and not known to her. He was one of those killed in the war. And now without any man as her husband, the 'mother in-law' organizes men from outside to sleep with her in order to beget children in memory of her dead son. Fear and anxiety kept besieging Uju that made her run away from the house to avoid the trauma of constant male harassments. Meanwhile, with the support of a relative, Agha, her brother, gets trained as an apprentice in a job in Lagos and returns home to revenge the atrocities of his uncle on their family.

The revenge here, however, is read as an action, not only against Chuka, but also against the culture that allows his actions. Therefore, it is a demonstration that calls for a review of the values of the customs. The audience is led to identify with Agha in the film in bringing the villain to his shame. But a form of a suspense is drawn where major Obi Okonkwo returns from his asylum after the war to the jubilation of the entire community. Thus, the film allows Chuka the villain, to have lost the moral battle even before the physical one is brought to his door steps. Already covered in shame, Chuka fabricates deceptive stories to tell his brother, major Obi, which Agha interrupts by his arrival to avenge the ill treatments to his mother before she died. As fight ensued and the returned major engages his son unknowingly, he discovers the tattoos he gave to Agha as a boy before leaving for the war front many years ago. Here, then becomes the moment of truth in the film, when Chuka confesses to all his deceptions with regrets.

Hear My Cry therefore is a film that urges its audiences to seek for change in most communalistic societal values by reviewing such underlying ills as: lack of respect for fundamental human rights, control over who to marry, inheriting widows without their consent to remarry, etc perpetuated under the communalistic tenet of the community as supreme over the individual. But while these cultural traditions and rituals are being challenged strongly, some others considered to be humane are enormously celebrated and

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continue to thrive, based on their significances. Prominent among these is the ritual of kola nut that is often encoded in most Nollywood films as well, which we shall now discuss.

5.4 The Ritual of Kola nut[5] *(Ime Oji)*

Kola-nut is a special kind of tropical fruit that is symbolically appreciated as a sign of unity, peace and hospitality in Nigeria (Ofoegbu, 1991, Eboh, 2004). The three major ethnic groups (Hausa in the North, Yoruba in the West, and Igbo in the East) grow their own different types of kola nuts and celebrate the fruit in different ways. In the South-Eastern geopolitical zone, 'it is a necessary first gift presented to friends and visitors as they come into the house which symbolizes openness, welcome, peace and love. It is also shared at key moments of social interactions: marriage ceremonies, political alliances, settlement of cases, reconciliation and expiatory sacrifices' (Eboh, 2004: 142).

In the context of new realities, the significance of kola nut can be replaced symbolically with whatever is available in the house like minerals, palm wine, biscuits, or beer, and when there is none available, it is expected that the host apologizes to his guests before any discussion can be held. Typical of this idea of kola nut in the West is the culture of tea or coffee in the Irish and English homes when they are offered to visitors. The only difference is that whereas for the Igbo of Nigeria in particular, it is culturally binding on the host to offer kola nut to guests, it is not the case in the West. By being 'culturally binding' does not mean however, that there are strictures in failing to present kola nuts to guests, but that such a negligence would mean that one's guests are unwelcomed and unwanted by their apparent host. A lot of Nollywood films encode the ritual of kola nut in their storylines indicating resonance with people's lifestyles. It is the custom and tradition of Nigerians to respect and value kola nut. In *Mbaise* particularly, part of the Igbo speaking area of Nigeria, kola nut is celebrated in a cultural festival annually by a community of ten towns that make an entire Local Government Area of Imo State in Nigeria called, *Oji Ezinihitte*.

Oji in Igbo refers to 'kola nut' which in symbolism stands for unity and life which these communities and every person that identifies with them celebrate when sharing it with neighbours, friends or guests. In *Things Fall Apart,* the ritual of offering libations and kola nuts is dramatized when Unoka, the father of Okonkwo offers prayers to his family shrine, typical of Igbo (African) traditional religion (ATR). Here, it is the onus of the father of the house to thank the ancestors and clan deities for safeguarding his household throughout the night, while invoking their blessings as the day progresses. Another instance in the film is when kola is celebrated at the wedding ceremony of Obierika's daughter as a sign of love and welcome to the in-laws. In *Living in Bondage* it is the first ritual celebrated before meals in view of conferring Andy with the chieftaincy title as already discussed.

The symbolic gestures that display the people's ideological frame of mind in the ritual of kola nut is seen when a chief priest or one of the elders is engaged in the breaking of the kola nut and invokes the ancestors and gods to it. A typical example of this is when Unoka welcomed Ogbuefi Okoye to his house and when Obierika presents same as a token of hospitality. First, there is the service of kola nut, often brought by the wife to her husband to present to the guests; then, the movement of the kola (in a saucer), from one person to another according to seniority of the clans in traditional reckonings, and then the actual 'breaking of the kola nut'. In a *Fool at 40,* [a film that is culturally revealing], there are three significant instances of the sharing of kola nuts.

Hyginus (Nkem Owoh and protagonist of this film) has been wrongly thought to be pronounced the next *Igwe* by the community's oracle who decreed that calamity will befall the village unless they bring home the potential chosen *Igwe* to lead the town before the shrine for coronation. Even though he is originally a rural pauper, with no regard in the community, Hyginus immediately upon return from where he aimlessly wandered away begins to make some strident demands from the community elders if he is to save them from the calamity by becoming their king (*Igwe*). These include getting him up to 1,000 women as wives, building him a royal palace, and buying him a car. In these contexts, he signals his [failed] aspirations which poverty could not allow him to

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attain and by means of his yet to realize new position demand such from the community. He deliberately argues like an elite because he wants this community to see him as an educated person and worthy of his demands and therefore uses foreign ideas to mesmerize the villagers who he said have not travelled and do not know how the new kings in different parts of the world are now been treated. He therefore referenced the type of leadership he will bring as typical of King Solomon's in the bible and that of Queen Elizabeth in the United Kingdom and therefore will need a big vehicle like limousine as used in the United States of America all through his tenure.

Even though, eventually he was not the real chosen person as suggested by the oracle in this film, the cultural instances of the offering of kola nuts occurred severally when the elders came to engage him [Hyginus] in discussion and begged him to save their community from the approaching 'earthquake' as one of the elders put it by accepting the *Igwe* title. Another instance is when it [kola] was offered to Mazi Onukeze and Mazi Ukadike by Hyginus' father, Mazi Okoye (Sam Loco) when both individually brought up their daughters to the family of Okoye and Hyginus so that Hyginus could agree to marry them since he has said that one of his demands for the throne is to marry many women. In this scene, Mazi Okoye did not only present these visitors with kola nuts in the context of the original kola nut fruits and drinks, but also received from Mazi Onukeze a bottle of whiskey [dry gin] which in this context is also branded kola. What this depicts is that kola can practically be symbolized and replaced by other presents other than the kola nut fruit *per se* and this is also been understood by the community. It also showcases the welcome and openness shown to these guests by the host family. The third instance of presenting kola nut in the film was when Sony (Mr. Ibu), Hyginus's friend brought him a jar of traditional Igbo palm wine to win his favour and seek his approval of him working in the palace after his [Hyginus] possible coronation as the *Igwe* of the community. Again, palm wine here is kola and symbolizes good will before these friends who share it even before ever discussing the important issues of bringing the palm wine.

That the community elders in this film see no problem to the demands of Hyginus and worked hard to meet up with his challenges showcases the position of not only the *Igwe*

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in communalistic society like the Igbo but also signals their view on polygamy which often characterizes many palaces as a quality of wealth and richness in the traditional African communalistic societies. While some argued that Hyginus should cut down his demands, [meaning reducing the numbers of what he demands that the community does for him before he could accept to serve as their *Igwe* as purportedly decreed by the gods], they did not oppose as not being part of their culture especially for the king's palace. Again, that some of the elders brought their daughters forward is also due to the fact that they understand the *Igwe* to be practically the personification of the community and will like to share in the royalty that aqcuaintance with him would bring their families. All these are indicators of communalism as was described in the theoretical chapters of this study especially in the context of the supremacy of the community in individual's life and the notion of commensality in the context of dialogue by the elders to solve communal difficulties. However, the major reason for reading this film here is on the instance offering of kola nut to guests which Nollywood uses to showcase communalistic ritual as concurrent with the Igbo's manner of everyday living experiences.

The kind of prayers offered at the breaking of kola nuts include invocation to the gods, the ancestors, and spirits to protect the land and guide all those who live in it. It also involves an invitation to them to share in the kola, drinks, and meals of the day, hence a small piece of the kola is dropped on the ground for them or a drop of drink poured on the earth surface as a symbol of their portion. This depicts the interconnectedness between the world of human beings, spirits, inanimate objects and ancestors that was discussed as characterizing African worldviews. Kola nut is one particular ritual which showcases people's beliefs in the tripartite nature of the society which is not only popular as a tradition but also as a prominent feature of Nollywood's filmic storylines.

Ancestors particularly are seen in Africa as the 'living dead' and continue to be members of their families, similar to Catholic theological understanding of the concept of heavenly saints as being part of the earthly church. Traditionally at the apex of each extended family in the kinship system is the bond of closeness between a particular set of people and their ancestors. Here, authority lies on the first son of the extended family (Njoku,

2006: 61) in liaising between the living family members and their deceased ancestors. For this reason, the gods and ancestors have their places secured within the compounds and are actively involved in the affairs of the families. In the understanding of the communication that goes on between the living and their dead, Eboh states that the surviving members of the dead are obliged to show the dead reverence and fellowship. These members:

> must not forget the departed, otherwise misfortune is feared to
> strike them or their relatives. Libation and food are offered to them
> as a sign of respect and acknowledgement of their role in the affairs
> of the living. They are tokens of the fellowship, communion,
> remembrance and hospitality being extended to those who are
> the immediate pillars or roots of the family (Eboh, 2004: 72).

Like kola nut, symbolic dancing is one other ritual that pervades every other ritual in Nigeria and Africa generally, which is often encoded in Nollywood films. What this implies is that, while both kola nut and dance can stand alone in themselves as authentic communalistic rituals, they are most often incorporated into other rituals and ceremonies to bring out the beauty of their celebrations and communications between the different sections of people and the society; for instance, to include and involve the living participants and those of the spirit world. They are cultural symbols of inclusion in communal rituals as the next section shall now justify.

5.5 Symbolic Dancing and Rituals

Dancing is part of all facets of rituals in Africa, and in Nigeria. It constitutes one of the most socializing activities of every community. Bame (1991) in his analysis of dance in Africa, corroborates what might be argued as typical of Nigerians when he says:

> it would be no exaggeration to say that the African is a
> "real man of dance". To him, dance itself is life. It is a way of thinking,
> living and communicating. The dance forms an integral part of all
> important facets of his life cycle: he dances when a new baby is born,
> and when he conducts puberty rites; he dances during marriage and
> funeral celebrations, religious ceremonies, festivals, and recreation

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after a day's work (1991: 7).

Bame's insight is given because dancing fuses into all celebrations not only rhythmically but also ritually in terms of worship to deities during festivals, showing appreciation and joy at successes as seen in *Things Fall Apart* at Okonkwo's victory in a wrestling contest against *Amalinze the Cat,*[6] and during passage rites of circumcision of new born babies, funerals of titled men and women, etc. The festival of *Ugwu Mbaise* in Ahiara Diocese of Imo State specifically is entirely a festival that celebrates dances among communities to bring about unity and cultural interactions. Dance as a ritual festival has the power of instilling strong values into communities and creating in them a sense of shared patriotism and egalitarianism (Uwah, 2005: 84). Dance is one particular symbolic ritual that encapsulates the communalistic notion of fellow-feeling. What moves people to join in the singing of songs, dancing to the sound of drums or doing both is significantly hinged on the notion of communal solidarity. In this context, to dance alongside others is to identify oneself with the ritual celebration taking place and in this way socializes oneself with one's community. There are dances for girls, young women, old women, boys, young men, old men and mixed groups performed at various occasions: childbirth, marriage, death of old women, death of old men, reception of dignitaries, festivals etc with lessons for communities. As a socializing milieu and communicative media, Amuchie notes that:

> The native dances serve several purposes as follows: to
> entertain people, and for physical development; some
> of the dances especially the *Ekereavu* and *Abigbo* have a
> lot of message and advice to the youths, the community
> leaders, young school girls, and even to the state and federal
> governments in the area of poverty, prostitution, abortion,
> concubinage and stealing (1999: 220).

Even though there are different kinds of dances for different classes of people and occasions, the majority of ritual dances are meant to be joined by the general public who are participants in them. Dance establishes the ground for common fellowship and affirmation of the communalistic social identity of individuals. As Rothenbuhler argues, 'everyone who performs a ritual accepts the idea, at least implicitly, that his or her

patterned behaviour is symbolically meaningful and effective, that he or she is using symbols to achieve social purposes' (1998: 34). Dance therefore as a ritual implies an involvement of the participant in the ritual celebration being carried out; it expresses an involvement and also integrates the participant into affirming his or her cultural identity.

Following the textual analysis of different films under review in the light of Nigeria's communalistic cultural rituals, one can argue that almost all activities and celebrations are symbolic in the way they use dance. They help the neophyte be aggregated into the *communitas* and to understand the ethos of the traditional society which is one basic foundation why they resonate with people's stories when seen on films. To be aggregated into the community as discussed under Turner's 'dialectics of ritual process' is being at the threshold where neophytes at their initiation rites are guided through the myths of the society. In *Coronation* (2004), there is the celebration of *ozo* title holders that showcases the joy and significance of rituals in initiation ceremonies. In one of the filmic scenes, the late Oliver De Coque, one of Nigeria's celebrated musicians, leads the titled men in singing and dancing alongside his band members. Like the kingship title, the *ozo* title is traditionally valued and signifies that the bearer is honoured and respected by his community as a leader and elder. Attesting to why most people especially in the South-East of Nigeria respect the *ozo* title, Melie and Wass argue that, 'the *ozo* title-taking ceremonies are the means by which an Igbo man gains higher religious, social, economic, and political status' (1983: 65).

The *ozo* title in the Igbo speaking area of Nigeria particularly is a sacred institution that has remained rooted in tradition and applies ritual dancing in its celebrations. The title holders are traditionally expected:

> to "break kola nut", the greatest symbol of Igbo hospitality, and
> pour libations of wine while praying to Chukwu (God) and *ndimmuo*
> (the spirits) at home, at village meetings and at social gatherings of
> ethnic significance. In this role the titled man occupies an
> intermediate position between the people and the ancestral
> spirits (Melie and Wass, 1983: 67).

Here, the significance of this title is recognized in the society as a positive evidence of a respectable personality. The *ozo* and chieftaincy titles are two sides of the same coin. Originally these were titles conferred by traditional rulers and their autonomous communities on people of proven integrity but currently are been sought after by individuals on their own accord and sometimes with the influence of money. Those who seek them include especially the *nouveaux riches* who seek recognition and status in their communities in affirmation of their individual identities through the apparent benefits of these titles. Gannon explains this when he highlights that 'one of the most sought after status symbol is a chieftaincy title, which is considered to be higher in status than an earned doctoral degree. When an individual with an earned doctorate becomes the chief of his hometown, he may use the title "chief" followed by the title "Dr" in brackets, as in Chief (Dr) XYZ' (2001: 281).

This drive and recognition of traditional title and dance feature prominently in the film *Coronation* as said, and also in *Fool at 40,* where a young man who has been judged a failure due to poverty and lack of financial success, becomes rallied around by his community members once the oracle pronounced him to be the next ruler of the community. It is the celebration of this titles coloured by ritual dancing that showcases the public recognition which society accords the bearers. Thus, even though the filmic themes revolve around cultures and communities, our concern here is on the ritual dancing that accompanies the traditional ceremonies, which corroborate the view that Africans and Nigerians alike celebrate dance and music in typical significant ways as communalistic people.

With cultural rituals in Nollywood films, the myths of the Nigerian people are being re-enacted, their stories are retold (even by means of film's music scores), and societal values are handed over to younger generations at the same time. Here, the films are 'products of man's initiative and creative instincts intersecting with his language, art and religion to the extent that they are products of his traditions and cultures' (Adedeji, 1971: 134). Familiar dances and musical scores therefore help audiences participate in movies and relive their rituals as if in real life situations and by so doing elicit resonance by their

storylines and represented themes. Thus, it is not unusual for viewers to sing along familiar ritual tunes while watching Nollywood films nor is it difficult for them to interpret movie actions by identifying with rituals being carried out on screen. On religious rituals and themes especially, most audiences sing along their familiar worship and traditional songs when brought into films by actors or actresses or even the film's editors.

5.6 Ritual of Faith and Religion in Worship

Religion as part and parcel of life is another tenet of communalism in African traditional life (Mbiti, 1969, 1990; Uzukwu, 1997; Okere, 1995; Dipio, 2007) . Every person is guided by a personal god, called *chi* in Igbo language similar to the 'guardian angel' in Christian theology. As an aspect of communalism, Mbiti states that 'religion is the way of life of Africans' (1969: 29). There are apparent communications between the living and the dead guided by the hierarchical ordering of things as said earlier in communalism. Humanity first is created by the supreme God who is called *Chukwu* or *Chineke* [...] the God that creates (*Yahweh elohim*). This is where African traditional religion shares boundary with Christian theology that defines the triune God as 'the being which nothing greater than can be conceived (non solum es quo maius cogitari nequit) but greater than all that can be conceived (quiddam maius quam cogitari posit)' (Anselm of Canterbury, in *Fides et Ratio*, No. 14).

The concept of God in African communalism is revealed by the names given to Him in African languages. Following the principle of 'agere sequitor esse' (acting according to being), God is conceived as an unfathomable being, a force that creates all others and beyond whom there is no other.

Mbiti emphasizes the way Africans conceive of God by arguing that 'God is the origin and sustenance of all things. He is older than the Zamani period.[7] He is outside creation and beyond creation. On the other hand, he is personally involved in his creations, so that it is not outside of his reach. God is thus simultaneously transcendent and immanent'

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(Mbiti, 1969: 29). This image of a being that is involved in the totality of African life is a force that recreates everything. Obiego, using the Igbo experience of religious faith to buttress this same point remarks that, 'the profundity of their ideas and belief in *Chukwu* (God) is immortalized in their personal names (born mostly out of their experience in the struggle for life) as well as in *Chukwu's* praise titles or epithets. Some of these speak of *Chukwu's* existence in the emphatic way, as if to convince someone' (Obiego, 1981: 57).

Some of the epithets as outlined by Mbiti in some African languages which describe Africa's religious concept of God include:

> 'He who is of himself' (Zulu), 'the first who has always been
> in existence and would never die' (Bambuti), 'who has no father
> and is not a man' (Herero), 'the greatest of the great' (Ndebele),
> 'the great spirit' (Shona), 'the fatherless spirit' (Ashanti), 'marvel
> of marvels' (Bacongo), 'the unexplainable' (Ngombe), 'the unknown'
> (Massai), 'the "He" of the suns' (Ila/Baluba), 'mighty immovable
> rock that never dies' (Yoruba) (Mbiti, 1969: 25).

These concepts come about due to the general understanding of the 'person' of God as the last end of all things or what this researcher calls the *Dum* of existence. *Dum* is an Igbo word referring to the 'totality' of all things. It discusses God as 'totality' since He is pre-eminently immanent in nature. He is the 'All' of all things, the final summit and last apogee of existence who, even though, permeates all beings, is substantially unfathomable in being (Uwah, 2000: 26). For Adedeji, 'God reveals Himself to Africans as a kingly Father who is dependable and a caretaker of the family, a friend who is trust-worthy for companionship, as a creator and life-giver who sustains and upholds the universe. For these reasons, Africans and Nigerians, particularly, see God as somebody who is good, merciful, holy, powerful, all knowing, omnipresent, a spirit, unchangeable, and unknowable. The Yorubas express these qualities when they say *Olurun mimo* (Holy God), *Atererekariaye* (omnipresent), *Oba awaramaridi* (unknowable), *Apata-ayeraye* (Rock of Ages), *Oba aiku* (Eternity), *Kabiesi* (Unquestionable)' (Adedeji, 2000: 41).

In the Igbo speaking area of Nigeria, more of these epithets describe the people's understanding of God (*Chineke*) as one of them who is involved in their affairs more like the ancestors communalistically. He is called *Amama amacha amacha* -'the unfathomable being', *Echeta obi esie ike* – 'one who, when remembered infuses confidence', *Ogbara nkiti okwu biri n'onu* – 'the silent being that holds the last speech', *Ogba aka eje agha* – 'the warrior who wins battles without weapons' etc.

In their communique at the end of a meeting in Accra-Ghana in December 1977, the pan-African conference of Third World Theologians state that 'African theology must be understood in the context of African life and culture' (Appiah, 1977: 193). Ideologically, God is a force in Africa, spiritual, but totally immanent. Everything revolves around him as the supreme force. Onwubiko arguing this states that 'one's entire action is reflective of one's religious concepts and practices as seen in the ordering of society. This is because social morality is dependent on religion' (Onwubiko, 1991: 31).

The ritual of faith and religion in worship is seen among Africans in almost every religio-social rituals. Since people believe that God is a higher spiritual force that is involved in their affairs as a community and individuals, they reach out to him through a pantheon of other gods and minor deities like *Ala* or *Ani,* the earth goddess, *Amadioha*, the god of thunder, *Ajoku* the yam god and other clan deities. On the personal level, there is always a personal *chi* called *Ikenga* in Igbo land, which is considered to wade off evil and bring good luck to individuals. This understanding frequently gets represented in Nollywood films especially in rituals that betray faith in God and the gods, not only in the traditional settings, but also in representations of modern day Nigerian society.

Bless Me (2005) is one Nollywood film that depicts the religious–didactic genre of the Nollywood industry in a more modern fashion. Typically, it is Pentecostal or Charismatic in both content and outlook and evokes the sense of religion as a way of life by most people in the country. It systematically uses family hardships to moralize faith in the consciousness of viewers who more or less, might be engaged in it to see a reflection of their society and perhaps, their own life-stories.

Directed by Ernest Obi, this movie suggests a reading founded on the philosophy of evangelization by means of media outreach programmes and technologies. It uses the screen as a pulpit to preach faith and the steadfastness to God in the midst of difficult challenges. Again, it is a practical film that confronts once again the reality and problem of evil in the world created by an all good, a God. The bottom line theme of its narrative is the age long philosophical question: 'why does the innocent suffer while the guilty prospers?'

Using Festus (Mike Ezuruonye) as the protagonist of this movie, the producers question the 'why' of the presence of evil in human existence. The irony which even Festus could not comprehend, even as he helps viewers identify with the narrative flow of his sufferings, is why should he, a devout Christian and worshipper of God, be left in abject poverty and squalor, while his neighbours of 'double-dealing' businesses succeed in all their transactions. Like the biblical Job, he asks the 'why me' question. But as argued by Zwick, such a question is 'a problem that bears witness to the omnipresence of evil with a new intensity. Art does this, not just in presenting us with disturbing, haunting accounts and fantasies of evil, or simply by attempting to express the incomprehensible traits of evil through modern artistic designs. It quite often attempts also to question evil as to its very roots, to offer interpretations and at times to suggest a path for coping with and overcoming evil' (2000: 72). This understanding, one would argue, is realized in *Bless Me*.

The opening scene of *Bless Me* begins with a wide angle shot of sun rays shinning softly on the houses of the rural Onitsha[8] area of the South-East of Nigeria, as family members are seen getting up from sleep. Swiftly panning the camera round the old and rusted corrugated iron sheets' houses in the area, to give a view of the environmental outlook of the place and depict the calmness of the night that was coming to an end with daybreak, the lens technically penetrates a particular bedroom and reveals to audiences a young couple in pyjamas, standing in the middle of their bedroom and singing 'worship songs' to God in a morning prayer session (See Appendix K on this scene of religious worship).

While the idea of standing and singing hymns to God is not recent in Nigeria, the Pentecostal way of doing it is quite different from those of the traditional churches, indicating the dawn of a new reality in the ritual of religious worship in the country. The screen expresses this point where it offers a representation of the morning prayer of Festus and his wife Amaka (Rita Dominic). Like devout 'born again' Christians, this young couple lift high their bibles, with eyes tightly closed and speak multitude of words 'to God' in a frenzied manner. This scene, while not particularly suggesting a reversal of the traditional film aesthetics of the Nollywood industry, where elders of families lead in traditional religious prayers by pouring libations to personal and family gods, as seen in *Things Fall Apart*, *Festival of Fire* etc, highlights the Pentecostal modern way of worship among most Nigerian families. Significantly it depicts the underlying argument that people in communalistic society see religion as their primary way of life. This family therefore, can be read as displaying the typical nature of faith in marriages among most elites in Nigeria, where gender equality also has become an accepted issue, and respect and honour are shared equally between husband and wife unlike the traditionally patriarchal settings where women had no voice of their own in the families.

Even though one might think that this film is Nollywood's attempt to adapt to market demands and conform to the religious inclinations of the Nigerian audience, still, it is a way of 'talking to people about their existential problems at a level on which they can be easily addressed' (May, 2000: 52). *Bless Me* is a desperate call to God for redemption out of poverty and stupor. The songs in it also, not only in the prayers but as film's music score reveal a desire of a couple burning for material upliftment, far more than spiritual successes. Or put in another way, they manifest the devout faith of a young family wishing all 'blessings' to turn situations around at the behest of God whom they serve.

Songs accompany filmic storylines in Nollywood. Most often they introduce the next sequence by using thematic issues in the films to highlight actions and reactions of characters. In this way 'songs reveal the utmost depth of the singers' feelings and desires' (Livtak, 1996: 70). Yet, they demonstrate Nollywood's style of using them as a very important element of the folktale (film) aesthetics (Ogundele, 2000: 100). As Kunzler

submits: 'with simple words, these theme songs comment on the story or assess its morale' (Kunzler, 2007: 7); while Barlet argues in the context of all African films that 'music is never gratuitous. When it comes from a traditional source, it contributes to the film's aim of perpetuating memory. When the film describes a painful reality, the music plays its part in conjuring away the anxiety and the difficulties' (2000: 185).

Unlike *Bless Me*, the film *Igodo* (1999) plays out the ritual of traditional faith and religious worship as earlier mentioned. It is the story of one man whose wonderful love for tradition and victory at traditional wrestlings made him unique. He becomes a hero of his people because of the fame he brought to his village in wrestling contests. But since a group of elders are not happy with him, they plot and frame him up as a thief. Some people are organized to go and steal the king's staff and hide it in his house and since he is adjudged guilty, is buried alive. However, since the earth goddess does not approve of his death as a god of justice, strange things started happening in the land and people began to die mysteriously starting with the elders. Upon consulting with his council of elders and oracle, the ruling king deployed six young men to go and fetch a cutlass from an 'evil forest'[9] for cutting down a tree growing on the warrior's grave and to placate the gods in their anger.

Igodo especially showcases the ritual of worshipping this tree and getting chief priests do consultations and sacrifices to the clan deity to safeguard the community. As a traditional religious film, the belief in the judgment of the gods is made supreme explicitly in this film and oracles are consulted as a sure way of knowing the mind of the gods. *Living in Bondage* (1992) is another film that dramatizes the religious ritual of faith and belief in Nigeria. Shot and screened in Nigeria when most graduates had no employment under the control of military dictators and had only the church to fall back to, this film depicts conversion and faith after initial mistakes of the young, typified in Andy, who used his wife for a money making ritual to escape poverty. This film in a way captures the 1990s when many young people resorted to different illegal dealings to make money including ritual sacrifices as said earlier and obtaining money by tricks.[10] Given this scenario, Kenneth Nnebue incorporated the ideas of the youth's frustration and religious search for

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salvation into this film. In this way, Nigerian viewers, who are the primary audience of the film, can identify with its storyline while reflecting on the consequences of choices in terms of abandoning one's religious way of life and seeking wealth by any means.

Religion and faith define a strong aspect of Nigeria's culture both in the traditional and modern day fashions. In his study on *The Role of the Mass Media in the Process of Conversion of Catholics to Pentecostal Churches*, Ihejirika identifies as one factor that makes people convert to Pentecostal churches, the idea that most believe there is always a contest between good and bad spirit in their lives (2003: 67). This confirms Oha's findings of the Yorubas too especially in relation to Nollywood's representations of their traditional religious practices, where the interface between religion and cultures is causing 'a form of postcolonial education that means the emergence of cultural and religious hybridity in the society' (2002: 138). For Dipio, the 'hybrid nature of this genre takes care of many interests at once. It combines art and commerce, pleasure and morals, reality and fantasy, tradition and modernity, and a form of Christianity that integrates traditional religion' (20007: 80). However, while Ihejirika's finding might seem superstitious even though being attested to by both Dipio's (2007) and Oha's (2002) textual analysis of filmic representations on the Nigerian audiences, what it does is reveal the tension that characterizes the interface between faith and the apparent failure of being materially wealthy in Nigeria. Oha corroborates this by highlighting further that 'many Christian narratives foreground the conflict between God's forces and Satan's in the affairs of human beings. Secular human experiences are seen as reflections as well as consequences of spiritual warfare' (2000: 192). Conflict here is in the struggle of overcoming poverty which most people tend to think is caused by the Devil attacking them or 'tying down' their progress and wealth and therefore needs to be fought against by all means.

In *Festival of Fire* (1999) directed by Chico Ejiro, another edifice of religious rituals is been depicted in the tension surrounding the early missionary encounter of the Catholic Church with the traditional beliefs of the people of Eastern Nigeria. Shot in a typical pre-colonial location, reminiscent of Chinua Achebe's Umuofia village before the advent of

Christianity in *Things Fall Apart*, this movie pays great tribute to the heroic pioneering spirit of the early female missionaries while presenting the tenacity of a people's love and defense of their traditional religion and culture. The establishing shot, filmed from a wide angle perspective, gives at a glance, the romantic exotic nature of the rural African village Amani, in 1885, where people were deeply engrossed with the killing of twin babies for fear of upsetting the decorum of the land, purportedly guided by the local deity, *Amadioha,*[11] who prohibits the bearing of twins as an evil omen.

The film tells the story of a certain man, who to avert the killing of his twin babies as custom demands, separates them by handing them over to different women of two different villages to bring them up in their own houses outside Amani. The twins, *Ike* (male) and *Mary* (female), were given identical tattoos on their bodies, in case they survive and come to learn of their background. As believed by Amani tradition, the family of Ike happens to be a priestly clan and therefore is privileged with serving the communal deity at the level of chief-priests, referred to as *Eze mmuo*.[12] Of course the primary priestly function here includes the killing of twin babies as well as offering of sacrifices to the deity on behalf of the people. Twenty five years after the birth of Ike and his sister, Ike grows to be chosen as the *Eze mmuo*. This is also the time when the early missionary nuns decide to come to Amani for evangelization for the first time. Mary, the twin sister of Ike is one of them, and became the leader of the group soon after their European leader was killed while rescuing a woman being stoned to death by a mob for giving birth to twins.

In their fight to combat this tradition, Mary and other nuns had to battle to rescue some abandoned twins as well as offer medical assistance to the villagers. But lke, as one of the custodians of Amani traditions would not tolerate the women's new religion. He turns the entire community against the nuns. While some got killed and buried, Mary is brutally flogged and disrobed by a mob led by Amaeshi, the prince of the land and his guards. Just at the point of getting ready to kill Mary, in sacrifice to appease *Amadioha,* the god of the land, a twist occurs. Ike saw the tattoo on Mary's chest which symbolically reminds him of the warning of the deity who once told him: 'you can't destroy your own!

You cannot kill yourself!

Ike withdraws his sword from the day's task of sacrifice in order to consult his aged father, who once again, narrated the story of his birth to him, reminding him in clear terms: 'the woman with the tattoo on her chest is your sister'. At this point, like the spell of a bad dream, the screen zoomed slowly to a flash-back that relocates the audience into the distant past when Ike and his sister were born and rescued by separating them. Thus, like a privileged revelation, the audience is here reminded that Ike too is a twin, and might after all, be encountering his sister unknowingly, who herself also is not aware of this fact either.

Bewildered by these hidden revelations of his father, Ike approaches Mary in her secluded cave and sorts out their identity and family background by asking family questions that revealed them as siblings. *Festival of Fire* does not only tell about the history of the 1885 missionary journey of the Catholic Church to the old Eastern region of Nigeria, but also showcases how the church was able to outwit the ferocious old traditions and the acceptance of new faith by the people. At the end, the king of Amani eventually was baptized and most of the people got converted to the new religion.

These films couched in symbolic proverbial words and ritualized actions depict the elasticity of tension that arises in the correlation of an old communalistic system with a new one, and therefore help appreciate the fact that Nollywood builds on village rituals to solicit audiences' resonance with the films. The issue of religion and worship among others is so strong that both in the traditional pattern and modern day bible based traditions, they are recurrently represented. Many films are encoded with representations of ritual worships and belief systems. Thus, engaging in the textual analysis of these texts justifies among other things, the basic assumption of this long essay that Nollywood's representations come from the people's everyday life contexts and significantly from their communal rituals.

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

Rituals constitute one of the major ways of enacting cherished community values and Nollywood has capitalized on this to gain audiences' attention to her productions. The forces of proximity and recourse to antiquity as typified in Nigerian folklores therefore are two great factors that play out in Nollywood's encoding model of production. Even though Nollywood, because of technology can be seen to differ from original traditional folk media in the mode of productions, yet by having village rituals as centripetal to its storylines, the new media share in the advantages of folk media. These, as Sirinivas argues, include the fact that they are part of the rural social environment and are credible sources of information to the people. They command the audience as interactive media and are ideal examples of a two-way communication, generating grassroots participation and dialogue between performers and the audiences (2003: 253).

Nollywood films generate participations by telling stories that resonate with indigenous audiences and also Diasporic Africans. Understanding this role played by oral tradition and rituals in the films helps film critics see how the filmmaker transforms his or her tradition into a new technology (Diawara, 1988: 13). It is, in the words of Barber, 'celebrating the traditional', which is an affirmation of self worth for the people as well as a demonstration of their progress and modernity (Barber, 1997: 1). It is this fact that this chapter has shown by exploring the select five key rituals celebrated in Nigeria and frequently represented in Nollywood films.

The 'ritualistic' nature of Nollywood films therefore can be argued to depict the industry as grounded on indigenous cultures like any other folk media, produced and consumed by members of the group. In this case, they reinforce the values of the people and are the visible cultural features by which social relationship and worldviews are maintained and defined (Eilers, 1992: 127). Thus, the general question of root paradigms in Nollywood films is ritualistic, ecological, cosmological and therefore strongly cultural in most cases. In the section that follows, we shall be presenting the interpretations offered by audiences on Nollywood's filmic representations in order to corroborate them with the textual

readings of cultures done in this section. This then will offer us the opportunity of effecting a proper triangulation of our study's data.

ENDNOTES

[1]Chinua Achebe is one of the foremost Nigerian novelists. His book *Things Fall Apart* was written in 1958, and describes the core traditional cultures of the Igbos (Eastern Nigeria) before and after the coming of the white man [European colonialism]. The film we are reading here is adapted from that novel.

[2]*Igwe* is a title given to kings and traditional rulers in the Anambra and Enugu areas of the Igbo speaking part of Nigeria. Its substitute is the *Eze* title used especially in the Imo and Abia States, part of the same Igbo area in the South-Eastern geopolitical province of the country. The office of the *Igwe* is traditional. He is the community's leader and custodian of their customs. He leads the community in all traditional ceremonies and rituals. In Nollywood films, the palace of the *Igwe* or *Eze* is showcased as the meeting place for all traditional and communalistic discussions that involve celebrating communal feasts, making peace or calling for war and other serious issues. The palace (throne) is called *Obi Eze*, meaning where the traditional ruler meets with his councilors, or consults with the traditional chief priests charged with consulting the gods or deities, and adjudicating cases.

[3]Ancestors are revered as the 'living dead'. In African thought and culture, they are seen as part of the society. They are invoked to participate in communal celebrations during festivals or to deliver justices in cases of oppressions. Among the symbols used in invoking them in life situations are kola nuts, palm wine or *ofo* at special occasions. *Ofo* is a small piece of wood symbolically carried by the elders as signifying justice, righteousness and truth; and used to invoke the gods and ancestors to adjudge a situation or strike an offender with punishment.

[4]Patriarchy is a significant culture of the Nigerian society. But this does not imply that women do not have a strong voice of their own. They do and this is represented in films like *Widow* and *August Meeting* where women organizations in the old and new traditions are treated as formidable voices especially in the South Eastern states of the country. The notion of patriarchy particularly is shown when men do things either for the society or their individual families without consulting with the women on the conviction that they [men] are the pillars of the society. Gannon argues that, 'masculinity or aggressive masculine behaviour in the pursuit of dominance over others can most probably be attributed to the Nigerian society as a whole' (2001: 270). In *Things Fall Apart* (1986), Obi Okonkwo was significant in depicting the masculine qualities of the male dominance. He challenged his wives to work harder and even beat one of them during the Umuofia holy week. He also confronted his father when he proved lazy to pay his debts and took the stage against the Europeans when they arrived to colonize and evangelize Umuofia and other neighbouring towns and villages. With formal education and civilization however, this cultural masculinity is no longer entrenched. Women are currently sharing positions with their male counterparts in most decision making bodies. Although this cannot generally be said of all communalistic societies, the fact is that most are tending towards equity and equality at least in principle and in most elite circles in practice. Gannon observes a deep seated difference in this trend between ethnic groups in Nigeria. He states that 'with regard to the role of women among the three major ethnic groups, the Hausa-Fulani, true to their Muslim religion, tend to consider women as quite subordinate to men in virtually every respect. This is not the case among the Igbo and the Yoruba, where women have traditionally faced little opposition to their entrepreneurial spirit' (2001: 270). It is for reasons of this apparent suppression that women in the North mostly have welcomed Nollywood films as against going to cinema centers which makes those of them that attend it be looked down upon as lacking in moral virtues. The film *Bless Me* (2006) portrays the development of male and female equality in the South-East of Nigeria where both husband and wife face marital challenges equitably. But that is a typical elite culture being depicted of a newly wedded couple, contrary to life in rural villages as seen in *Widow*, significant of what Geertz calls attachment to their 'primordial ties'. In *Widow* particularly, the primordial ties are seen in the punishment given to Nnenna by the *Umuokpu* group in suspicion that she might have killed her husband who died strangely at the breakfast table.

[5]Kola nut as said is a unique tropical fruit that symbolically signifies unity, peace and hospitality. It shows openness, peace and love and is shared at key moments of social interactions (Eboh, 2004: 142). An example of the type of prayers or invocations offered at the breaking and sharing of kolanuts, reminiscent of those in the films can be visualized from the following by Eboh (2004: 144) thus:

Onye wetara oji, wetara ndu.	One who brings kola, brings life.
Egbe bere, Ugo bere, nke si	Let both the kite and eagle perch, whichever
ibe ya ebele, nku kwa ya.	refuses the other the right to perch, let
Ka Chukwu wetara ndu,	its wings break. May God who brings
wetakwazie nri anyi ga-eri,	life bring also food for life.
Ukwu akpona anyi n' ulo,	Let there be no misfortune for us at home
nke ona akpo anyi n'ije,	and abroad. God has already broken the
Chukwu awagola anyi oji,	kola, it is then left for us to share it.
obuzi ka anyi kebezia ya.	

[6]*Amalinze the Cat* is a name given to the wrestler from Umuofia's neighbouring village who engaged Okonkwo in the inter-village wrestling contest. His name evokes the sentiment of a warrior who is never defeated hence he is called 'the cat'. Chinua Achebe describes him in his novel thus, 'Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights' (See Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*. 1958. London: Heinemann Educational Books. 3).

[7]'Zamani Period' according to Mbiti is a Swahili word meaning 'the unlimited past'. He used it to signal Africa's understanding of the existence of God in their view of religion as a way of life. By this he describes God as one who started existing before ever there was any past. 'God is the origin and sustenance of all things. He is older than the Zamani period' (Mbiti, 1969: 29) he stated.

[8]Onitsha is a town that harbours one of the biggest markets in Nigeria where Nollywood has huge number of distributors and fans. It is the hub of commercial businesses in the South-East of Nigeria. Though, rural and developing, it is seen as the centre of 'everything' both the good and the bad in the society. The main Nollywood production centre in the South-East of Nigeria is located in Onitsha, precisely in 51 Iweka Road in Anambra Sate. In this film, a representation is made of the town to showcase the landscapes and typical business and religious lifestyles of which filmic characters are involved.

[9]'Evil forest' is a piece of land left fallow for long and believed to be dangerous. It is considered to be the abode of evil spirits in the community and a place where those thought to have been killed by the spirits are dumped without proper funeral rites in the past. These include: people who died prematurely, twins, suicides, or those who died out of the atrocities they committed against the land. It is this type of land that the early missionaries were given to prove that their own God can combat the gods of the evil spirits, hence a test of their power, before most local people were convinced to convert to their 'new' Christian religion.

[10]'Obtain by tricks' otherwise called 'OBT' or '419' in Nigeria is a crime scam that refers to some people's dubious ways of obtaining wealth by corrupt means and practices. The tag '419' is the section where the penal code appears in Nigerian legal documents and is currently the popular nomenclature to identify the advance fee fraud in the country. In the film *I Go Chop Your Dollar* (2005), directed by Andy Amenechi, Nkem Owoh satirizes both the Nigerian society as well as the greedy victims of the fraud scam by means of the film's narrative and music score. Currently this scam is being investigated by the Nigerian government by means of a federal ministry called the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

[11]*Amadioha* is known in Igbo cosmology to refer to the 'god of thunder' believed to be a messenger of the supreme deity, God, for invoking justice and truth in the world. People use the cultural symbol of *ofo* to invoke this god of thunder for justice. For Nnawuihe, *ofo* is a great symbol in traditional religion. It has a central position in all major religious, social and even political activities. For instance, titles are conferred with the *ofo* (Nnawuihe, 2005: 20) and elders mainly are those who carry *ofo* to adjudicate cases in the land traditionally, hence their work is for the peace of the land and are called *ndi Aladimma*. Literally *aladimma* can be translated as 'peace in the land'. While *Ala* refers to earth, a locale or a place, *di mma* means to 'be well', to 'have peace', or 'bring about wholesomeness'. Thus, *ndi Aladimma* refers to those who work to see that there is order in the land. *Aladimma* is for this reason the highest political and social forum for every Igbo community, where important decisions are taken. It comprises of all adult males and

sometimes females of the native community and is led by the elders drawn from the heads of the family units, who act as official representatives of their family groups (Ekennia, 2000: 162).

[12]*Eze mmuo* literally means spiritual-king or a king that has the eyes of the spirits. It is a title for the chief priest in Igbo traditional religion who serves the deities and the communities by performing sacrifices and consultations with the spirits of the ancestors and the gods. Another name for *Eze mmuo* is *Dibia Afa* which implies one who sacrifices and consults the gods. This type of traditional priesthood is significant in African ontology and cosmology because the priest is the spiritual leader of the community and deals with the traditional ruler (*Igwe* or *Eze*) who rules by maintaining order and peace after the dictates of the gods as revealed to the *Eze mmuo* or *Dibia Afa*. It is a sacred position in the community and can only be filled according to tradition by the choice of a deity or family heritage and requires absolute moral and spiritual codes by those elected to serve. In the Yoruba speaking area of Nigeria, the substitute is the *babalawo* who consults the *Ifa* oracle (that is, the Yoruba traditional deity similar to *Amadioha* in the Igbo speaking area), and gives messages of the gods to the *Kabiyesi* – the traditional Yoruba king (similar to *Igwe* in the Igbo part of Nigeria) to deliver to his people and community.

Chapter Six

6.0 Qualitative Findings

6.1 Introduction

The generated data from this study's fieldwork provide a basic platform for considering communalistic rituals in Nollywood's representations. Generally, the findings from across the eight focus-group interviews showed that viewers are very familiar with Nollywood themes. A good number of participants affirmed that they not only identify with the representations, but also watch two to three films per day. This certainly is understandable, given the nature of home viewing practice prominent in Nigeria where families consume films either through television cable channels or by renting them from near-by rental shops. When asked what Nollywood films mean to them, many expressed their pleasure in terms of the various 'uses' they make of the films especially in relation to the cultural society. For instance, one audience participant re-named, Anya Tony, revealed that he 'watches two Nollywood films per day [...], it makes people learn more about what is happening in the society [and] teaches how to speak good English'.

The uses of Nollywood as a meta-narrative in exploring the daily activities, otherwise 'cultures' of the society, was the basis of looking at filmic themes from the context of transmitting cultures on screen. Nigerian audiences interviewed showed an overall agreement to this view and said they looked to films for storylines that resonate with their lives. Many credit the films as teaching life lessons with some arguing that a lot of Nollywood experiments are overtly exaggerated and can hardly be termed authentic cultures. There were both emergent positive and negative scores attributed to Nollywood film industry by these participants. The key findings can be summarized as follows:

1) Importance of Nollywood for socio-personal identity formation: respondents tended to have their self-image and identity affirmed by watching Nollywood, in that, the cultural familiarity of the materials made film readings easy and enjoyable to them, while also providing them with 'lessons' for 'their' personal lives. By this is meant that traditions

having been mediated by technologies and make Nollywood films resonate easily with audiences in line with Turner's notion of rituals as 'social dramas'.

2) Normative roles performed by Nollywood: a number of participants also stated that Nollywood's materials encourage them to reflect on their values and morals, particularly film materials, based on 'morality tales'. In other words, the films are contributing to social changes in the Nigerian society by making people re-think their cultural beliefs and thought patterns.

3) Knowledge transmission and educational role of Nollywood: a number of participants also pointed out that Nollywood performs a 'truth-telling' function in the ways it chooses to address social and cultural issues with 'true life' stories that 'tell us exactly what is going on in the communities'. It was also mentioned that Nollywood exposes many important, but otherwise hidden, issues regarding abuses in the homes and society, including poverty.

4) Role of Nollywood in national identity formation: based on participants' responses, it seemed clear that many are at home with watching Nollywood, as it is based on their indigenous cultures and values. Hence, they enjoy and appreciate watching these lives and cultures depicted on films. In this sense, there was a strong sense that Nollywood is unique, in that it 'depicted our African culture as distinct from other cultures in the world' and 'shows to the world what Nigeria embodies'. This is a dual process of inward-outward identity formation which emerged throughout the interview processes with different groups. Firstly, Nollywood reflects to the nation what Nigeria stands for, thereby reinforcing certain positive images and values. Secondly, it constructs an image of Nigeria for the wider African and international Diaspora audiences, which is one area of identity-formation process that can be explored by further research.

5) On the entertainment value of Nollywood: participants related the ways they enjoy and derive pleasure from Nollywood stories and themes differently, which is where this

research discovered audiences as having different tastes and therefore provided a category of audience classifications in Nollywood.

Most people strongly believe that the nascent film industry has a long way to go, especially when compared to the higher production values of Hollywood. Some respondents criticized its lack of creativity, originality and imagination, by claiming that some of the materials are overtly exaggerated, repetitive, simplistic, boring and 'borrowed' from other cultures. They highlighted that unlike Nollywood, Hollywood materials are of a higher quality and sophistication both technologically and aesthetically, and called on Nollywood proprietors to rethink their overall production processes and qualities. The focus-group interviews actually revealed among other things, that Nollywood does have a future and is hoped to be the new 'embodiment of African cinema' and the 'pride of Africa' but only if the producers and directors could be more committed, in terms of originality and creativity, rather than hinge on commercial viability and monetary reasons, which seem to be the basic factor guiding productions at the moment, and as a result undermines audiences' pleasure and local appeal. By this is meant that producers should not be releasing unfinished products to the film markets, without being certain of their quality, which in time might cause fans to despise these productions.

6.2 Communalism

The portrayals of communalistic cultures in the films connect participants to richer meanings and larger forces of their community. As audiences witness characters going through their well-known action of rituals in the films, they subjectively experience the same objective meaningful world which is attained through the condensed nature of symbols employed in the films. These audiences are drawn into solidarity with the community's past, present and future, through the films they watch, which reinforce their beliefs and identity while detesting what they consider as false. For instance, for Felicia, a student-nurse from the South-East, knowing titles of films and making her own choices

is one significant factor that makes her watch Nollywood films. Asked 'what type of films do you prefer to watch?', she said:

> I like watching epic films. They make you learn things that happened even before you were born. And even if you do not travel back to your village [...], as in you don't have grandparents who can answer some questions and tell you the stories of the past, through epic movies you will know those things and after watching them you can come out and say boldly those things happened.

Significantly therefore, this respondent is living out communalistic cultures through Nollywood representations. Tradition is 'thickly' presented especially in the epic films through costumes, manner of carrying out communal sacrifices, proverbs as a traditional way of speech and concomitant symbols encoded in films with pre-colonial settings. The combination of proverbs and symbolic ritual activities among the Igbos evokes the sense of culture that is sacred and primordial, reaching back to the ancestors and going beyond the present. Even though, for instance, *Things Fall Apart* is set in English language, the director adapted it well to the typical exotic symbolisms that characterize Igbo language and communalistic thought patterns as can be seen either from the scenes when children are having their moon light stories, or in the proverbial debates of the elders at the village meetings and discussions which they often had in consultations with the traditional chief priest. The wonderful names given to Okonkwo upon his victory in a wrestling contest depict this understanding and tenets of communalism where an individual belongs to the community even as he was rewarded with a 'feather to his hat' (title). His praise names therein are all culturally coded words to imply valour both in the English and Igbo languages, but more significant for the Igbo communalistic culture who celebrated 'him' as 'a good omen from the gods'. He was called: 'the master wrestler', 'Agu', 'Ebube Dike', 'the warrior', 'the tiger of the forest', 'the roaring flame', 'the conqueror of the cat', etc. Importantly the integrity of these names come to light when the elders are engaged in typical celebrative traditional handshake where one calls out to the other who simultaneously and symbolically responds in like manner.

The filmic language of *Things Fall Apart* in particular, being communalistic, is better appreciated when the primary knowledge of African cosmology is well known by the audience in the light of what was discussed as 'cultural competence' earlier. This is because, the Igbo people, like Chinua Achebe, believe that 'proverbs are the oil with which people munch their words', implying that good speeches cannot be devoid of proverbs. In this film, the elders of Umuofia, conscious of their role in the society, help the viewer to be introduced into their world as they define the obligations of the land and denounce the abhorred taboos that must be challenged in their meetings and views. Defining the type of community these elders represent, Palmer says, 'Umuofia society is proud, dignified, and stable, because it is governed by a complicated system of customs and traditions extending from birth, through marriage to death. It has its own legal, educational, religious, and hierarchical systems, and the conventions governing relations between the various generations' (1972: 49). It is the elders that are at the apex of the society and are the living custodians of the communalistic laws of the land. *Things Fall Apart* shows this group deliberating over communal matters in a number of ways and issues, negotiating sacrifices to the deities, and carrying out rituals at the behest of the entire community. Quoting the scene where the elders had to welcome the chief priest, often referred to as the 'wise one' or the 'eye of the gods', the film, like Achebe's seminal novel, presents a dramatized greeting pattern of a normal communalistic society engaged in a negotiation.

'Umuofia kwenu!' shouted the leading 'egwugwu', pushing the air with his rafia arms.
The elders of the clan replied, 'yaah!'.
'Umuofia Kwenu!'
'Yaah!'
'Umuofia Kwenu!'
'Yaah!'
'Evil forest then thrust the pointed end of his rattling staff into the earth. And it began to shake and rattle, like something agitating with a metallic life. He took the first of the empty stools and the eight other 'egwugwu' began to sit in order of seniority after him...When all the 'egwugwu' had sat down and the sound of the many tiny bells and rattles on the bodies had subsided, Evil forest addressed the two groups of people facing them.
'Uzowulu's body, I salute you', he said. Spirits always addressed humans as 'bodies'.
Uzowulu bent down and touched the earth with his right hand as a sign of submission.
'Our father, my hand has touched the ground', he said (Achebe, cited in Palmer 1972: 4).

As this scene rolls, one begins to see the symbolic imageries of communalism being well inculcated into the film's storylines and as focus-group participants debate cultures in the films, these visuals come to mind. Here, both words and visuals are used to describe realities. Verbal language and physical objects are applied to make better understanding of the symbolic significances of materials, as said earlier, the world of the African is seen to involve the animate, the inanimate and the spiritual in one environment that is humanity's abode. The ancestors are invoked to witness the goings-on in their communities and protect their people from harm, the same way the deities are asked to favour the good intentions of their loyal worshippers, the community, while the bigger gods like *Amadioha*, the god of thunder or *Ala*, the earth-goddess are called upon to adjudicate justice in the land. All these are communalism in film, which were confirmed by the focus-group participants.

'Asked what themes get represented in Nollywood?' a group of respondents at the Youth Outreach Centre, Port Harcourt argued as follows:

Edet: I think Nollywood is today an embodiment of African cinema. Whether Nigeria, Senegal, Angola or Malawi, etc you will see that it is African cinema. The way we dress and our local settings in the films show that it is purely African. Our local assemblies, our buildings, our accent and the way we speak or even our ways of settling disputes in the films are cultural and cuts across all Africans. That is to say Nollywood to a non African is all about African way of life. Non Nigerians because of this can easily identify with the films too. I am proud to be African and I am happy that Nollywood portrays the real image of Africans to the world today. Well, as much as I do know that I am an individual I do not want to generalize but I think I can always speak for myself. Even though there are basic problems with Nollywood like sometimes they don't edit films well and just go for marketing, but I think they are doing great.

Jerry: I am from Malawi. I am a seminarian doing my apostolic work here in Nigeria. My impression about Nollywood films is that they portray a kind of culture Nigeria is living to the outside world. Like before I came to Nigeria we are always seeing Nigerian Nollywood films. If you go to Malawi you will see Nollywood films sold along the streets. If you go to some parts of the mall you will see people watching the films. Usually what we see in them are themes like violence, armed robbers attacking houses, fine buildings, and even the village part of it. So the impression we get is that Nigeria is a place where the gap between the rich and the poor is very wide. Because it lets you see the township scenery where the buildings are big and beautiful and the village scenery

where people are poor and houses are small. And I think the next element is corruption. You see the corruption element standing out too. There are also some positive sides about Nollywood films. I think they bring out African cultures (although that is contentious: is there anything like African cultures and I can say to a certain extent, yes). And I think that's the reason why I like Nigerian movies. I can identify with them. I see a lot of similarities in Nigerian cultures with my own Malawian cultures. That's the way we are brought up. I see more similarities than differences really. For instance the way a young man asks for a hand in marriage, the way bride price is paid, etc. We do those things as well.

Chika: In fact I like watching Nigerian films because I am a Nigerian. So one of the films I really liked watching and have recommended to people is *Igodo*. That film depicted our African culture as distinct from other cultures of the world. It is all about a particular village. They were in crisis and when they consulted their oracle (you know in those days there was nothing like Christianity), they were asked to go and select seven able bodied men from among them to go to an evil forest to bring something that will be a remedy to their condition. At the end of the day, out of the seven men that were sent, six lost their lives because they had so many difficulties. But there is one thing that really strikes a chord when watching this film. It is at the point where the demand was for one of them to sacrifice his life on behalf of others and their leader agreed to offer his life for them. That was so touching to see bravery for one's community so well depicted.

Participants' arguments as presented here imply that the Igbo culture is generally significant in Nollywood and comes across through representations [both in good and bad forms]. Most of these of course are stressed by their celebrations on-screen. Both Real and Turner believe that rituals help mankind to relive their past in order to affirm their present and then project unto the future. This is one significant role played out by Nollywood films for Nigerian audiences who can easily identify with the themes, the stars, the locations, and the storylines. Following Real's insight, this study affirms Turner's dialectical process by revealing the functional attributes of Nollywood films which draw a lot from the cultural rituals of the everyday society of Nigeria. Hence, our argument that these rituals are centripetal to Nollywood films is being graphically justified by Real's diagram on the functional role of rituals in society as we shall see shortly. In this diagram, Real marshals out the functional roles of rituals as seen in the films which include the facts that it objectifies, repeats, structures and transforms society by its celebrations and perhaps, recurrent (re)presentations [in Nollywood]. This research therefore uses this diagram here to signal what Nollywood films do to African and Nigerian communalistic cultures by representing them. It shows that these films do not

only objectify the people's rituals by repetitively renewing them for audiences, but also structures the societies by constantly depicting the myths of their historic journeys as a people through symbolic representations. There is the pattern in this filmic representations that creates audience's participation, the connections to both people's historical past and their immediate physical environment, the crossing of a liminal threshold by the resolution that comes from their rituals and eventually the celebration of the central values of their cultural lives both as audiences and as actual ritual participants. In this case, ritual representations in Nollywood films, exemplified by the five key ones discussed in Chapter five, help to affirm communalistic identity in these Nigerian cultures, which is the viewpoint of this study and is underpinned by Real's diagram.

RITUAL ━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━▶ REALITY

OBJECTIFIES
- Expresses collective experience
- Unifies emotionally and symbolically

REPEATS A PATTERN:
- Creates simultaneous participation in present
- Proposes a transhuman model
- Unifies participation with story, others, life

STRUCTURES TIME AND SPACE:
- Connects to historical past and physical environment
- Metaphorically conveys a peoples identity

TRANSPORTS AND TRANSFORMS:
- CROSSES Liminal threshold to new state
- Breaks through profane into the sacred

PUBLICLY CELEBRATES CULTURE'S CENTRAL VALUES

CREATES, MAINTAINS, MODIFIES, TRANSFORMS REALITY

Source: (Real, 1996.47) *Ritual Participation operates in a variety of ways to express and shape relations with one's society and environment.

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To find out more about the impression of audiences on the assumption of this study, the same question, 'what themes do you see featuring most in Nollywood?' was repeated before another group of participants at the Centre for the Study of African Communication and Cultures and the following answers were also proffered:

Anthony: I want to say there a number of themes that Nigerian films present. Sometimes there are some films on faith where they emphasize on trusting God. Of course they show this by contrasting it with the consequencies of deeds that are ungodly. Some others talk generally on cultural moral values. Sometimes it is on entertainment and variety shows (people feel happy) that engage people and give them pleasure.

My name is Bob: Most of the movies tell us exactly what is going on in the communities. Take for instance most of the movies that depict students' activities on campuses...they tell about what is happening in the universities. Some talk about the society generally like the film *Millionaires' Club.* They really represent what is happening in the country and show the extent people can go in 'making money' and the way money is being spent in Nigeria. In Nollywood, we get exactly what is happening in the society. Some other movies where it has been acted like slavery is a history of what happened which everybody knows is real. Even to this day some forms of it are still going on and this is being depicted in the movies. So I think Nollywood relates to us what is happening in the society.

My name is Ikpiki from Delta State: In addition to what he just said I think I need to mention something about it also. Nollywood is about our culture....like African culture, Nigerian culture, Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa cultures. I think most of the Nigerian films let us know a lot about our culture, where we come from, in short about Africa in general.

In relation to culture therefore, history and heritage are often included. Hence, Bob's answer above which refers to what happens in the society and perhaps its history is significant here too. The story of slavery as he mentioned remains a landmark in narrating the antecedents of the society which gets attention easily when told or represented as we will see shortly with Amata's *Amazing Grace* (2006) when we discuss the proximity of texts to people's stories. But suffice to add that *Igodo* is another film that depicts communalism in Igbo land by revealing all the characteristics Nwachukwu identified as denoting 'cultural authenticity' in terms of a 'tremendous fund of African imagery, ritual-spiritual language, music, dance, metaphor and proverbs, the mythic components and poetic resonances of oral traditions that produce film aesthetics that are African (Nwachukwu, 1994: 202). Starring Nollywood stars like Pete Edochie, Sam Dede,

Charles Okafor, Obi Madubogwu, this film presents the cultural, mythic and epic story of the people of UmuIgodo, formerly called Umuoka. The opening sequence is a long shot of the village littered with scenes of gathered crowd wailing and crying over the loss of members of their community. In one instance, a cascade of vehicles is seen to bring home the coffins of deceased community members, while some others are seen burying another member at the opposite side of the screen. Indicating by this scenario the rampant deaths in the village that brought unease to every member. Here, the screen action zooms gradually to tension in the village seen by the gathering of elders at one side discussing with the *Igwe* in consultation of the *Eze mmuo* and at another side women lamenting either the death of their children or of their husbands. The *Igwe* (Amaechi Mounagor) calls out to the elders in a shrinking tone seeking for answers to the calamity of his kingdom, 'darkness has enveloped UmuIgodo and the gods have closed their eyes...I feel your pains...things have changed...but only the gods know why...Dibia Opara, the people await your counsel...reveal the secrets of the gods' he said. This scene was the lamentation that brought in the chief priest (Dibia Opara) who consulted the oracle and revealed how UmuIgodo in the past killed an innocent man and buried him alive and now the gods are taking their revenge on the present day generation.

Igodo as a communalistic 'art' signals the meeting and consultation of the *Igwe* and council after what we described in the theoretical framework chapter as 'co-operation and mutual co-existence' (Eboh, 2004: 163) in communalism. That the elders are seen to discuss and consult the gods through the oracles again underpin the cosmological understanding of the Igbos which was mobilized in the course of this study. As Geertz highlights 'culture is public, because meaning is' (1973: 12) and by this, an array of 'clusters of symbolic acts' (Geertz, ibid: 26) as Geertz calls them are made public not only by communalistic negotiations but also by Nollywood's visual mediations. Like a twisted momentary flash back, the camera lens relocates audiences of this film and the *Igwe* in council to their [UmuIgodo] past, not only following the mythical narration of the story by the 'great wise one' but also through its dramatization that gives a clue to the pristine nature of Umuoka and traces its journey to how it was brought to be the present UmuIgodo community. Here, the innocent man, Iheokwumere is seen to be lost after the

death of his parents and ran into the forest to live by himself until Ezeoke, a village hunter who had no child saw him and brought him home as his own son. At the death of Ezeoke however, Ihukwumere continued to become wealthy and famous to the envy of some villagers until a group of seven elders plotted against him. Meanwhile, these elders did not know that Ihukwumere was dedicated to *Amadioha*, the god of thunder. They accused him of stealing the *Igwe's* staff and buried him alive after the decree of the *Igwe* which is the main reason of the anomaly in their community as vengeance from the gods. The film Igodo reveals communalism and its numerous rituals as the mythic stories of UmuIgodo progressed. It also showcases the cosmological connection that the living have with the dead ancestors and the gods as was discussed earlier. Hence, it verifies and performs the function Garritano attributes to most West Africa popular films as 'record contemporary realities while simultaneously prescribing responses to the difficulties urban postcolonial African societies confront' (2000: 171).

6.2.1 Societal Values

The values of the society is one other area where most respondents affirmed that they learn a lot from Nollywood representations, which implies that these films help to affirm their values. They argue that by watching these films and relating them to life stories, they are able to reflect on their values and morals as members of the society particularly seen from the 'morality' tales encoded in the films. This buttresses in a way the argument enunciated in Chapters five that most Nollywood films are categorized in the religio-morality genre, where they focus mainly on the binary oppositions between the good and bad of the Nigerian society. Juliet, one of the student-nurse participants highlighted that, 'Nollywood exposes what is happening in the society [...]. It teaches about our actions and how they can affect us tomorrow'. Arguing further she said, 'I have encouraged people to watch films depending on the type of problems they have at a time'. Here again, the uses of the films are expressed in terms of the societal values they give and like a healing therapy, Nollywood is evoked by audiences to address societal ills.

This normative role of Nollywood films is observed as similar to that played by some traditional dances in Nigeria which are didactic in nature and guide the society in upholding good values (see chapter five). Like the dances, the normative role of Nollywood films to Nigerian audiences is moralistic and helps audiences in the uses of their films. Mark from the Centre of African Culture and Communication, believes that Nollywood 'passes messages better than Hollywood movies which can be on anything at all'. In this way, the significance of cultural representations in terms of routine duties and traditional activities are seen as aspects of the narratives that Nollywood encode which are simply the representations of the expected ways of life of Nigerians. In this way, the movies grasped from this perspective serve a basic purpose as enunciated by Lull. 'They help people make sense of their environments. Stories symbolize cultural values and provide cultural continuity [...]; as cultural devices they are extremely pleasurable [and] provoke imagination, connect to emotion, and stimulate fantasies' (Lull, 2000: 173).

Highlighting what goes on in this type of consumption, Hall attests that, 'they [...] have the whole social order embedded in them as a set of meanings, practices and beliefs: the everyday knowledge of social structures' (2003: 59). In this way, the representation of cultures in films is a renewal of the celebration of dominant rituals on screen for those who consume them to learn of negotiating the society's values. They engage themselves actively on the viewing process by accessing their memories and authenticating them through filmic storylines. Teshome argues that, 'once memory enters into our consciousness, it is hard to circumvent, harder to stop, and impossible to run from. It burns and glows from inside, causing anguish, new dreams and newer hopes. Memory does something else besides telling us how we got here from there: It reminds us of the causes of difference between popular memory and official versions of history' (1989: 54). This, in a nutshell, seemed to be one important negotiation that audiences in this mode deal with in Nollywood consumption attitudes.

Audience participants agreed that the films give some kind of affirmations to the way people lead their lives. By watching the movies and identifying roles, one is made to take sides with one character rather than another, or even to feel as part of a ritual being

celebrated in the film. Eucheria, 27, one of the student-nurses believes that Nollywood films are centered on life experiences that teach audiences generally. Thus, she argued that the films 'use what is happening in our country to teach us [....]. The films teach us about our culture and lives in certain places like tertiary institutions'. Reinforcing her argument is Ngozi, 24, who echoed her belief in Nollywood's capacity to transmit knowledge, especially on core cultural values, alongside the teaching of English language and civil manners including fashions as well, to viewers.

> Nollywood helps me know what is good and bad.
> It helps me know how to dress well and how to talk by
> speaking good English. It even helps me know how to walk well.
> It helps me know how to talk to someone in a good tune and
> manner of approach.

Pleasure in Nollywood is strongly hinged on the resonance of storylines with people's life experiences in this study. Most participants, especially those from the university colleges, bought into this idea of pleasure in Nollywood in their contributions. People are able to link filmic stories to their community experiences and some to their own life experiences. A typical example of this instance is the section that presents the following dialogue during one of the focus-group interviews where participants attested to using films to teach values to some of their friends.

Eucheria: I watched a Nollywood movie. It is about a guy who married a lady. This lady had an ex-boyfriend with whom she had broken up. When they were arranging to get married, the former boyfriend was asked to be the best man to the new husband of the lady. Now on the night of their 'bachelor's eve' the lady slept with the best man, her former boy friend. Unfortunately for them, the husband-to-be caught them. Although he didn't quit the wedding the next day and goes on ahead with it, he decided to avoid both his newly wedded wife and the best man (friend). But later on when she pleaded with him and begged him on her knees, he forgave her and later travelled outside the country with her. I recommended this film to a family friend because this same thing happened to him. He said he would never forgive his wife but after watching the film decided to call his wife and made peace with her.

Interviewer: Are you saying this happened to someone you know?
Eucheria: (cuts in) On the eve of their wedding. It happened really.

Interviewer: So, can we say that things revealed in the films happen in Nigeria?
Eucheria: Yes. They happen around us.

Anthony: They do. In fact it is from practical experiences in life that they draw their storylines and only make it sink deep into the generality of people who are not experiencing such things in different places. So I think they are really touching the practical lives of the society.

Onyekachi: Most of the movies tell us exactly what is going on in the communities. Take for instance, most of the movies that depict students' activities on campuses [...]; they tell us about what is happening in the universities. Some talk about the society generally like the film, Millionaires' Club [...]. In Nollywood we get exactly what is happening in the society. Some other movies where it has been acted like slavery is a history of what happened which everybody knows is real. Even to this day some forms of it are still going on and this is being depicted in the movies as well. So I think, Nollywood relates to us what is happening in the society.

Other participants at the Imo State University, Owerri, talked of how they have used Nollywood to explore values and recommended them afterwards to friends and families, thus:

Jacinta: I have recommended some films to people before. One of the films is *Father Moses*. In that film there is an only son of a man. His father wanted him not to go into priesthood because he wanted him to join his occultic group. But the son refused and eventually the father died. Now, in the 'land of the dead' the father realized that his son had made a better decision by joining the priesthood and was so devout that he won all battles against him. In this film you see that the young man was focused and at the end was a victor and not a victim. So I recommend it to friends to let them know they can have their ways even if their parents are against them. They can be sure that once God is with them they will win the situations. Whoever is in Christ is a victor and not a victim.

Nwachi: Yes, I recommended the film *Will of Change* to somebody. It talks about AIDS, about young children, young people, etc teaching that it is not proper to have sex when they are young. They have to wait till they are married and even if they cannot control themselves, they have to use protective devices.

Adaeze: I recommended a film to my friend. She was having a problem in her relationship. It came to the stage where it was like... he was to marry his girlfriend and the family of the guy does not like her and they said 'no' which was keeping her low. In that film which I recommended to her, the storyline was about a 'youth corper' who was posted outside his city. For instance, he was a Yoruba that came to Igbo land and served. He came and fall in love with a girl. Then, the love started growing...and when he now wanted to marry the girl...the family said no!. So I recommended the film to her...'cos I was like telling her it is not the end of the world. Because in the film too, the guy later

ended up marrying this girl friend despite all family oppositions. So it's all about someone having that strong mind and focused on what he or she wants.

Significantly, respondents from different institutions and sessions referred to the lessons of *Sound of Love* (2006) a film they watched and recommended to others. Matthew 33, narrated his impression over this film when he saw it for the first time during a travel he made to Abuja. 'The storyline is so interesting that I could not just let it go like that without making another person watch it [....]. Until now, we are still searching for the film here in Port Harcourt'. Searching for this film together, no doubt, brings home the communalistic nature of sharing values with one another in Nigeria as explained in the theoretical framework of this study. The film is about Silas, a jobless and only child of his mother, from a very poor family that happens to be in love with the princess of Umuagwu, his village, to the annoyance of the royal family and other elders of the ruling council. Being the daughter of a king (*Igwe*), tradition demands that her father gives her out in marriage to a potential royal family, and unfortunately she was not to follow the tradition. The value here is that both the princess (Chioma Chukwuka) and the love of her life, Silas, were united in pricing love above tradition and rejected not only the *Igwe's* ruling but also the proposed suitor from America who came back with money, cars, education and civilization to the village. As said in this film by the princess to her mother, 'my heart is not for sale' implying a powerful value that the society should learn through the film.

The *Will to Change* (cited by Nwachi) is another film aimed particularly at empowering young people to take authority in leading their lives responsibly. It moralizes on social existence in Nigeria where many are left to chart their futures by the choices they make. A similar film like that which calls attention to harnessing one's talents towards personal empowerment is *African Heroes* (2005) which is textually thematized here to signal young people's dramatization of Africa's journey and the ambition to survive its continental stories by means of their talents. In other words, the societal values of success, hard work and ambition is what this film is all about especially for most young people who tend to be frustrated with lack of job opportunities in the country. Directed and produced by Lancelot Oduwa Imaseun, this film portrays Africa's journey and aspirations

towards the future in a way that reveals its continental historic struggles and definitive attempts to overturn events for the better.

While casting aspersions and asking unanswered questions, every African could easily understand what story is told by watching this film, shot to depict the situational crisis of the continent. Its storyline begins by showcasing and making a categorical distinction between two groups of youth: one, made up of young musicians ready to use their talents for survival, and another group being disoriented young people stealing from the public for living. Since the film terminates the screen life of the bad group as soon as they surfaced by letting them be caught and be dealt with by the police, this reading will concentrate on the group that their deeds underlie the narrative flow of the screen play of this movie: the (emerging) *African heroes* as the film title indicates. The film tells the story of seven young men and a girl from different family backgrounds drawn together by ambition. Out of friendship and interest, this group discover their love for music and are hopeful that they can make a living out of it, and decide to form a live band. Before this time, life of course, has been terribly difficult for them. Only their hope of success is the driving force behind their desire.

Graphically, the screen presents the lyrical combination of these talents as they play and sing prophetically of Africa's redemption in a reggae manner, reminiscent of the late Jamaican reggae musician, Bob Marley. Unfortunately, the room belongs to none of them, but to an ambassador's daughter, studying at the University of Lagos, who is a girl-friend to one of them. In this instance, their poverty is stressed as without a house of their own as adults, apart from being at the mercy of a non-national in their country. Thus, like most Nigerian and African stories, where it is mainly the politicians and their Western friends working in the country that have good lives, this film questions the notion of citizenship in Africa without a life and a home for the common people.

As day by day these young musicians gather to sing in their friend's house, they began to think of achieving their dream as emerging 'African heroes', at least with their natural talent seen in music. Since there was going to be a music contest in the city of Benin, as

one of them hinted, which is about four hours drive from Lagos, they decided to participate in it. But like most African problems where good will is not good enough, this group needed help to transport themselves to the venue of the contest. Thus, their problem became how to make sure they take part by being present at the contest. They had no money of their own. They had no means of transportation. Yet, they have a lofty dream to pursue, which represents visually the force and belief behind most Africa's entrepreneural spirit that tomorrow will be better if there is only a way to overturn present dilemmas.

Eventually the young musicians approach the ambassador's daughter, Tunisia, to give them a lend of her jeep for the journey. This again, is another typical representation of the type of connections African leaders tend to have with foreigners when they have goals to pursue. Not only is Tunisia a non-Nigerian, the host of the music contest also is a white European who is organizing it with some Nigerian businessmen. In this therefore, we see what was discussed in Chapter two as the 'dependency syndrome' of most African nations on the West being depicted. The crisis ridden culture of the Nigerian youth is also played out: unemployment, love of women, rugged dressings, revolution, dreadlocks as hairstyle, jokes, fights and reconciliation.

As a matter of fact, *African Heroes* can be read allegorically as different leaders of Africa, (represented by the seven young men and a lady), discovering what unites them as a continent (say, for instance, music), and hoping to make a revolutionary success out of it and explore developmental opportunities. The connection with Tunisia and Jerry Smith, the chief host of the music competition, shows the admired belief of most people that Western connection is a key to development. Even though, the European entrepreneur is seen to tap into their resources (music), the film does not indicate they knew what to do without his help.

The difficulties encountered by these young people on the way to the music venue in Benin is a representation of the hazards usually encountered by most African nations and leaders on the road to the 'promised land'. For instance, Tunisia resisted giving these

emerging 'African heroes' her Jeep on the account of the vehicle's condition, but they had to promise to service it on the way to their contest. Eventually, they had difficulties, first, by being mistaken and arrested as a gang of robbers, on account of their dressing patterns and hair styles, by some Nigerian policemen patrolling the highway. Again, they were stranded on the road *en route* the contest due to the inevitable breakdown of their vehicle which after all was not serviced for the long journey. In this case, they had no food to eat and no water to drink for hours. And since the mobile telephone network did not have coverage up to the area they were stranded, they were left *incommunicando* of all contacts that could help them, which made them angrier with one another.

In this film, one thinks that Africans are speaking to themselves allegorically. The screen's visual representations show arid places that are caught off from ordinary human activities. Along the long dry motor way where these young 'emerging African heroes' had their car break down, there were no mechanics and no petrol filling stations. The scenario ordinarily resembles typical Hollywood road movies scenery but yet with undulating differences. For instance, while in Hollywood, the characters take their missions as explorers and adventurers, this group of African characters are caught under pressure to meet up with the music contest schedule and have no way of escape out of the vicinity. They are expected on stage in a short time and yet no one knows about their predicament except the film audiences. For them and the viewers therefore, this film at this stage creates a suspense that heightens the anxiety of expectations in its representation with this situation.

As graphic as the film editors were, *African Heroes* uses the desert section of its representation to awaken sentiments over the nature of Africa's landscape and her people's sufferings. The camera lens at this instance, kept transversing between the stranded musicians on the highway like in road movies (Brereton, 2005: 91) and the impatience of the organizers in far away Benin City waiting for them. Depiction like this reveals the long imagery of endless landscape which the off-camera horizontal tracks used to express nature and harmony in Africa as discussed under Nollywood aesthetics. Eventually, one of the organizers of the contest had to be dispatched to go in search of

them along the highway since they could not be contacted by phone and Tunisia, at home, has indicated that they left her house over a period of four hours.

Like every other African story on the road to success, difficulties abound and this is the problematique being questioned in most references to *homo Africanus* as regards why the difficulties. Eventually in this film, the dispatched messenger sees the distressed musicians by the Jeep, parked by the road side, and brings them to the competition arena in his own car to entertain the awaiting crowd.

However, the eventual successful performance of the emerging African heroes essentially dramatizes the view that in spite of difficulties, Africa's dream towards emancipation from poverty can be achieved. They did not only render their piece so well in spite of all odds, but also were able to move spectators to sing along with them amidst constant resounding ovations. Thus, with the huge success of their song entitled, *Africa is coming soon*, one is positioned to believe that the stories of development, leadership, cinema productions, and other national and continental issues connected with Africa are being addressed in this film. It is Nollywood's way of using films to signal the desires of young people in their intentions for progress in Nigeria and Africa and to question the dependency syndrome of most African leaders on the Euro-American zones for development. The film's closure inevitably signals that Africa can really overcome her unhappy conditions, if only the continent can look inwardly and put her rich local and natural resources to better uses.

6.2.2 Educational and Therapeutic Values

Instances also abound where participants said they resonate with Nollywood films because they dramatize their own stories and help them know how to cope with difficult issues. In this way, the films are a help in negotiating their personal and socio-cultural identities. For this reason, there is the search for movies that teach morals and ways of negotiating between life challenges. Thus, most respondents agreed to having recommended Nollywood movies to friends and families who they think the films

allegorically touch on their life situations and can be helped by drawing lessons from them.

The therapeutic and educational function of Nollywood films are based on the connection these films have on people's own (true) life stories and confusions. For instance, they represent the view of people in their abject poverty in the midst of plenty, relationships between the rich and the suffering poor people, or the power of God over strange illnesses and mysterious difficulties, thereby infusing hope unto the dejected to wait on God for deliverance and help. For the most part, fifty three per-cent of participants said they have recommended Nollywood films to others either to educate them on an issue or to give them some kind of therapy in their private sorrows.

Even though these filmic stories might be on universal themes, the respondents believed they are mainly focused on Nigeria and what people encounter in the country. Films that come to mind here include *Oil Village* (2001) that recasts the story of the sufferings of the Ogoni people which was referred to alongside *Stubborn Grasshopper* in the respondents' contributions. Others are *Last Ofala* (2002) that dramatizes the ritual ceremonies of traditional rulers in Anambra State, *Mama Mia Italia* (1995) that showcases how Nigerian immigrants suffer before they achieve success abroad, using Italy in the film, and South Africa in *Across the Border,* as examples. Films like *National Anthem* (2004), *Across the Niger* and *Not Without My Daughter* capture the socio-political life stories that shrouds ethnicity in the country and help audiences negotiate educational and therapeutic values in them.

The Oil Village (2001) is one Nollywood film that represents the anomaly that resulted in the brutal death of a human rights activist, Dr Ken Saro Wiwa and his compatriots by hanging. In this film, some oil workers are identified as traitors to the peace and harmony of the land, and when some kinsmen communalistically decided to fight for their rights for peaceful existence and control of their natural resources, they were betrayed by some saboteurs alongside the federal government that killed them. Starring artistes like Sam Loco Efe, Sandra Achums and a host of others, this movie uncovers the wastages and

devastations that go on under cover of oil drilling in the Niger Delta. In his 'oilwatch' article, Bassey laments that 'as the Niger Delta boils and as Nigeria looks towards a bleak future with diminished oil revenues, the oil corporations operating in Nigeria continue to garner obscene profits. This happens because the corporations are not paying for the environmental costs of their operations and because ecological debts go unattended to. Local communities have shouldered the burdens while the corporations laugh all the way to the banks secured by their opaque joint venture agreements' (Bassey, 2009). By circumstances and conditions like these, as underscored by Bassey, the ecosystem of people's immediate environment is disturbed and Nigeria, like most other African nations, has her own experiences of ill-feeling resulting not only from colonialism, but also from the ideological mindset of the West in their acquisitive tendencies. Most people learn about this scenario from Nollywood [even within Nigeria].

In fact the Ogoni story which *Oil Village* rehearses can be called another example of Nollywood doing a public service in the country. Being a section of the Niger Delta, in the Rivers State of Nigeria (South-South geopolitical zone of the country), the Ogoni is particularly 'a microminority in Nigeria [...] divided into six kingdoms or clans, speaking five distinct languages, and have a strong connection to the land, which nurtures them spiritually as well as materially. [Their] political marginalization was compounded by their economic exploitation by multinational Shell Petroleum Development Corporation which through its subsidiary, the Royal Dutch Shell, was extracting oil from Ogoni lands in the Niger Delta [...] since 1958' (Campbell, M. 2002).

In presenting one of the many reasons and examples of their unrests, Adebayo and Alao (1998) write that Shell is at the centre of the oil crisis in Nigeria, thus: 'Shell Oil, responsible for half of Nigeria's oil production, admitted that there was at least two hundred spillages a year at different sites. Although the company said it was committed to containing and cleaning up such spills, the watering environment of the delta has made it impossible to take effective measures short of burning off the oil altogether. The ultimate result of this is a total upset of the ecological balance of the region. There are more than twelve million people living in the oil producing areas [...]. Ken Saro Wiwa, a

popular Nigerian writer and publisher, who came to personify the cause of the Ogoni people, led the campaign against these oil explorations [....]. The situation came to a head in April 1993, when many Ogoni villagers discovered that their farms had been bulldozed for the installation of further oil pipes for Shell Petroleum Company. A spontaneous protest by unarmed women and children was met with a gunfire attack from soldiers of the Second Amphibious Brigade in Port Harcourt [...]. Ken Saro Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders were executed by the government after being convicted of what was widely believed as a trumped charge of murder' (1998: 82/83). Thus, Nollywood as attested by focus-group participants encodes societal situations like these to teach and educate viewers.

Apart from those that touch on the entire general Nigerian political situations or particular community's history and problems, there are other films read by participants that focused on individual life stories like *Biggest Boy in Town* (2006) where a poor boy was left to suffer in abject poverty without any hope of going to college until God sent a distant helper to him that made him succeed to the surprise of his rich uncles and neighbours. Others include films like *Tribulation* (2007), *21 Days in Christ*, (2005) and *Glorified* (2002) that showcase God as the ultimate power that overcomes all problems seen possible in Nigeria. On retribution and educational parlance, Nollywood films like *GSM Wahala* (2003), *Okada Man* (2002), and *Yahoo Millionaire* (2007) stand out as informative about the country too. While in *GSM Wahala*, comedian jokes are made about enslaving oneself to mobile phone, popularly called *GSM* in Nigeria, being the abbreviation for the Global System of Mobile communications, the *Okada Man* is focused on hardship and responsibility in the family faced by Nkem Owoh, a motor bike commercial driver. In *Yahoo Millionaire*, viewers are led to see what goes on with internet fraudsters as to guide against the scam and warn perpetrators that government officials are on the lookout for defrauders.

While these films represent the socio-political conditions of the country, they are at the same time educational and therapeutic depending on what issues are at stake in people's lives. For this reason, some focus-group participants agreed to have recommended films

to those they know. For instance, one respondent said, 'Each script [...] has a vital information [...]. They impact knowledge, inform and educate people [...]. They portray the daily activities of our society'; while another viewer remarked, 'I have encouraged a guy to watch *Never Say Good Bye* [...]. It helped him in his relationship', yet for another, 'these films teach us how to face our challenges [...]. They show how the less privileged are been maltreated, how widows suffer in their [husbands'] homes [...]; how ladies are exposed to dangers and how ritualists go about their dirty deals'. Thus, the argument of these participants is that Nollywood films are deeply concerned with Nigeria's socio-economic and religio-political conditions and therefore can arguably be said to portray Nigeria's cultures in their representations.

Added to this is access to the learning of oral English furnished by the films. This is grasped by paying attention to Nollywood actors and actresses and how they speak English in the films. This is not only a benefit to aspiring students of the secondary and tertiary institutions who learn by watching these movies but also for aspiring artists who see in the film characters, the heroes and celebrities to imitate. For Tony Anya of Imo State University, 'the person I like most is Pete Edochie [...]. He speaks good English and I like everything about his actions. While watching his films you learn a lot'; while for Nkiru of the School of Nursing, the films 'can teach someone a lot of things like how to make friends [...], how to go about things in life and how to study' etc. Especially the women revealed that viewing Nollywood movies has helped them affirm their self image and identity given the resonance of storylines to their life experiences and cultures. They have used them to interrogate their belief systems vis-à-vis societal norms in order to form their personal identity. Some indicated that watching how characters manage crises on screen has helped them know how to cope with difficult moments of life. Emeh, 25, a student-nurse, for instance made this point when she stated how useful Nollywood texts are to her.

> Nollywood films are the most interesting films [...]
> because they teach a lot of things. They give you
> information about what is happening around you and
> outside of you [...]; they teach both the good and

bad things of life like the things that keep families
moving together or how to keep friends. They can even
make you repent if you are a pagan.

Among the film titles they frequently referenced were *Never Say Goodbye*, *Taste of love*, *A Million Tears*, *Love is Blind*, *Father Moses*, *Love Affair*, *Igodo*, *State of Emergency*, and *Billionaires' Club* among others. All these significantly encode prominent issues of the society including love affairs, making money, and converting from African traditional religion to become a Catholic priest. One viewer expressed the belief that Nollywood is all about 'what is happening in the country and the extent people can go to making money'. This view was expressed by most viewers who narrated life experiences that echoed filmic storylines. For instance, in responding to 'what does Nollywood mean to you?' One Nkiru Eke, 22, argues that, 'Nollywood films mean a lot because they are so interesting and can teach someone a lot of things like how to make friends, how to live with a man or a woman, how to go about things in life and how to study, etc'; while for Rita, 'when I watch a film I forget my worries [...]. It helps me to feel good whenever I am feeling bad'.

6.2.3 Proximity to Storylines, Locations and Stars

Another emergent finding concerns the reason why Nollywood films resonate with most viewers. This was highlighted when viewers attested to identifying with locations and filmic celebrities, not only in their accent, but also in their attires and storylines. Some echoed the proximity they have with film locations that make them easily understand them. For instance, one respondent said, 'when the films are epic features, narrating the stories of ancient people, how near you live to the filmic locations can make you like the movie'. Some mentioned the reasons for liking film stars. If it is not their fashion, it is the type of character they act or how they speak, indicating by all these that actors and actresses bring to the movies their societal figures and personalities. For instance, using a village parish church to showcase the Catholic ritual of saying mass as happened in *The Pope Must Hear This* or using a particular village shrine to depict what goes on when people consult oracles; or signing contracts in a government office with Nigerian flag and

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national symbols at the background as represented in *The Stubborn Grasshopper* (2001) and *Government House* (2004) point to the connection filmic representations and themes have with the Nigerian society.

Resonance with filmic texts comes in different forms and sustains audience's pleasure. Apart from locales and stars, storylines also do this for participants who argued the films are all about the society. This is seen in the slavery story for instance which is an ancient story but gets represented from time to time in different forms from *Roots* (1977) to the *Amazing Grace* (2006). The astonishing way with which *Roots* resonated with Nigerians when it was first serialized in the national television channel could be indeed something of its proximity to the people's story of slavery. Perhaps, this was due to the fact that the film's storyline recounts the slave trade which most Nigerians remember, by having some of their relatives and family members lost to the inglorious trade. Again, the reason of the power of 'colour' arguably might have contributed to the film's success in the country whereby audiences can identify with other black Africans elsewhere based on their skin colour. On this note, Onyeocha argues that 'most of the attempts at identifying the African, even by Africans themselves, have never quite succeeded in getting away from the question of colour' (Onyeocha, 1995). Thus, the slave trade and the colour and racial background of the black characters are possibly the main reasons why most people identified with *Roots* in Nigeria and the reason for its inclusion in this study.

Jeta Amata's (Nollywood's) *The Amazing Grace* (2006) extends the dramatization of the slave trade in a way that continues *Roots'* representations of the subjugations of colonialism and slavery as well and still elicit audiences' pleasure. To a great extent, the film actually credits the abolition of slavery to the resilience of the African 'spirit' exhibited by the victims. The film particularly continues the dialectics of the slave story but in a way different from those of *Roots* (1977) and the British version of the story as represented in Michael Apted's own   *Amazing Grace* (2006). While the Nigerian *Amazing Grace, The* (2006) showcases Nollywood's major feat in quality production (against the much touted criticism of the poor quality of the films in Nollywood, being shot on 35mm which is Hollywood's standard), *Amazing Grace* (2006) by Apted, is

typically an English story from a British perspective. Both films have the same theme of an African story of slavery, but represented from different backgrounds and angles, yet incidentally released in the same year. Again, suffice to say that while both countries participated in the inglorious trade of human trafficking, one constituted the merchants and the other, the victims.

The mission of the British film significantly avoids these horrors and trauma of Africans, so much so as it dwells on the activities of the Westminster politicians. As Donovan (2007) argues, it was aimed to show that 'politicians for all the bad press they get, can make a difference for the better'. Highlighting that the film is 'about one Englishman's political fight to end the British slave trade', Donovan quotes Apted, the director of the film as giving the angle of his story, thus: 'it's not about the plantations, it's not about the high seas [...], it is a fresh look at what was going on in the political world [...] and that's what I focused on' (2007). And this is unlike the angle taken by Amata who traces the slavery to cultural shocks, high handedness of the slave merchants and above all, the communal spirit behind Africa's apparent opposition to the inhuman trade. This is the resilience that unites all victims in the slave camps as they oppose their keepers. In this film, one is led to see this resilience of the African spirit dramatized especially by the male folks safeguarding the women by physically fighting their common enemies, the slave invaders.

Apart from this egalitarian spirit of the captured slaves in the camp, the film portrays the victims' ability to gather together and discuss their troubles as is usually done in real time communal squares. There, in the huge cage of their captivity, they consoled one another with cultural songs which indicated their hope for survival and cry against the misfortunes of the land. This perspective however is not the view in the British version of the story that focused mainly on the political debates of Westminster hall and revolves around John Newton and other top politicians like William Wilberforce. Critics however, have argued that by not giving much attention to the plantations and the real issues of the slaves, Apted was actually 'writing Blacks out of history' (Donovan, 2007) and this is the gap the Nigerian *Amazing Grace* realistically seems to fill.

Since both films were produced to mark the 200th anniversary, especially in Britain, of the end of slavery (1807 – 2007), it is understandable how two filmmakers from across two continents can dwell on the same historical theme with the same title. But the differences come to the fore by analyzing the filmmakers' ideological backgrounds. While Jeta Amata's film reveals more of the actual locales of the slave trade by including the native people of Calabar of Nigeria in the cast where John Newton travelled and traded on slaves before his conversion from the inhuman trade, Apted's version is almost a political masterpiece discussing the involvement of the UK politicians in the abolition process of the slavery. So like most real life situations where the masses are often neglected and less spoken about, this film concentrates more on politics and politicians, and only showcased representations of the slaves intermittently in the overall screen narrative.

Amata's film creates a tribute to the Nigerian slaves by depicting how they fought their ways through to redemption, which is totally silent in Apted's. He does not only showcase this by the solidarity exhibited by the victims but also by the support they gave to each other in the big cage where they were assembled for onward journey to Europe. Particularly by means of their songs, these hordes of individuals radiated an apparent calmness that only mutual support could have made possible under such heinous conditions of slavery. On the basis of these songs, Amata even indicts John Newton by suggesting that his music, the *Amazing Grace,* from hence came the title of the film, actually originated not from him, but from the slaves. This is done in the film by casting the victims as often singing a particular song to the rhythm of John Newton's *Amazing Grace*, in their native Calabar language even before the arrival of John Newton. Later upon encountering difficulties enroute the sea when Newton converted to Christianity in thanksgiving to God whose grace alone could have saved him, he adapted the Calabar (Nigerian) song to his own native English words as he figured out the rhythm in his own mind.

Based on iconic instances like these, one respondent recounted his joy when he could identify a movie shot in their family home thus, 'I was there watching them. I really enjoyed the directing of it and the acting roles [...]; at the end, I bought one for myself'. Some other respondent also said, 'I love it when I recognize familiar environments in the films [...], like going to fetch water from our village stream [...] and knowing that it is the same stream that is in the film I watched'. Identifying with movie storylines, stars and celebrities was one significant point that characterizes the passionate audiences. They rent or buy movies based on their identification with film actors and actresses. For instance, Tony Anya betrayed this impression when he highlighted that 'the person I like most is Pete Edochie […]. That man makes films sound so great and real'. By this the significance of realities as viewers experience them through their 'stars' in a given *mise-en-scene* is a special pleasure that movies elicit in audiences. Lull, on this note, acknowledges that, 'among the attributes of the person that are extended through viewing, are the age, generation, gender, sexual orientation and personality' (Lull, 1990: 161).

Arguably in a lot of ways, the personality of Nollywood viewers can be said to be extended through watching these films and by seeing the stars they identify with in the movies. This depicts a process celebrated as pleasure by the active involvement audiences bring to reading the actions of their movie celebrities. This as Mackay observes, 'is seen as being the very material out of which we construct our identities: we become what we consume' (1997: 2). Thus, by resonating with filmic icons, audiences see themselves playing out in the characters as well. One viewer argued that, 'my film stars are Sam Loco and Osuofia […]; once they appear on films, you know what they can do. They bring life. Most people act like them in the villages. They are just funny and able to make you laugh and keep you happy'. Osuofia and Sam Loco are celebrated Nollywood comedians and audiences mimic them in real life situations to create laughter and jokes. In *A Fool At 40* (2006), *Okada Man* (2002), and *Osuofia in London* (2003), Nkem Owoh who is popularly called 'Osuofia' and the lead actor in these films brings humour to audiences by his mannerisms in acting.

Typical examples where proximity to locations elicit audiences' pleasure include the lived-in situation sceneries. These dramatize specific scenarios of traditional transactions in real African cultures and environments and bring in shots of passers-by, for instance, along the streets and churchyards. In contexts like these, 'proximity has its own truth as a description of the condition of global modernity and this is generally of either a phenomenological or a metaphorical order. In the first case, it describes a common conscious appearance of the world as more intimate, more compressed, more part of our everyday reckoning' (Tomlinson, 1999: 3).

Other instances of proximate places to audiences which Nollywood captures includes the display of actual goings-on of market places where actors and actresses are themselves participants, or the communal meetings at village squares where elders perform cultural rituals and actors or actresses are invited to participate, or even the idea of bringing in ordinary road users (taxis, motorcycle drivers, bicycle riders, hawkers selling their wares in-between moving vehicles) into the films are some of these actualities that do not need special film sets to be built and are encoded, which help realize resonance in proximate viewers and often help them gain lessons and therapy for life struggles. Represented ritual celebrations is one way audiences extend their personalities in the films by viewing their daily concerns and usual cultural themes recast on the screen. In this way, they affirm themselves in what they see and deride what they oppose in society. Like every other media, Nollywood audiences also acknowledged the functional role of the films in educating people. This ranges from what they perceive as 'truth-telling', in the way the films chose to address social and cultural issues, to what they call 'true life' stories that 'tell exactly what is going on in the communities'. The context and venues, as one student-nurse explained, is like 'watching a football match with your friends or family members and running commentaries as the game progresses [...]. It is so delightful and helps you talk of the next action you expect to happen'. Engineered by the screening of *Coronation*, insights into film preferences and ideological engagements of audiences around Nollywood texts were identified. Most debates centered on what is perceived as 'Nigerian culture' which helped to foreground audiences' grasp of the Nigerian society. Much of the data generated indicate that audiences understand Nigerian communalistic

cultures very well and indicated some tenets of it as were outlined in the literature reviews. Juxtaposing these with filmic representations, they discussed their impressions of Nollywood texts.

6.3 Conclusion

Following the overall data from focus-group interviews, some thirteen per cent of audience participants argued that it is difficult to attribute cultural representations to Nollywood since some of the themes are either overgeneralized or under stated while seventy-seven per cent on the other hand (more of female respondents, between 20 – 35 years of age) strongly believe that the films are focused on Nigerian cultures and lifestyles. These exhibited strong bodily movements like waving of hands and shaking their heads to argue the point of Nollywood addressing Nigerian socio-political issues on the affirmative; while only ten per cent of respondents refused to side any of the positions, believing they are not fans of Nollywood, and would prefer Hollywood films to Nollywood. However, suffice to say that the general answers of the participants arguably validated the hypothesis of this research which assumed that Nollywood encodes more of Nigerian cultures than anything else, and this was done by exploring some Nigerian rituals as centripetal to the films.

In general therefore, as discussed through this audience research, participants can be said to affirm a lot of uses they make of films, given the nature of Nollywood themes as discussed in the textual analysis of this study in Chapter five. Based on village and city life patterns or what this dissertation identified as lived-in situations of Nigerians, the films have strong resonance with audiences' lives seen in their participations in the on screen rituals of life celebrations and other issues. Thus, even though they decried the wrong (mis)representations of some Nigerian cultures by Nollywood encoders, the focus-group audiences nevertheless asserted that the filmic texts engender some unique values ranging from nostalgic pleasure of real cultural values of Africans, Nigerians and ethnic tribes to the negotiation of life patterns through filmic storylines and themes, and the legitimatization of personal identities and values through morality tales of the texts.

Generally by exploring the readings of some aspects of the Igbo cultures in these films, audiences' responses showcased a link to the resonance of the films with people's everyday lifestyles and cultural events. Hence, following this research data, the logic of audience-hood in this study can be said to be from the perspective of active participatory involvement in the process of production and making meaning of the films which involved 'the social, economic and cultural backgrounds that audiences bring to film analysis […] to interpret the texts from their own contexts' (Gunter and Leeuwem, 1996: 159).

Thus, identifying the different interpretations of the films revealed a significant array of uses as well that is the basis of the gratification theory at the heart of this study. It is the enunciated aspects of cultures that make the films present an image of communalism that achieves a common ground of everyday life for proximate audiences. They make Nollywood's films an arena of shared (same) beliefs and mores of the society for all. In this way, the industry serves a purpose for viewers and the nation alike by 'breaking the silence often maintained about their own culture from within [Euro-]American cinema' (Turner, 2006: 185), implying by this, that these [African] cultures which are often neglected or misrepresented in mainstream Western cinemas can now be seen through their own [African] shots. On this note, Gledhill's conviction that 'once an oppressed group becomes aware of its cultural as well as political oppression ...it then becomes a task...to replace the lies...(1999: 254) as outlined in Chapter one can be said to be verified and applied in Nollywood. The films do not only represent their own indigenous cultures from their own inside perspectives, but also by these problematize most outside [stereotypical] representations of Africa over the years as rehearsed in the earlier chapters of this study.

Chapter Seven

7.0 Culture Conflicts

7.1 Introduction

The primary research of this study showcases not only how Nollywood audiences connect to the representations of cultural themes in the films, but also highlight their sentiments as regards compromises made of cultures in representations. Some participants describe Nigerian culture as basically founded on 'communalism' but acknowledged that most aspects of these communalistic cultures are now being influenced by westernization. It is this notion of westernization that creates 'creolization' in communalism which Hannerz (1997, 2001) expresses as the feature of most post-colonial societies. Originally in his essay, *The World in Creolization,* Hannerz argues that 'we are always being creolized'. For this, he suggests that, 'we must be aware that openness to foreign cultural influences need not involve only an improvement of local or national cultures. It may give people access to technological and symbolic resources for dealing with their own ideas, managing their own cultures in different ways' (1997: 16).

Distinguishing Hannerz's notion of creolization from other terms like hybridity, Haynes argues that the concept 'refers to an active historical process whereby new cultural forms are created out of the interaction of two or more cultures, in a center-periphery power context, with an asymmetry in power and prestige but with the periphery playing an active role' (2000: 21). This concept he believes is relevant in Nollywood's filmmaking practices which no doubt is at such a periphery and dynamically adapts itself to other cultural forms which is what the particular focus-group respondent cited above thinks is not good for Nigerian cultures generally.

Speaking on Nollywood's representations of creolized Nigerian cultures, a university undergraduate from Imo State and participant of this study's focus-group interview session re-named Edwin Okoro states that,

> When we talk of our culture, we refer to the spirit of
> communalism which we know very much about […]. Most
> of these movies make attempt to project this communalism,
> but the fact is that our culture has been bastardized by Western
> influences that even at this critical time, we cannot decipher
> what is purely African or purely Western.

This view is an indication that audiences are active consumers of the films and consume them in various modes following Hall's theory of decoding media messages. Yet, the point he makes is significant in underscoring the dynamics of culture–change which most Nollywood films betray. It is the Igbo films among other Nollywood films that are the most liberal in this sense, not only in the way they mimick Hollywood productions in terms of encoding Western standards of living but also in the way that most of them are shot in English language other than in the vernacular as seen in the Yoruba and Hausa films. Haynes and Okome believe that the invocation of Hollywood styles by the Igbo filmmakers signifies 'a betrayal of African culture in the neocolonial invasion of foreign media' (2000: 76). But rather than signify a betrayal of culture, this writer thinks that they show the versatility of the producers in realizing the notion of hybridity of cultures (Hannerz, 1997: 12) in filmic artifacts which is the main trend of things especially in terms of globalization currently. They do not only signal development and creativity, but also, showcase different aspects of the Nigerian cultures to a wider audience in their hybridized state.

Generally, the Nollywood industry, typified by the Igbo productions, cannot be said to be devoid of external influences given global challenges presently. It is not anti-change as it is not against cross-cultural influences, which it assimilates to make better productions. Rather in the spirit of globalization and hybridization of cultures, the filmmakers are making these productions relevant to wider younger audiences by following universal themes and widely acclaimed genres and formats. Thus, while the cultural traditions of Africans are recurrently been represented in the films, their adaptation to some Hollywood filmic styles, like using English language, showing flashy cars and high rising buildings, showing rituals in new social contexts are not to demean the people's original socio-cultural contexts but in pursuit of established creative standards operative in

(outside) mainstream cinemas. For this, Uchendu argues that, 'the very idea of culture implies change-adaptation and readaptation of forms, institutions and ideas and their application to changing situations. Culture change as a dynamic process implies among other things, choice making in society' (1980: 88). Nollywood films are showcasing their dynamism in mapping out frameworks after Hollywood standards. All cultures are realistically dynamic and by their encounters with outside productions, assimilate and retain something of the other in order to develop. These films, I would argue, at this instance, have remained open to external influences without losing their real qualities.

Applying Hall's encoding and decoding modes[1] of media messages therefore, the study discovered a significant number of fans who consume filmic themes outside their 'preferred meanings' in reaction to what they perceive are not their cultures or what Haynes terms 'a betrayal of culture in the neocolonial invasion'. In this context, Hall reckons that audiences are operating inside the negotiated position, which is where these fans critiqued Nollywood's themes as overtly exaggerated and at times copiously mimicking mainstream codes than being 'truly' communalistic. By this is meant that some audience members do not take the filmic texts and themes as absolutely representing their cultures and would rather negotiate meanings with them. In this context, there is what Hall calls, 'a mixture of adaptative and oppositional elements' (2003: 63). Hall therefore comments that:

> It is possible for a viewer perfectly to understand both the literal
> and the connotative inflection given by the discourse but to
> decode the message in a globally contrary way. He/She detotalizes
> the message in a preferred code in order to retotalize the message
> within some alternative framework of reference […]. He or
> She is operating with what we must call an oppositional
> code (2003: 63).

Particularly with *Coronation*, used in the focus-group interview sessions, most participants underpinned ambivalences in some Nollywood representations while others tended to defend them as purely cultural but encoded from the director's viewpoint. The dynamics that characterized the debates are in themselves revealing, especially in the

following argument that took place in one of the School of Nursing sessions. The question was, 'what do you think of the film just screened?'

My name is Juliet Okoro. The film is coming from Nigeria. From the title of the film, *Coronation*, it is about our culture where by a chief or a king is being coronated. It is highlighting how the coronation ceremony is being done and celebrated. It is all about the culture of the Igbos.

Vivian: She is right, but I don't think they kill people as this film portrays.

Chikaodi: *Ozo* is devilish. I won't like my dad or my husband to belong to it. I think most of them are pagans.

When the same question was raised at the start of one of the sessions at the Youth Outreach Centre, Port Harcourt, participants also were divided on agreeing on what truly stands for Igbo culture given the filmmakers' ability to twist rituals from their own perspectives.

Anthony: Well, the film is about the Igbo culture of *ozo* titled men. I love Oliver's music played during the festivities in the film, but I'm not sure I will like to join the *ozo* group. In fact, that is not a good culture.

Mark: You see this film is revealing the society. Some of these big men are secretly dangerous and these films are revealing them.

Chinonso: But that's a lie. My uncle is an *ozo* man...he is good and not even wealthy. We cannot be taking these films as telling us the truth.

Matthew: For me, *ozo* or no *ozo*, life must go on. I don't need it. What for?

Interviewer: Do you think no other tribe has that culture?

Stanley: It is presented from the Nigerian perspective here, I mean from the Igbo perspective.

In the light of the above argument, these Nigerians thought that Nollywood films can be said to be exploring their local and national cultures in their own ways despite the effects of the culture contacts with the West during colonialism. Particularly what Liebes argues about reception studies across cultures applies here when he states that 'in this context, media texts are seen as triggers for conversation, as catalysts in the negotiation of identity and, ultimately as a site of struggle over social and cultural issues' (2005: 363).

7.2 Negotiating Texts

Discussing Nollywood in this study from the viewpoints of participants indicate that they relate very well to the systems that are akin to their concepts of realities. On this note, Nollywood is used by them to negotiate events and their meanings. Thus arguably their 'emotion and cognition, entertainment and information, pleasure and ideology, fact and fiction, all seemed to be intimately linked in the process of sense-making' (O'Connor and Klaus, 2000: 381). The films particularly seemed to have helped a lot of audiences construct a positive view of their identity and easily turn them off when expectations are not met or storylines are contrary to what they consider as objective reality of the society.

Audiences in this way tended to be active fans and very much enthusiastic about the industry's products too, but while on fire emotionally with Nollywood films, they use these films specifically by choice, either as recommended by friends or according to genres and had special concerns over some of their representations. For instance, Anthony, 23, another university undergraduate, asserts that it was through Nollywood that he came to know how life was in the past, 'in the days of the ancestors, especially through the traditional epic ones'. Thus, he gains pleasure from the films and negotiates cultural knowledge from them, but is not excited when texts compromise practical cultural rituals. Here, there is a negotiation of meaning in the texts which viewers resolve through the encoded messages. Fiske highlights that within this process, 'negotiation takes place as the reader brings aspects of his or her cultural experience to bear upon the codes and signs which make up the text' (1990: 3). This sense of identifying with the text breaks the notion of film storylines being totally abstract to audiences but rather creates a sense of self with the collective understanding of what is symbolized on screen. Here, O'Connor and Klaus outline that, 'genre [...] as well as (sub-) cultural identity [...] seem to be instrumental in determining the kind and variety of pleasures experienced in the act of viewing' (2002: 370).

The focus-group participants who tended to negotiate texts in this form for cultural meanings signaled what could be described as 'loosely adaptive' to Hall's notion of the

'negotiated paradigm', wherein they are in dialogue with the primary text. Their pleasure is sustained only if the film is engaging, unlike some other audiences, who seem to wait until the end of movies to give their opinion on individual productions. In this negotiated mode, the viewers are more autonomous in their views. They go into films with a preconceived notion of what to expect, often done by interpreting the titles and advertisements of films on their packs or in the media. Unfortunately, this is where producers have beaten audiences by giving films sensational titles that may not be closely related to storylines for market purposes. Lamenting this scenario in one of the focus-group sessions is one viewer from the Youth Outreach Centre in Port Harcourt, who decried that 'they give a film a title just to market it'. This was corroborated by another participant who critiqued Nollywood's texts for compromising cultures and being of low productive quality in comparison to Hollywood, thus,

> I have a case and an enormous grudge against Nollywood.
> The problem with it is not only that it lacks creativity but
> deposits little or no constructive sense on the mind of its
> perpetual viewers. It is largely predictable and consequently
> boring. It leaves much to be desired. To make the point clearer,
> I can never watch a Nigerian movie twice but I can give
> Hollywood movies many reviews.

Thus, even though most audiences watch Nollywood films and gain pleasure, their interest is not sustained by the encoded messages the film texts showcase but the analysis of the flaws they point out in the films. These consume films oppositionally as indicated by Hall by disagreeing with the preferred messages of the texts. Such viewers are not easily overcome by the dominant ideology of the encoded message but turn it around to critique the encoder's view, especially in relation to local cultures and lived-in conditions in order to understand or interpret it in another fashion. In this context, a group of focus-group participants from across the eight sessions were able to argue that what Nollywood encodes as Nigerian culture cannot actually be termed so for several reasons. One viewer made this explicit by arguing that there is so much diffusion of Western elements in Nigerian cultures presently that it is difficult to say what the movie producers have got right or wrong. In his words, 'it makes the whole thing funny. I was watching a film the

other day [...], in fact, I was ashamed because the film was trying to project African culture [...]; the traditional ceremony of breaking kola nut, to be precise, but they didn't observe what I understand as the very procedure of doing it. So you see they are losing touch with realities'. For Ikenna, 'it is hard to see girls stealing cars and shooting guns randomly in Nigeria, if not in the US [...], that is not our culture, even though the films show it [...], and a lot of other things they put into the films aren't how we live'.

'Losing touch with reality' is how Stanley, 23, critiqued Nollywood's apparent inability to capture a cultural ceremony strictly as it is done with elite influences in some films presently. This does not only show that viewers in this group do not only actively read these films in an oppositional way but also produce their own meaning besides filmic intended messages. In this mode, what Diawara states of 'resisting spectatorship' in the United States applies. Even though by this expression, Diawara refers to 'the manner in which black spectators may circumvent identification and resist the persuasive elements of Hollywood narrative and spectacle' (Diawara, 1999: 845). Here, it is used to refer to Nigerian audiences' resistance to accepting cultural representations which they think are antithetical to the reality of their cultures in (real) lived-in situations. This is not only of dichotomy between cultures and non-cultures, but also between primordial communalistic cultures and their forms in modernity.

7.3 Tradition versus Modernity in the Films

Following the empirical data of this study, both from the textual and audience analysis, it is arguable to say that Nollywood is at the crossroad of underscoring cultural shifts in Igbo communalism or what we described here as 'cultural creolization'. In other words, the apparent tension between traditions and modernity is visibly seen in most films in the context of what one of the respondents [Stanley] called 'losing touch with [African] realities' indicating by this, his understanding of moving away from the primordial 'cultural patterns' of doing things communalistically in the society. In the words of Haynes, 'the video films are full of examples of modern and traditional elements wrapping around one another until they become a contradictory whole' (2000: 32).

Things Fall Apart dramatizes the beginning of this 'clash of cultures' for instance, in the scene where some European missionaries and some British District Commissioners arrived the villages of Umuofia and Abame. The natives were held spell bound while the new comers walked round the communities in a way that suggests absolute superiority of the Europeans. Also, to humiliate the elders and silence the citizens alike, this supremacy was depicted by the security of the Europeans provided by young men armed with Western weapons never seen in any Igbo community before then. Thus, colonial rule, as Dirks argues, led especially in Africa to so many structural [and cultural] changes (Dirks, 1992: 17), seen for instance, when one British District Commissioner arrested the elders of Umuofia in this film for opposing the missionaries' plan to establish a church in their land.

Thus, in all of these, the sacredness of the fabric of communalistic traditions was publicly opposed by new [European] cultural structures, brought into place by the colonialists and missionaries that justifies the title of the film and book as the beginning of when things [began to] fall apart culturally. The viewer is here guided by the filmic narration that accompanies the history of the arrival of the Europeans almost like in a documentary format. The view is that a missionary was first killed when he came to a neighbouring village to Umuofia, called Abame. Since the British empire traced his death to the village of Abame, they wanted to revenge by killing the people they see at a village public market on a certain day. Palmer states of this incident that 'the first sign of the white man's presence takes the form of a military outrage; the extermination of the entire village of Abame as a reprisal for the murder of a missionary' (1972: 57). Thus, the film at this scene portrays a few white people training young Africans to shoot their own kit and kin. Fear and anxiety went high when these soldiers shot to death the Abame people at the market on that fateful day. Thus, submission to the white man's rule then becomes the safer option for the few survivors who were absent from the tragedy and began to underlie new cultural standards among the Igbos.

By empowering the soldiers and giving them guns, the Europeans began a rule never seen before in the traditional reign of the elders and therefore challenged their communalistic customs. New realities began unfolding as the screen introduces new ways of doing things. With the dress code of both the District Commissioner and the missionary, the viewer is made to reflect on the direction of the society towards modernity. The difference is already seen in the discrepancy between the traditional loin cloths and wrappers of the villagers and the European's mode of dressing that was also new. Not quite long after schools and churches were established and that engendered new ways of doing things in the society. Palmer states that with the arrival of the 'white man' and his new religion and administration, the traditional society's cracks and weaknesses, hitherto concealed by the common fear of the ancestors and the gods, breaks open and the one stable community collapses (1972: 48). And for Onwubiko, 'the Christian missionaries were able to attract many converts especially as they rescued the rejected members of the society, the slaves, twin-babies and their mothers, and the osu-cult slaves (1991: 124). Of course, like most respondents at the focus-groups sessions who reacted against what they think should not be called cultures in the films, Obi Okonkwo in this film, vehemently opposed the new cultural orders [new Christian religion as against African Traditional Religion, new Judiciary system as against the judgment of the elders, etc].

Okonkwo practically challenged the Europeans for the fear of 'desecrating the land' and perhaps causing them the anger of the gods as was espoused in the indigenous ontological cosmology of the Igbos earlier in this study. But these were only fears engendered by modernity pressures brought about by the Europeans which the indigenous people thought was detrimental to their communalism. Okonkwo particularly is set in this film as a respected leader of his community, Umuofia, who epitomizes their values and defends tenaciously the traditions of their ancestors.

The opening sequence shows Okonkwo as a faint darkened man emerging from his thatched hut at the dawn of a new day, only to be identified as a ferocious fighter as he calls out to his wives to wake up and start the day's chores. With the sound of the cockcrow at the background, echoing with the brightening movement of the screen, one

reads that morning meant business to this exotic Igbo family that must go to their farm before the blazing sun comes hard at noon. The half naked man, Okonkwo (dressed like a typical Igbo man, in his loin cloths and towel on the neck), ably acted by Nollywood celebrity, Pete Edochie, is one man like 'egwugwu' [the masquerade spirit] that could be said to be conscious of the status he weighed in the society. As Palmer notes, 'Okonkwo is the personification of his society's values, and he is determined to succeed in the rat race. When we first met him he possesses all the various symbols which are marks of success; he is a wealthy farmer with two barns full of yams, three wives. He has demonstrated his prowess in war by bringing home no less than five human heads and he has taken two titles' (1972: 53). With this notion and prowess he fights for Umuofia to remain intact and devoid of Western influences he feared were coming from the missionaries and the District Commissioners from Europe. He fights this by killing some of their messengers and eventually committing suicide towards the tail end of the film when Western judicial, educational, and religious institutions have fully taken place in the Igbo society against the original African traditional religion and judiciary system usually held by the elders and upon it all hybridized into new forms. As Okonkwo decried the consequences of the Igbo-Western clash of cultures this film can be called an affirmation of his fear, thus, 'the white man has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart' re-echoing here the sentiment of the film title as well as what will become the actual aftermath of the [cultural] encounters.

But given the clash of cultures, Onwubiko believes that all is not lost of African cultures, but that Africans have resiliently continued to hold on to their core cultural values. Thus, he argues:

> what must be emphasized is that no matter the effect of the
> events and contacts on them, the Africans have directly or
> indirectly tried to protect, both ideologically and practically
> what is of value in the African way of life (1991: 5).

What Onwubiko argues above, seen also in the logic of the focus-participants is that while African cultures are undergoing changes, or are been variously influenced and

represented, the core elements and indicators of communalism still underlie them, even in their hybridized forms, hence audiences at various points are able to negotiate meanings in the films.

Other films like *Bamako* (2006) and *Roots* (1977) underscore the effects of colonialism or Western cultures on African cultures given the consequences of the colonial activities in Africa as seen in *Things Fall Apart*. *Bamako* particularly can be called a blockbuster of political communication that debates the controversial consequences of the policies of the Western influences on Africa, especially through their controlled global financial institutions, IMF and World Bank. Directed by Abderrahmane Sissako, it is a critique of the Western world's apparent financial crimes against the poor continent of Africa or as Slarek put it, 'a grim story of exploitation and almost criminal economic advantage taking, wrapped in the deceptively friendly glove of financial support - loans were granted to the world's poorest nations by the richest, but with the sort of strings attached that seem designed to exploit the recipient as a source of cheap labour and goods, with forced privatization paving the way for foreign multinationals to undercut local businesses with their own subsidized imports' (2007).

This colonial invasion of cultures in *Roots* strongly showcases when the [Western] slave dealers carried Kunta Kinte and others away from their African home of Juffure, in Gambia, while they were preparing for the communalistic ritual of initiation into adulthood. Implicitly, by carrying away the men and women from their culture and community in chains, on board a ship depicts the extent of the white man's power in Africa during colonialism which Okonkwo fought against in *Things Fall Apart*. In some way, similar to the *Titanic* (1997) which Brereton reads as signifying the white man's burden around industrial capitalism that metaphorically makes humans become sacrificial victims of the 'sins of capitalism', which tries to ignore the innate potency of nature (2005: 15), the slave ship with which Kunta was carried away, by its build and structure, stood out on the screen as a colossal demonstration of this colonial power of Western cultural invasion. As it leaves the shores of the Gambian River with chained slaves in it, the film relives deeply the held memories of African viewers who use it to negotiate

cultural experiences in life as it wallows under a heavy storm that besieged it. Kunta Kinte was seen constantly crying for rescue in the ship which he calls 'the belly of death'.

Specifically to give a picture of this context and the victimhood of Africa in this ugly enterprise of slave trade and where it has left Africa today, Okere highlights that the slave trade is one aspect of Europe's ideological civil superiority complex that shook the foundations of African people's community-centered life, which by its nature was bound only to destroy whatever notion of rights there was. The 'slave raids, the internal treachery, etc, encouraged the bargain of buying and selling of slaves and so degraded human life and engendered so much brutality, heartlessness and cruelty that very little could survive by way of personal pride or courage to claim any rights. Soon after the slave trade was the scramble for and the partition of Africa, and the forceful submission of the people to the colonial authorities that have made the governments even of today be seen as forces of terror and intimidation' (Okere, 2003: 32). Given these instances, the fabric of communalism can arguably be said to have shifted or otherwise be hybridizing.

7.4 Communalism and Hybridity

The final closure of *Things Fall Apart* necessarily prompts viewers to raise questions about the future of Igbo communalistic society after colonialism in the form of this 'clash of cultures'. Among the questions this raises are some on the nature of the new values in communalistic communities. For instance there is the tendency to appeal to old cultural values at times and also the urgency to identify with civilization or modernity in some other instances. Eboh attempts a description of these contradictions in values between Africa [Igbo] and Western societies when he opined that 'while African worldview encourages communalism, corporate survival, interdependence, fellowship and unity in diversity, the Euro-centric reality structure nurtures the survival-of-the fittest mentality, might-is-right syndrome, and thereby encourages aggression, oppression, exploitation, exclusion, dichotomy, infringement of individual rights, corroding and cancerous egotism, independence, apartheid and materialism' (2004: 22). Njoku too itemizes what the clash of cultures has brought to the Igbo society and Nigeria in general by arguing that,

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'Africa's contact with the outside world and the ongoing processes of globalization are recreating the African continent in unimaginable proportions. They are transforming patterns of thought, preferences in diet, dressing, housing, etiquettes, appetites and fancies. They are reengineering visions and ideals of living perceptions of self, of others, and of conflicts, which confront communal living in the present day Africa' (2006: 63). While for Kwameh 'all aspects of contemporary African cultural life, including music and some writings with which the West is largely not familiar - have been influenced – often powerfully by the transition of African societies through colonialism' (cited in Aschroft, et al., 1995: 119).

Things Fall Apart identifies the movement of these changes which Nollywood has continued currently especially in the scene where the European missionaries, in the company of some new Igbo converts of Umuofia began branding Igbo's cultural festivals 'ungodly' practices. The story of Enoch in the film, for instance, is one incident that dramatizes this cultural confusion. In order to be elected for baptism in the new [Christian] religion without having to do an examination on the catechism, Enoch wanted to show his fidelity to the new faith and sneaked into the village shrine and killed the harmless 'sacred python'. Njoku reads this as a bad influence of the effects of the cultural-contacts (2006: 65). While appearing to bring peace and mutuality among the people, the white man's religion he argues, effectively succeeded in bringing disharmony among the people, and dividing them among themselves. Thus, according to him, 'the adherence to either the missionaries or colonialists led Africans to turn against their own people and ways of life. The sense of community became also a victim of this unfolding drama. Those who were converted to Christianity began to look down on those who remained faithful to the religion of their ancestors' (2006: 65). Instances like Enoch's in films makes Haynes identify syncretism as 'an essential feature of arts in Africa which fits easily into the post-structuralist, post-colonial, multicultural paradigm in which all situations everywhere are now seen as syncretic, or hybrid, or creolized, and the injunction is to see all situations as at once local and informed by global forces (2000: 18). Like the culture of postmodernity, the Nigerian films today, especially those of Nollywood, have taken up the logic of reflecting and representing cultures in their

hybridized forms otherwise, cultures in both their old [communalistic] and in new [westernized/modernized] forms.

The story of Andy Okeke, in *Living in Bondage*, (1992) is another place where the confusion in the 'clash of cultures' is once again created by the mixture of tradition and modernity, even though its representational aesthetics is modern, Okome argues that the worldview that *Living in Bondage* (re)presents is 'articulated in the trials and tribulations of Andy, a representative of the urban middle class trying to reconcile his ambitions to the dangerous and the unscrupulous city (Haynes, 2000: 149). He had all the typical training of the society's values, right from the village, but upon coming to the city, got seduced by the new values of wealth which lured him into a secret cult. Basing on incidents of culture-clash as seen in Igbo communalism, scholars like Eboh, believe that the traditional cultural values of the African, may not only be changing but also be in crisis (2004: 79). In *Living in Bondage*, there is the shock of coming to the city [modernity] for the first time from the village [tradition] which illustrates Andy's hollowness with which he trusted Paulo, his friend who deceived him, as with superior knowledge of the key to success in city life which eventually led him to difficulties. Njoku on this instance argues that 'city life style being different from the village life threatens and increasingly pushes the traditional lifestyles and mores into a negligible corner. This leads to disorientation and crisis' (2006: 69). For Ekwuazi, in *Living in Bondage*, 'the characters negotiate a new set of social values that are very different from those of their original tradition, [even though] they sometimes look back to that tradition when it suits their purpose' (2000: 149).

Systematically, a finding of this study's textual and audience analysis therefore is that Nollywood creates films with particular cultural aesthetics that buttresses the tension around tradition and modernity. While those of village settings are devoid of class consciousness, depicting the image of what Haynes and Okome call a 'usable past' governed by a noble, colourful, and intact tradition (2000: 76), those representing the westernized lifestyles point to the aspirations of most audiences by showing on screen the spectacle of wealth and pageantry by a quality display of lavish fashions, cars, money, and modern houses. In this, the rural villages are the settings of the narratives which

dramatize the dynamics of life in pre-colonial Africa taken to be the zone of communalistic cultural integrity and 'purity', uncontaminated by Western culture, while the city is seen as the 'site' where traditional moral values and practices are tested, degraded, compromised and transformed. In other words, these films, while re-enacting strong communalistic traditions still foreground the tensions that cultural society experiences in the face of culture-contacts as will be explored later in this study.

The illustration below, shows the twist, like in most other Western genres, between Nollywood's village (ancient) and township (modern) filmic representations of Nigerian cultures similar to Gillespie's findings about the audiovisual cultures of South Asian families in West London (Gray, 1993: 151). This shows the tensions and aesthetics of the representation of cultural scenarios in Nollywood, especially in considering the values of communalism and how they are gradually being modified mainly in the cities.

Table 3.

Village	Township/City
Rituals	Hybridized (Mixture of Africa and West)
Usable Past/Nostalgic	Fashionable/Aspirations
Purity	Tested
Communalistic	Individualistic
Real	Technologies
Poor	Wealth

In the *Festival of fire* and *Widow*, we also see this tension been depicted in the correlation of an old system with a new one. For instance, in the *Festival of Fire*, when the religious women brought the new [Christian] religion to a totally patriarchal Igbo communalistic society and opposed the ritual of killing twin babies, neither Ike, the chief priest nor the elders could tolerate them as they were wrongly perceived as desecrating the sacredness of the land (see chapter 5). Particularly in *Widow*, Nnenna interrogates audiences, who invariably are modern day educated elites and the society on the usefulness of the ritual of widowhood practices as they stand today. The focus-group sessions at the Centre for

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the Study of African Communication and Cultures showed strong disapproval of what is not African culture in the films being represented as though they are that way. Particularly, when asked 'do you think these films encode our cultures?', the following lines of thoughts were presented by some participants:

Anthony: Yeah *but in as much as they know our culture*. We have to be mindful of the exaggerations between what culture is and what it is not in these films.

Stanley: Though Nollywood has interest in the cultural moral values of Africans... They have to know our cultures themselves. *They don't present the real African cultures* at times.

The italicized phrases in these sentences underlie the key impressions of these participants who are very much aware of the shifts between African cultures and the influences of modernity, and would perhaps like to have the undiluted traditions as what stands for African communalism rather than their hybridized forms. But looking at Nollywood representations as cited in this study, there is no denying the fact that the Igbo society, and all of Africa are practically being influenced and are adapting constantly to new realities. Hence, by conflicts and clash of cultures, these films and focus-group audiences attest to the hybridity of African and Igbo society in the films as well as in real live situations. It thus can be argued that the clash of cultures is one area in Nollywood's representations that will continue to remain problematic. As Haynes would say, 'the shift from one exemplary narrative to another corresponds to a real historical progression...' (2000: 34) this arguably can be said to have even extended to the globalization of African and Igbo cultures across borders currently.

7.5 Globalizing African [Igbo] Cultures

During (1993: 23) defines globalization as 'a more organized cross-national or "diasporic" labor-force movements along with the amazing growth of export culture industries, including tourism'. What this emphasizes is the ability of cultural products to cross fertilize with other countries, whether they are Hollywood films, Jamaican reggae music, McDonald's burgers, or Nollywood films. In all of these, what is at stake is not

the fear of losing one's identity in the global process, but the urgency to affirm this identity and reinforce its notion in others as unique and authentic to the bearer. This corroborates Borja and Castels' argument that what is valued in globalization is what creates value (1997: 9). By this is meant that whatever is valued by consumers should be allowed to thrive within globalized structures. Using this argument, Adorno remarks that 'modern audiences, although less capable of the artistic sublimation bred by tradition, have become shrewder in their demands for perfection of technique and for reliability of information, as well as in their desire for "services"; and they have become more convinced of the consumer's potential power over producer, no matter whether this power is actually wielded' (Adorno, 2001: 161). This consumer power propels globalization then, because by it, people are attracted to their choice-products based on their value and goodness and not because of where they come from.

While some critics may argue that most African cultural products might not do well on the global markets, due to their poor production values and other competitive disadvantages, the argument of this research is that an equal opportunity to compete with others in the global process helps African [Nollywood] products to refine and circulate outside the confines of their original production backgrounds. As Jenkins states, 'commodities are a limited good and their exchange necessarily creates or enacts inequalities. But meaning is a shared and constantly renewable resource and its circulation can create and revitalize social ties' (2003: 283). This view of sharing meaning is another way of approaching Nollywood's representations in the context of globalization which Stevenson remarks: 'would argue for a genuinely cultural democracy based upon values of liberty and equality, as well as respect for "otherness", difference ...' (2000: 113). Thus, the notion of 'cultural democracy' is what is implied when this study talks of Nollywood participating in the globalization process, especially in terms of media globalization.

To argue this further, this study appropriates the McDonald's argument to show that the logic of Borja and Castels (1997) is insightful when they argued that, 'the process of globalization, and the information of the process, distribution and management are

profoundly altering the spatial and social structure of societies all over the planet' (1997: 16). Furthermore, this work sees the Nollywood film industry as participating in an open market of ideas by attracting audiences by means of its productions anywhere in the globe. In doing this, African cultures, including Igbo rituals and cosmologies are been extended to wider audiences without undermining them but rather offers the outside world a glimpse of them from an inside perspective.

McDonaldization is often evoked by some people as another way of interpreting globalization and by that imply that the 'growing global interconnectedness leads towards increasing cultural standardization and uniformization, as in the global sweep of consumerism' (Pieterse, 2004: 42). While this is the way some scholars might argue, a few have actually explored the theory of McDonaldization (Ritzer, 1992; Talbot, 1995) and find it a case of *non sequitor esse* (not as it sounds). Particularly in Talbot's findings through studying the McDonald's centre in Moscow, the argument of homogenization is apparently inaccurate on every score. Thus, she concludes that the 'McDonald's in Moscow does not represent cultural homogenization but should rather be understood along the lines of global localization' (Pieterese, 2004: 50). Even though Talbot believes that the concept of 'global localization' describes better the presence of McDonald's in Moscow, her study considers the fact that global interconnectedness in terms of homogenization alone is not a foreseeable reality at the moment. This research shares this view too, but adds, that in every globalization effort, there is definitely something to suggest the realization of homogenization as well as heterogenization in some sense. By this is implied that all goods extend something of their unique identity to others while allowing others to appropriate them in their own ways.

Talbot's study actually illustrates the above point in relation to a McDonald's food centre in Moscow. She finds that the American fast food giant, McDonald's, exists and practically remains American in outlook and fast food products; but to be served in Moscow, it adapted to local conditions. Particularly on this note she finds McDonald's in a new momentum in Moscow while retaining its *Americanness*. She argues thus, ' instead of efficiency, queuing (up to several hours) and lingering were common place. Instead of

being inexpensive, an average Macdonald's meal costs more than a third of a Russian worker's average daily wage (Pieterse, 2004: 50). Applying these findings to films and globalization implies that if McDonald's could be seen and bought in Moscow, so also should cultural products like Nollywood and Hollywood be seen and watched anywhere in the world freely. In this way, the cultural artifacts heterogenize (by letting themselves be consumed outside of their national area), while at the same time homogenize (by reinforcing their original unique quality and effects) on audiences as American or Nigerian products. By this understanding, the cultural artifacts retain their imprints and are not been imperialized by others. They extend their unique cultural aesthetics to others while being themselves regarded as particular nation's cultural goods. Thus, it is in the light of this argument that this study calls for the productive benefits of Nollywood's globalization and by it implies both its heterogeneity and homogenization.

Globalization creates opportunities for diversifying efforts in cultural productions. It does not imply as Lull argues, 'that some universal technology-based super-society covers the globe and destroys local social systems and cultures' (Lull, 2000: 233). As Hannerz acknowledges too, the global movement of cultures does not negate the authentic indigenous characteristics of the cultures [of Africans] by any means but only highlights the fact that every culture is dynamic and media globalization helps all of these cultures to hybridize or creolize (Hannerz, 1987, 1992, 1996). This creolization emphasis is founded on transculturation, which according to Lull 'produces cultural hybrids – the fusing of cultural forms' (2000: 243). Based on this, every cultural product, including Nollywood, has equal opportunities to showcase itself and compete with other international products at the same level. On this note, this research shares the view that 'fears of globalization (or Americanization) should be treated for what they are: anxieties about the effects of market forces, and in terms of entertainment, these are not easy to read. It is difficult, for example, to explain the rise of rap as entertainment in the USA in the 1980s [...] and the global influence of reggae [...] despite the policies of either international record companies or the Jamaican government' (Frith, 1997: 175).

All these highlight the need to encourage African productions in the global market. Thus, this thesis suggests that participating in a multifarious manifestation of media globalization helps Nollywood affirm its identity, while at the same time exploring alternative cultures. This makes Nollywood relay what distinguishes it from other film cultures as well as challenge the industry particularly to produce quality films imbued with African aesthetics that can stand side by side with Hollywood and other national film products in festivals across the world. Scholars no doubt are divided when it comes to examining African products on the altar of globalization. For some it is another model of imperialism, whereby globalization is the same as 'Americanization' or 'westernization' or 'Europeanization' as explored in Chapter three. For instance, Robins argues that 'cultural globalization is bringing about convergence and homogenization in world culture. At the same time, there are also more cosmopolitan developments, with new cultural encounters across frontiers creating new and productive kinds of fusion and hybridity' (1997: 33). This type of view considers globalization as detrimental to independent regional cultures and products which will become imperialized by major global participants in the field.

But unlike the above viewpoint, this study considers globalization as presenting an open market for free participation of all peoples including Third World cultures. Nollywood films therefore as discussed join the globalization trend from the angle of a free market of ideas in terms of media globalization while not shielding their national identity and integrity, or merely being forced to join as a part of secondary agent in issues they can conveniently participate. While acknowledging the potential possibility of cross-cultural influences from other parts of the world on Nollywood, since cultures and life altogether are dynamic, this study argues that rather than imperialize goods and services, globalization can actually promote the extension of these products and services to the benefit of participants in the broad sense. Njoku describes the scenario scholars find themselves when discussing globalization as one of ambivalences. On this note, he argues:

> There is a reasonable ambivalence which has characterized
> globalization. On one side, globalization designates a process of
> placing human progress and the opportunities of human ingenuity

at the door steps of all peoples. From this angle it evokes a sense of
a worldwide cooperation, solidarity, interdependence, global prosperity
and world peace. From another perspective however, globalization is
also leading to the fears of a worldwide social Darwinism and the
spread of a uniform world culture. This perspective sees globalization
as a suspect movement that acts as a vehicle of Western cultural and
economic imperialism. This perspective evokes the sense of
fear, threat, and worry (Njoku, 2006: 71/72).

Using these two perspectives, this research considers globalization in the first context and not in the second which smacks of unfounded fear and anxiety. In other words, it is the belief of this researcher that globalization as applied to this area of cultural production, is mainly construed as 'media globalization' and not economic or any other type of globalization. The homogenization perspective of globalization which is the second perspective Njoku outlines above, sees things differently by presenting globalization as 'making everywhere seem more or less the same' (Tomlinson, 1996: 6). This fear which translates as Americanization or westernization often tends to exhibit some kind of paternalism which this writer thinks is unnecessary especially in relation to Africa. For this reason the view is shared with Borja and Castels that 'what characterizes the new global economy is its extraordinary – and simultaneously – inclusive and exclusive nature. It includes anything that creates value and is valued, anywhere in the world. It also excludes what is devalued or undervalued. It is at once a dynamic, expansive system and a system that segregates and excludes social sectors, territories and countries' (1997: 9).

By exclusion, these authors include things that are undervalued and of course the usual frame of mind for most Westerners is to think that Africa is not and cannot compete in the globalization process due to her numerous continental plights since these have never allowed her come up with standardized products. Others tend to think that poverty and easy subservience to American and European cultural imperialism are too strong for Africa to overcome and stand on her own. But even though this might be true at one level within the continent, the notion as argued here considers globalization as affording equal opportunities to all participants and not limited to a select few. On this note, the idea of global cultural homogenization is certainly or I believe, been problematized in the context of Africa.

Globalization in some way at least, serves to lessen the chasm between the 'info-rich' and the 'info–poor' by eliminating the apparent gaps between receptions of goods and services. This again is an argument a lot of liberal Western academics still do not share. But since human nature is essentially the same, this researcher believes that everyone is attracted to 'good products' equally in the same manner irrespective of individual backgrounds. Thus, it is almost common sense to argue that a tasty burger from McDonald's in the United States will appeal to an African child as much as it will be a treat to an American child. Hence, the availability of Hollywood or Nollywood films on the same market increases not only the chances of choices for audiences but also solves the plight of some cultural goods being confined only to their production areas.

Globalization lies at the heart of all cultures and refers to the interconnections and interdependencies that characterize modern social life (Tomlinson, 1999: 2). According to During, it means 'the development of global market and capital so as to skew highly capitalized national economies towards service, information, financial instruments, and other high value–added products away from primary commodities and mass production industries' (1993: 23). Nollywood, in participating and contributing to this global market of ideas will correct the dangerous misrepresentations of African worldviews and values, while at the same time affirm and transmit Nigerian and African cultural viewpoints across borders through global media interactions. To argue for the confinement of films within Africa, as against disseminating them through reciprocal mechanisms of globalization, harms development, signaling a tendency to cry foul and return to the ghettos of cultural experiences that undermine healthy competitions and free exchange of creative ideas. Hence for this reason and many others, scholars like Thompson call for a clear vision in understanding globalization when he states that, 'though globalization undoubtedly has its roots in the experience of the West, it now, as it were "belongs" to the world as a whole, and will inevitably draw on and be influenced by non Western cultural traditions' (1997: 145). The anxiety of those who argue against globalization is that it has not worked for the betterment of Africa. This is true especially on the economic level, but might breed some form of paternalism that promotes African

products only for the welfare of Africans, since the fear would be that globalization will make African productions become imperialized by Western 'others'. Such however, would imply a sterile, worried dying culture in effect especially when viewed from the context of media globalization.

The argument of this thesis is that the world will not be overturned by current globalization processes as feared by many, especially by the involvement of African nation. As Tomlinson argues, 'contrary to the claims of cultural imperialism thesis, globalization is unlikely to produce an entirely regulated, homogenized global culture' (1997: 148). Thus, it is right to say that much of the criticism of globalization as a crude homogenizing agency have often been misplaced and misguided. No matter how we draw close to global interconnectedness, what it reveals is our 'sameness' in the concept of humanity which does not deny people's individual identity and authenticity. This is one factor that should, more than anything else, propel Nollywood to media globalization without undermining its own cultural integrity. For this reason, Nollywood can arguably be termed a vibrant participant in the global market, not only because it is consumed via cable channels and internet sources across the globe, but also, because it extends African and Nigerian cultures to others, outside the frontiers of Africa's geopolitical space. The Nollywood film industry significantly contributes to this global services by bringing African perspectives to media networks. That it circulates in and outside of Africa, in order to be enjoyed by a wider audience, exemplifies how it is globalizing effectively. It is simply reciprocity without paternalism. It is a healthy competition between one artifact and another, or one industry and others, and in this way, offers audiences the potential power of making choices according to their cultural values. In this instance, industries learn from each other in the globalization process and modernize productions towards improving quality of products. In all of these therefore, competition is *de facto* possible and necessary to regenerate cultures.

Generally therefore, the Nollywood industry is expanding in a liberalized fashion and distribution pattern that also shifts from both the pan-African cinema structures and Western mainstream cinema channels by involving local distributors to circulate the films

to Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo viewers. This specifically makes the industry depart significantly from Western marketing strategies that ordinarily rely on advertisements and box office sales. Nollywood on the other hand, involves local channels, audience fans, and market distributors to dispense its productions to specific target audiences (given the language) and then to the wider market. However, based on some perceived cultural shifts and the absence of conformity to their expected standards of film experiences therefore, the focus-group audiences were able to point out a lot of flaws in the films, not only in terms of compromising old communalistic cultures with modern realities, but also in terms of leaving African and Nigerian cultural situations to make films after the Hollywood's style and aesthetics, most of which however, are prominently distant from Africans and Nigerian cultural experiences. Given the nature of this open-ended debate, and other issues brought to view by this study, more research is been suggested in the next chapter to explore the reception of Nollywood across global borders and other related areas concerning the industry and the people of Nigeria, but meanwhile let us acknowledge that the issue of cultural hybridity and poor quality of representations in these films made focus-group participants underpin some flaws in the Nollywood film industry.

7.6 The Flaws

Emerging from the primary research are data that betrayed the flaws in the film industry as outlined by audiences as well. The focus-group analysis of Nollywood representations and the future of the industry as a national cinema generated what this study considers as arguments against the film industry's standard of productions. What this shows is that even though a majority of audiences appreciate Nollywood, it does not mean that everything about it is of high standard. As a nascent industry, many believe it has a long way to go especially in comparison to mainstream cinemas of the West and especially Hollywood. Respondents criticized the industry for a lot of reasons ranging from lack of creativity, originality and imagination to making storylines that are overly simplistic, boring and repetitive. Some argued that some storylines are borrowed from other films abroad while others said the industry tries to model productions on those of Hollywood,

instead of just being African. Above all, that Nollywood claims a promising future but only if can seriously address the challenges of technological and aesthetic qualities of its productions.

7.6.1 Largely Predictable

Most respondents believe that there is some type of simplicity aligned to Nollywood films originating from the fact that their themes and possible storylines are evident even from advertisement posters and disk packages. This, some think is unprofessional, since it does not leave room for suspense. For this group, their view is the same as Paula who argued that some storylines 'are repeated time and time over, to the point that the viewer can just see the title, listen to the soundtrack and just five minutes into the movie, know already where the storyline is heading to' (Paula, 2007: internet source). In attempting to underscore what audiences dislike about Nollywood representations, this study discovered a list of expectations as well that the industry needed to address to continue maintaining the loyalty of its numerous fans especially those who critique it for being largely predictable.

Interviewer: What do you dislike about Nollywood films?

Kelechi: I think I like watching Hollywood films in the sense that I love the suspense they give. When you begin watching it you might not really understand where it is leading but gradually the suspense is resolved. This is unlike Nigerian movies. At times when you read the title you can just describe what to expect and at the end you will see you are right in it.

Adaku: I think also I don't like some shots in Nigerian movies. There are these two guys that feature together: Aki and Pawpaw...those two guys...the way they act..huh....they can actually corrupt the morals of kids watching them and you will know once you see them. They are something else. They are always playing dangerous tricks with the elderly. Even though they are comedy films and make people laugh but they can be dangerous to kids copying them as styles. The way they act...if younger ones at home keep watching them, they will certainly be influenced wrongly.

Chimaraoke: What I want to say on interpreting the storylines of Nollywood films from their packages is that there must be a reason for that. I feel what they do is that when you know your situation you know which film can give meaning in terms of what you want to

see and what resonates with you. So you know when you watch the film it might give you an insight or another step to take into what you want to watch. But in a situation where you see a film like *Welcome to America* and you have no idea of what to expect in it... that would not give you the desire to watch since you have no intention of going to America. What you want is something that will change or appeal to your situation as a Nigerian.

Thus, while some respondents think that being predictable is the very mark that distinguishes Nollywood from others like Hollywood in a good way, whereby people can easily read the films, given easy identification with storylines and film locales, others see it as an over reliance on a generic formula, which is a major weakness. Gabriel of the Imo State University, strongly opines that he holds a case against the film industry. 'They destroy creativity. Nollywood is highly predictable and that makes it boring for audiences. Myself, as a person, I hate to watch Nollywood. I prefer Hollywood [....]. I hold them responsible for the derogation of people's cultures [...] and projecting corruptions to the minds of viewers'.

Disagreeing with Gabriel however, is Adaku, who thinks that comparing Nollywood to Hollywood is unfair. She believes that 'you cannot compare American films to Nigerian films because in American films you don't know what to expect. But in Nollywood, the package alone tells you what to expect; and this is good for our people who want moral lessons and not just gun shots and flying cars'. Eucheria, another student-nurse corroborates Adaku's view when she stated that,

> You can't just understand American movies. You just keep
> looking at the television and what you see is shooting of guns and
> all the rest. At times when somebody asks you 'did you watch these
> films' you will say 'yes' but when the person says 'can you please
> tell me the story' you will not know what to say. But if you come to
> Nollywood, you will just see that from the beginning to the end you
> will understand the stories. And you know it is our own people using
> what is happening in our country to act them.

Adaku and some other participants tended to agree that being predictable is a credit to Nollywood and for this reason have recommended particular films to friends based on known titles and storylines. Citing *Never say Goodbye*, Adaku defends her position and

explained how she recommended the film to a friend with similar problem as encoded in the movie and achieved a good relief in her friend's life. Thus, she concluded,

> So this film by its title was clear of its vision and direction.
> May be, because we are Nigerians, we understand it easily.
> It is acted to justify *Never Say Goodbye* which is unlike most
> American films that the end do not justify the titles [...].
> You don't easily understand where it is leading. It may start with
> seeing people fighting and shooting, and at the end
> you don't know the reason for that.

In this instance therefore, we have participants who favoured the idea of decoding Nollywood's storylines by reading into their filmic codes, but still more disagree and see that as a lapse in the creativity expected of producers and directors who should create suspense in films to hold audiences spell bound over what happens next.

7.6.2 Mimicking Hollywood

The argument of mimicking Hollywood appeared easily with Nollywood audiences saturated with watching Hollywood long before the arrival of Nollywood in the 1990s. Respondents believe that to get the films to high quality standard, which is an aspiration of Nollywood, there are attempts by producers recently to mimick Hollywood both technologically like in editing devices, usage of sound effects and in filmic storylines that portray Western themes and dramatizations effected by using arranged movie sets and Western costumes. Marcel 34, for instance, agrees that 'some films imitate Hollywood and therefore confuse young Nigerians about what is our culture'.

Confusing cultural representations with existential facts is where audiences believe that Nollywood producers are losing their grip with Nigerian cultural realities or they are using technology to shift away from apparent 'cultural truths'. Many believe that Nollywood filmmakers need to observe caution in representing cultures and life experiences in what themes to encode. Gabriel emphasizes that 'coming to culture which is a people's way of life, you see that sometimes the dressing of those in Nigerian movies

can be questioned. Though sometimes they have Nigerian movies that reflect real African cultures which represent the dressing codes in traditional settings [...], but most of the times you see some Nigerian movies acted with costumes I cannot reconcile as being wholly part of African or Nigerian cultures'. Marcel agrees to this and highlights that even though he watches Nollywood films, 'they are still patterned after imitating Hollywood. Some of them are educative and entertaining but most of them are mimicking Hollywood and show what is not part of our culture and can be misleading to our younger ones'.

One female participant, Jacinta, cites a film to buttress how producers are misleading audiences in captioning movies while drawing from Hollywood themes.

> There is this film titled *Trinity.* Trinity, as we all know, is 'oneness'
> but if you watch it you will see that they are trying to bring in
> another thing which is cultural. But Trinity is quite different
> from culture. So at times they will be citing a Hollywood movie
> and be giving it an African title and that normally
> messes it up.

Thus, audiences were of the view that most films encode not only the current trends in the society, but also the reality of African cultures grappling with Western influences since after colonialism, which leaves viewers with a somewhat jaundiced concept of what is African and authentic 'communalism'.

7.6.3 Poor Quality and Editing

Quality of products constantly featured in audiences' criticisms of Nollywood. This stem from poor and insufficient use of technological equipment to lack of well trained personnel to do quality jobs especially in shooting and editing of films. The focus-group participants called for more professionalism that is not simply guided by pecuniary drives. Marcel argued that 'Nollywood movies are poor in editing because they just want to sell and continue selling'. By this instance, he argued that producers place more emphasis on

rushing into the market with poorly edited films than considering the reputation of the industry. For Michael 33, of the Catholic Youth Outreach, 'this is unfortunate!'.

> When you talk of Nollywood directing action films, it is very appalling![...] the way actors fight is so so [...] fake! It's not really real! unlike when you watch foreign films. You will think they are real. But in Nigerian movies, the blow will go first before you hear the sound when people are fighting [...]. And I will advise them to improve on that aspect. Although they are great with love, romance, campus stuffs and all that [...]; but when it comes to action films, men! we are far behind!

Commenting on these production and technical observable flaws of Nollywood industry, Paula (2007) itemizes the faults of some movies that corroborate the findings of this study's audiences' responses. This, she cites with examples under two sub-headings: 'lack of funds and technical knowledge that hamper movies in the fields of sound and image, special effects, scenes choreography and structure, and the lack of creativity and greed to push too quickly to the market a movie that is a carbon copy of another or develop a theme already seen a million times before and counting'. In this way, she agrees with participants that Nollywood encoders do have a very challenging job to do more than they want to sell their products. Like Stanley, who cited a film to underscore this point, Paula believes that Nollywood film directors and editors should crosscheck their works in post production sessions before launching onto the markets. Using the film, *State of Emergency,* Stanley re-emphasized this argument, thus;

> *State of Emergency* is ehm [...] you can imagine somebody in an open space running away and you are shooting and shooting, but not getting him [....] or just shooting someone in a glass house and the glass house falls and the person inside is still standing [...] do you understand? It raises a great question I mean to say.

This response implies strong disapproval on the quality of editing that *State of Emergency* has and is the same point elaborated by Paula when she criticizes the movie industry thus, 'the fighting scenes and the shooting scenes are poorly choreographed and amateurish [...]. Gunshots sound like fire-crackers. Punches and kicks sound like they

have been stolen from scenes from other movies'. Using some current films in the market, she makes the case of poor editing more concrete by pointing out more flaws.

> In *The Intruder*, Rita Dominic is talking about Chief Jacobs,
> calling him Chief Douglas who was another character in the story.
> Sometimes, actors call fellow actors by their real names or by
> someone else's name […]. It also happens that [sometimes]
> the title in the movie is not the same on the cover. The
> Movie, *The Invisible Man,* is called so on the cover, but is *the*
> *Invincible Man* in the movie (Paula, 2007).

One major reason respondents alluded to these flaws was that most productions are done in an 'ad hoc' fashion and since quick monetary gain was apparently the only underlying principle, creativity is something lacking, unlike when the industry took off in the 1990s. This corresponds to a response by Marcus who argues that, 'now what we are seeing is that people seem not to think widely as they did earlier. You discover that most of the storylines are very close to one another. And the frequency or rate of production is higher, which means they are not putting much time into bringing out quality but looking at what to get after selling the movies'.

7.6.4 Repetitive and Overly Exaggerated Storylines

Also, emerging from the audience research is the view that most filmic storylines are often repeated in other films with just a little re-touch. Mark, from the Centre of African Culture and Communication, for instance, argued that, 'there are exaggeration of violence and guns in the films [...]. This gun-combating is not a Nigerian thing. There are too many exaggerations in that regard'. And for Marcus, 'even most of those things they portray are highly exaggerated visuals far from what is real like love lives, eh- eh- or violence [...], oh no, they are over the top'.

Especially the male participants from the city believed that the act of repetitions and exaggerations in Nollywood are often pushed too far. They are not 'artfully' done and do not give the film industry the integrity it deserves. Luke, arguing this point states that,

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From my own point of view, sometimes Nollywood goes
too far in exaggerations of issues in the society. For instance,
in most of the campus films they act, they place students in a kind
of big houses whereas students ordinarily do not live in those type
of houses, rather they live in self contained hostels and apartments.
In some others they make it seem that students live in expensive houses,
ride big cars [...]. I know students use cars but not such flashy expensive
ones [...]. Also they go far into extremes in the way students shoot guns [...].
I think students don't generally shoot. We don't handle guns like that. In
campuses, everything is handled with respect. So I think they have to
check on this and be fair to things as they happen [...] that's what I want
to say on that!

Paula (2007) bought into this logic of repetitions when she raised questions over the flaws of boring storylines and repeated themes in multiple steps by asking:

how many times is a bored married woman going to get an
accident and fall madly in love with the passerby/doctor/mechanic
who comes to her rescue? How many times will a rich man/woman
conspire to have their offspring marry the rich offspring of their
friend/business partner/political godfather? How many times will
a match made in heaven be undermined by trouble brewed by the
boy/girl best friend? How many times is a woman in love going to
finance the wellbeing of her jobless, parasite boyfriend who will
eventually abandon her? (2007).

Audiences therefore seem to react unfavourably to the idea of over-repetitive storylines in different fashions as well as 'dragging' film stories into different 'parts' for the sake of pecuniary reasons. This is seen by dividing films into two, three or four parts so that audiences get the same story by paying more to buy them. Against this backdrop, Haynes explains that, 'sequels are a standard way of milking a successful project, as well as providing room for the luxuriantly overgrown plots that the audience seem to like' (Haynes, 2007: 4). Felicia's disgust at the sequels is recognizable as how most audience participants feel about this development in Nollywood. She states:

Another thing is about Nigerian films having part one, part two,
part three, part four [...]; that really is very funny. I have not seen
American films having so many parts. And some of these films keep
repeating storylines, telling us the same things with different titles [...]

> like the one I was watching sometime in the past entitled, *Four-Forty* [. ..]. I have watched part one, was watching part two, thinking I will see something more interesting there and the next thing I saw was the end of it saying 'watch out for part three'. This, I know, I will never do in my life. I will not even try renting part three, not to talk of buying it.

In the light of this last assertion, one discovers the danger of how bad quality works can lead to a fall off in audiences' consumption practices of Nollywood films. In this case the logic of the focus group participants is a call for more attention into the post-production checks of the films before releasing them to the markets. An oversight of such a huge problem like this definitely will put the industry's future at risk. Hence, both the Nigerian government and the industry's stake holders cannot afford to sit back and not actively function as a barometer of quality, if Nollywood truly is to be considered Nigeria's national cinema industry or as often claimed the world's third largest film industry. Again, this issue we will revisit in the context of the concluding chapter of this research to showcase how important it is not to neglect taking prompt action at this stage of the industry's activities.

7.7 Chapter Conclusion

Engaging in both textual and audience analysis of this study has affirmed the convictions of this research that audiences resonate with filmic storylines due to their proximity to the textual themes of the films. This was particularly seen in the discourse on rituals and the identification of audiences with filmic themes that made them often recommend films to others. The focus-group participants following the films have contributed their opinions on issues founded on Nigerian cultures as they concern them and even raised objections to representations they do not think synchronize with lived-in situations of the Nigerian and African polity in terms of what this thesis underscored as culture. Generally, their definition of culture was grasped in terms of 'what is happening in the society' which ranges from lifestyles, experiences, concepts and traditional beliefs and the findings have shown that these strongly come into play in Nollywood representations.

ENDNOTES

[1]These audience groups need not be fitted into Hall's three modes of consuming media messages. While in Hall, a particular viewer can swap modes as regards different media texts, the audience categories as discussed in Nollywood here showcase their characteristics as more towards the industry in general, than towards particular movies or texts. It is only in some instances that they share certain characteristics as outlined by Hall but are more fixed in their own position and attitudes towards Nollywood as a national cinema industry.

Chapter Eight

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This research has discussed the representations of Nigerian cultures, especially the Igbo rituals in Nollywood films. It argued that given new digital technologies, the Nigerian film industry has evolved to represent the myths and stories of the people contrary to the stereotypical visual imageries of African people in mainstream Western cinemas. In this regard, based on findings from qualitative research methodologies (using focus-group interviews and textual analysis), it argued that Nollywood expresses African cultural values in a way that resonates with people's lives and experiences by focusing on their communal rituals and everyday lived-in situations. While filmic themes continue to depict Nigerian values, they also communicate to the outside world a more comprehensive representation of the indigenous people's worldviews.

As a relatively new phenomenon, the findings show that Nollywood uses culture and technology to raise awareness of communalistic communication among Africans in general and Nigerians in particular, following Moemeka's (1998) analysis of the concept, by making community based rituals the central focus of the films. For this, communication is presented as something that involves all humans, and more especially extends to the world of the ancestors and the gods, hence the symbolic backward and forward references to these forces in ritual celebrations are clearly manifested in the films analyzed. The general notion of communalistic communication as seen in the films underpins Moemeka's view that 'in communalistic societies, communication is a matter of human interrelationships […] to confirm, solidify and promote communal social order' (1997: 171). Some actions that depict these human interrelationships were seen when this work discussed communalism in relation to particular rituals and the significance of people's reactions as seen in 'dyads, family relationships and meetings, village markets, funeral occasions as well as religion' (Moemeka, 1997: 172). Apart from communications with living human beings, the rituals as discussed here show that both ancestors and the gods are considered part of human existence, hence African

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communalistic communications as represented in the filmic rituals extend to them. In this case, Des Wilson's argument in relation to African society that 'always there is recalling the memory of the ancestors in the past and calling of the people to work together for the future of the community' (2008: 51) has been verified as descriptive of Igbo communalism. Thus, this research reveals a particular aspect of communications in African society, as enshrined in people's deep ecology.

Like the practice of philosophy in Africa, Nollywood film industry was found to have become significantly involved in the process of Africa's self reflection and definition by its cultural representations whereby traditions are now being translated and mediated by technologies. By exploring Nollywood's filmic representations of rituals, the movies in special ways revealed Nigeria and Africa's deep communalistic situations (apart from some overgeneralizations), and by this means, serve as an industry of cultural extension and nationalistic values as underpinned by some earlier studies in the field (Kunzler, 2007; Onuzulike, 2007; Akpabio, 2007; Oluyinka, 2008; Osakwe, 2009). These values in Nollywood films begin with the identity of the people of Nigeria and Africa and therefore include their cultures and geographic locations. Mcloone in relation to Irish society attests that this type of values exist 'in a dialectical relationship between some notion of "us" and the "other" and this in turn can give rise to seemingly fixed binary oppositions' (2000: 11). It is the 'us' and 'them' concepts that was seen to characterize the Nigerian national cinema as different from others and therefore has given the industry a voice that currently speaks for Nigeria and Africa. In this instance, the Nollywood film industry builds on Africa's unique characteristics and creates a difference in representing African peoples and cultures quite differently from the cinemas of the Euro-American zones. Thus, to the extent that most other Euro-American filmmakers framed Africa from their own logic of existential realities and therefore adjudged circumstances from their own perspectives, this study discovers Nollywood offering a response that is supportive and liberative of African peoples and cultures from the neocolonial invasion of age-long misrepresentations. In other words, this thesis finds the films representing 'a break with and resistance to the cultural imperialism fostered by the global expansion of the Hollywood industry' (Lott, 1995: 50) in Nigeria.

Another key finding of this study which follows from fostering a resistance to cultural imperialism is the fact that currently the Nollywood film industry by its representations has become a significant step towards decolonizing African minds of the old stereotypes created over the years by Western ethnocentricisms. As Pines and Willemen argue 'the impetus of Third cinema, [and Nollywood in particular], continues to be participatory and contributive to the struggles for the liberation of the peoples of Third World' (1989: 55). This was remarkable both by the focus-groups' responses to the research questions posed alongside Nollywood representations that dealt with identity affirmation and cultural emancipations, because it was considered that 'the way images of black communities have been historically constructed from a White perspective and, moreover, from a position of considerable domination, has had clear consequences for the perception and portrayal of those communities in Western societies' (Ross, 1996: XIX). Hence, the Nollywood film industry challenges these imageries and continues to affirm people in the socio-cultural circumstances. By representing myths and history of African [Igbo] villages and peoples, Nollywood emancipates such ideologies and concepts from being continuously perpetuated against the continent and people.

Many reasons this thesis found can be attributed to why the video film industry in Nigeria has been so successful in building loyal audiences among Africans and around the world. These include the fact that the films help provide a time and a place for resolving deep-felt tensions in an increasingly modern post-colonial world, while at the same time affirming an authentic African identity. The industry brings the films close to the dominant emotional and identity questions posed by Nigerians and Africans alike, which is noticeably seen in the industry's model of representations of both the new and primordial cultures of African society. Not only do editors tap into lived-in conditions offered by natural environments, like ritual celebrations, they also draw from the panoply of computer generated sound effects deposited in different editing softwares to highlight creativity and attract more especially young audiences to the films. Thus, this study confirms the thesis of Ogundele that 'despite modern technology's ubiquitous presence

in most contemporary (black) African societies, most of these still retain worldviews and mental attitudes that run parallel to those of science and technology. Such attitudes and worlviews inform not just daily socioeconomic and political life, but also the reception and utilization of foreign technology' (2000: 98).

Another significant finding here is that the nature and notion of Igbo culture cannot purely be framed from the perspective of its primordial context but must recognize the changes brought about in it by numerous strands of cultural contacts. On this note, the indicators of communalism as outlined by Moemeka (1998) and Onwubiko (1991) were seen to be adapting to new realities presently. For instance, kola nut is no longer been limited to a particular type of fruit but can be symbolically observed by any 'present' offered to a visitor at the point of arrival to the house. Also, the actual methods of celebrating most of the rituals are also adapting to new realities. Thus, communalism as found to be represented in the films has taken into consideration the influx of modernization processes that have underlined communalistic set-ups. This therefore confirms the findings of Faniran (2003) on cultural hybridity of communalism as well as corroborates Turner's emphasis on ritual functions which includes been able to resolve socio-cultural conflicts in indigenous communities (1983: 28) like the Igbo speaking part of Nigeria that was studied here. The examination of these cultural rituals therefore found them to be significant in two ways for the Igbos for instance, in that it reveals how these representations are made of primordial and modern cultures and underscores as well the resonance they elicit from audiences given the proximity of the ritual themes to their everyday lifestyles.

Generally audiences' pleasure as found in the films is traceable to this proximity both to the village and national communalistic cultures and filmic themes. In this way, Barlet's view of cinematic language as revealing as well and was underscored not only in terms of aesthetics but also in relation to the Igbo cultures that were studied here, when he states that, 'the strength of [this] African cinematic language relates to its symbolism, which consists in a surrealism that is both mystical and metaphysical. The films of Black Africa deliberately mingle the esoteric and the sociological gazes. Symbols invade the images.

These take the form of gestures, attitudes, rhythms, colours, sounds, local or western objects, rituals and so on, combining with the words or – even – with proverbs [...]. They invite the viewer to participate [in the actions and] create a unity […] in the play of vital forces which rule the world' (2000: 143). In this way, Moemeka's view that Africans communicate communalistically was been verified. And in all of these, as Kwasi Ansu Kyeremeh would argue 'communication is culture and culture is communication [especially in the African context] (2005: 243). Hence, from an insider's perspective, Nollywood was seen to have become a kind of a cinematic version of public service broadcasting mechanism in the country, not only for Nigerians, but maybe, for the continent of Africa. In this way, it is able to reflect the *news* items of the society to its numerous consumers who tend to rely on it as an alternative medium. Ogundele on this note states that 'what we see in these videos is a direct reflection both of what happens in real life and of what people think and feel' (2000: 91).

Generally the findings of this study are not whether films concur with actual realities or not, nor does it center merely on the oppositionality of audiences to what is not communalistic in films. As a matter of fact, this study while not considering communalism as an insulation of Africa from Western influences, acknowledges that most Nollywood films draw from both culture and history, and do so by building 'on existing popular forms such as song and dance, the oral tradition (both literary and rumours) and popular theatre' (Diawara, 1992: 141). In this sense, while Nollywood as Okome says in relation to indigenous audiences 'is commercially savvy […]. One cannot forget its sense of mission, which is to produce culture from the bottom of the street, so to speak' (Okome, 2007: 2). Thus, while this study has ventured into a new and an understudied subject matter in the area of African film studies and comes with such findings as listed herein, it joins forces with Mbye to highlight that, 'the potential of a viable African cinema and audio-visual industry in shaping and promoting current projects of national, regional, continental and pan-African integration …is a given that cannot be overemphasized enough' (Mbye, 2007).

Fundamentally, this study has contributed to studying a given aspect of Third Cinema from purely its cultural background where the ontologies and cosmologies of the people of the Igbo speaking part of Nigeria are used to interpret the representations of their rituals. It has also contributed knowledge in the area of film consumption in Nigeria, especially among the Igbos. This was done primarily by following the interdisciplinary methodological approaches in social sciences, but more especially by shifting attention from the focus of most other studies on storylines and aesthetic qualities of the films as seen in the usual practice of the study of African cinema from the West (Murphy, 2000; Akudinobi, 2001), to the viewing contexts, textual contents and technology of consumption practices among Nollywood viewers in Nigeria.

Particularly, the focus-group participants highlighted the interest of consuming these films in the comfort of their homes with the basic media technologies like the VCR, DVD, or VCD which is a pure finding here. To these as Lull would argue, 'the ownership of these technologies is a source of "status symbol" in the society' (Lull, 1990: 169). Thus, in the context of all these findings, Nollywood is now effecting what Mbye (2007) calls a paradigm shift in African Cinema. And for Okome, with Nollywood on stage, 'the discourse of African cinema will need to be rephrased in very radical ways' (2007: 3). Among other things, Nollywood as Mbye says, which this study corroborates, has managed 'to put in place the rudiments of an industry and working out relatively well in a short period of time on the challenges of production, distribution and exhibition that have proved elusive to dominant African cinema for some time now: the ideal norm of African films financing African cinema, African producers producing African films, African distributors distributing African films within Africa primarily and beyond, and a certain measure of autonomy' (2007 : 12). Thus, this type of Africanity in filmmaking that uses acceptable technologies to explore African and universal themes and distribute same effectively is where Nollywood strikes a mark especially in relation to other African cinemas.

8.2 Contributions to Film Studies and Cultural Representation Analysis

Generally, the following can be articulated as contributions of this research to the field of media representation and reception analysis of Nollywood films in a nutshell:

- it has helped extend reception studies with broad rubrics of 'Third World' cinema into Africa, namely, that of Nollywood film industry.

- it provides an insight into the interpretation of Africa and Nigeria's ontological cosmology and thought patterns as captured in the films discussed and framed around the notion of communalism.

- also, there is a contribution on the unique nature of African filmmaking practice, especially that of Nollywood and its production strategies.

8.3 Nollywood as National Cinema: Challenges and Prospects

Like many other African nations, Nigeria has constantly been framed as a result of colonialism, underdevelopment and poverty. The findings of this study reveal that these representations need to be more objective, nuanced and anchored more from an insider's perspective. While some mainstream Western stereotypical frames may be close to reality, many examples in the Euro-American media are misguided due to significant lack of understanding of the nation's cosmology, worldviews and deep ecological existential realities, or what this study termed internal African 'cultural competencies'.

Nollywood cannot simply be characterized in the context of a national cinema as a mere 'propaganda tool' in the hands of the government, since in any case, it does not sponsor the productions, but rather by the way it addresses people's everyday concerns through the dramatizations of their cultural stories and values. As discovered in the context of focus-group discussions, many factors problematize this function of Nollywood as a national cinema already which need to be addressed if Nollywood is to really serve as a

national cinema. These include the reluctance of the Nigerian government to go beyond legislations on censorships to financing the movies. Another important aspect is that of regulating the distribution channels of the movies and deal decisively with the pervasiveness of the problem of piracy in the market, by instituting legal structures that can help eliminate it. Added to these, are the challenges enunciated by the focus-group participants on the issues of standards and quality of productions that are needed to sustain audiences' taste in the longer term.

Both state and the federal governments of Nigeria therefore should gear towards helping the national film industry to survive and not be left only in the private sector as was the case soon after the colonial era. In this context, there is urgency for the public funding of films and regulation mechanisms to help 'structure' the industry. Until now, film producers have struggled on their own to oppose the illegal pirated copies of their works been sold to customers by some people outside the industry. The government should be able to help them do this. With new media technologies, especially the digital copying devices, it is suggested that the battle against pirating media products is currently tough on all fronts left alone to the filmmakers. And how can the producers fight this, if they have not enough money of their own to pay legal bills given the fact that they might have invested all the funding required on their cultural products. Thus, if the nascent film industry is not to repeat the mistakes of the past, the government and other stakeholders should intervene in its management whereby some structures need to be put in place to regulate the production activities. Like the Australian film industry, Nollywood should be seen as a national industry that 'serves as a vehicle of popular socialization and as a form for telling uncomfortable truths about its society' (O'Regan, 1996: 10). In this context, it is not to be avoided by the powers that be, but should be helped to maintain the focus of doing its public service for the people.

Granted that the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) and the National Film and Video Censors Board are always promising to stop the activities of the pirates, how much they have succeeded in winning this battle is difficult to know. Thus, the government needs to step up actions both within the country and outside, to really be sure that the

rights of cultural goods and their producers are protected, whether they are consumed in the United States of America, in Europe, in any other African country or in Nigeria. Added to this consciousness is the call to look inwardly and protect Nollywood as a national cultural industry. This is said because the Nollywood model seems to be attracting a lot of other film artists to Nigeria. There are people from America, Europe and other African countries interested in its model of producing and distributing films cheaply as was found in this study. Thus, both stakeholders of the industry and the Nigerian government should make sure that everything is put in place to safeguard the industry's integrity by standardizing payments to artistes and not leave them vulnerable to attractions elsewhere. There is the danger of the most prolific and artistic creators defecting to more lucrative industries abroad, if more beneficial and stable systems of management and development are not coordinated into the future.

Furthermore, Nollywood films can do a lot of good in helping to decolonize the minds of Africans and outside audiences by promoting positive images of the continent. For instance, with regards to the trauma of slavery and colonialism, such narratives can help audiences come to terms with such historic realities and forge a strong and authentic identity of themselves out of the experiences of their colonial past. This has worked, for example, with Irish cinema and the history of colonialism and famine in Ireland, where films have helped audiences forge a deeper sense of cultural and national identity out of a dark colonial past. Again, the stakeholders of Nollywood should reappraise the representations they make of cultures as said by this study's focus-group participants. For instance, even if they mimic Hollywood narrative styles and digital cinematic effects to dazzle audiences, the idea of encoding witchcrafts, criminalizing children as evil and demonically possessed, and recounting the notions of famine, crime, and other desperate situations in Africa, only help to perpetuate the age-long Hollywood stereotypes that are mostly fallacious and based on Western driven way of discussing Africa. Even when the stories are intended to be fictious or comical [every art has the 'poetic license' to do so, as a matter of creativity], yet more entertainment narratives should be to help negate the perpetuation of the stereotypical misunderstandings in those who use films to interpret geo-political locations and indigenous peoples' way of life. For instance, some

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respondents at the focus-group interviews argued that they learn a lot from the films about what is happening in their environment. Thus, there could be the danger of miscommunication of some pernicious and fallacious messages being perpetuated onto this type of viewers.

Another prospect this researcher thinks the government of Nigeria and Nollywood stakeholders ought to embrace is in the area of creating an 'enabling environment' for the consumption of these films. There is need to assure not only the movie consumers but also the whole citizenry that the Nigerian nation is not a failed state by supplying them with necessary social amenities, like constant power supply, constant water supply and cinema and recreational centers to say the least. Lack of all these and more can be deeply frustrating to a people whose greater number of the population is young. Granted that most audiences consume films in their homes, more would prefer the experience of attending cinema halls to watch films of their national aesthetics. The current resuscitation of cinema centers, for instance, the Silverbed Cinemas, the Ozone Cinemas, City Mall Cinemas, Genesis Deluxe Cinemas in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt City is reassuring; but for citizens to enjoy the experience, they need to be assured of constant electric power supply both for the viewing experience and for the safety of their movements afterwards, otherwise, anxiety and insecurity will frustrate audiences' pleasure in the cinema experience. Thus, both the government and the industry's proprietors have the urgent duty of complementing the efforts of those in the cinema business in creating secure distribution systems and cinema centers for people's relaxation and entertainment.

While films generally interrogate the society (O'Regan, 1996: 21), the Nollywood films also need to be interrogated which does not mean to undermine the practice of films in expressing alternative views on the society. Yet, such as deal with cultures and people's stories need to comply with the order of framing them closely to their root sources. There is the need for high budget films, sponsored or subsidized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Nigeria therefore to adequately address issues of concern in standardized universal cinema formats while using authentic to Africa and Nigeria's indigenous

cultural aesthetics. In this instance, Nollywood would be taken for what it is, which as O'Regan argues in relation to Australian cinema, 'generally provide[s] cultural information about [the]…people…' (1996: 17). As a national cinema, it should be seen to be performing some specific functions for the Nigerian populace which ought not to be undermined. These include being seen as a:

> means of interrogating the public and civic culture. They inspect, evaluate, describe and project society, its life ways and its psychic dispositions (neurosis, fears, etc). Films investigate contemporary public issues, they render social divisions and the incommensurate purposes of people. They register disturbing social and cultural truths, and foster alternative identities within the country (O'Regan, 1996: 21).

Particularly within the last decade and a half, the indigenous constructed identity of Africa (by Africans) has resurfaced in an exploration of what this study calls identity re-affirmation and cultural remediation as argued in this project. Barlet echoes this when he said, 'taking on the contemporary history of the continent, they are questioning at every step a relationship to self which combines disorientation and an appetite for life, and a relationship with the West experienced both as a dream and as nightmare. The result is a fragmented pursuit of self knowledge and self assertion opening out to a cross-fertilization within Africa and, subsequently, with the rest of the world' (2000: 213). This questioning has become the benchmark of most African cinemas, for instance, the Nigeria's Nollywood film industry as seen here, but also needs to be as supported by the Nigerian government all together.

The entire exercise of this research reveals that generally Nollywood themes are often based on ideas acquired from the fate of Nigerians as they encounter real life issues. It therefore uses village cultures, ceremonial celebrations and city lifestyles to tell Nigerian stories and by this help to highlight the tangible aspects of the society. As a national film industry, it can be said that Nollywood reveals more of the Nigerian lived-in conditions, while calling up audiences' consciousness to respond critically to the conflicts, debased imageries and identity mis-representations of outside stereotypes. Thus, the notion of building on these cultures therefore, [whether socially, politically, religiously or

otherwise], is what makes Nigerian films resonate with Nigerian and African audiences and validates this study's major claim that cultures are the centripetal roots of Nollywood films which needs to be positively sustained.

8.4 Suggestions For Further Research

An ever present implication from this study is the idea of a continuous empowering of the Nollywood film industry in encoding pleasure for its numerous viewers who, otherwise, have no other audio-visual stories to relax with after their day's work. By this, communities and individuals alike are constantly affirmed in their cultural membership of the society, as seen in the rituals celebrated by communities in the films. This study therefore challenges Nollywood filmmakers and viewers in a specific way to promote these communal cultural remediations by improving the standards of productions and articulating aesthetically the social facts of the society's communalism.

As an open ended discourse that looks forward to a more sustained understanding of the representations and reception of African and Nigerian cultures in films, this study recommends discussing films as a site for a range of actions, including the affirmation of Nigeria's cultural identity and the extension of the same for wider global audiences. In this case, our research articulated some findings that could help guide the social and cultural facts of the Nigerian society. But like every other research, it is limited by space and time and therefore cannot claim to have exhausted all that needed to be done. On this note, it is the view here that more examination and studies are needed to develop this present project, more especially in the interrogations and investigations of the strident issues of the society which Nollywood helps to unveil. Some of the areas that further researches can help to deal with include the following:

(1) Testing the resonance of filmic themes on people's life stories to re-evaluate the findings of this present study;

(2) Again, since this study lacked a large sample of statistics, especially in the area of films' cost of production, distributions channels, as well as consumption rates in terms of how many copies are sold of a particular film, other studies are recommended to explore the reasons for this significant absence of records in Nigerian communications landscape and to negotiate a way to help fill the gap by means of putting government's structures in place and creating a comprehensive database for Nollywood cinema;

(3) Most participants of this study's focus-group interviews recounted their disgust at what they considered the 'poor quality' of movies due to the *ad hoc* nature of productions that flood the market so easily. It would be a useful case-study to examine the production system of Nollywood and indicate ways of arresting the difficulties encountered in attaining high production standards compared to other national cinemas;

(4) Since this research was not carried out as a comparative study to explore Hollywood versus Nollywood reception rates among Nigerian viewers for instance, another study is recommended to extend audiences' comparisons and attitudes to the American mainstream and Africa's most significant nascent film industries;

(5) One of the characteristic features of African arts and communications which Nollywood films reveal is that ritual performances are rooted in the search for the supernatural – gods, ancestors, oracles, deities, or what Ireobi calls 'search for transcendence' (2005, cited in Africanist, 11).. This was seen in the enormous powers and influences drawn by these forces in the communalistic communities that betray an organic African cosmology. More analysis is thus required to unravel this relationship between the cosmic and transcendent worlds of Africans.

A possible continuation of this research especially from the above and other areas of investigation will no doubt enrich audience reception analysis in film studies especially from African and Third World perspectives, particularly in Nollywood. In this way, it will draw from this present study and showcase how audiences have progressed in their interaction with film texts, as well as how Nollywood is able to surmount most of the fears raised by audience participants regarding the future of the industry. Generally therefore, while this present study has attempted to clarify some issues around the representations of African and Nigerian cultures in films, new researches on the industry will help to solidify and confirm further the data of this project. Suffice once again to mention that the main thrust of this present thesis was to illustrate that fundamental to the attraction of Nollywood films is the encoding of cultural [ritual] performances as a kind of life experiences of Nigerians, whereby storylines and film settings in some specific ways resonate with everyday lifestyles and community celebrations.

8.5 General Conclusion

The question of why Nollywood films have been so successful in attracting audiences in Nigeria and around the world is best answered by the fact that these films bring together the cultural elements of the Nigerian and African society. They are taken from the people's own experience of viewing and producing performance, drawn especially from their rituals and (re)presented via Nollywood films. The film productions have helped to form the tastes and pleasures of audiences as these audiences have in turn influenced the tastes and pleasures of the producers, which is the main reason for the apparent success of the industry. The experience of production of Nollywood video films is close to the experience of the audiences themselves.

Nollywood films bring in the tradition of ritual performances as lessons for a good life and the commitment of a people to take to heart the lessons therein depicted. There is the enjoyment of these ritual re-enactments on films and the rhetorical exhibition of their everyday conversational negotiations through life challenges as well. Present in all these is the folkloric tradition of actions which bring witches and wizards, good and bad spirits,

legendary kings and heroes, incantations and exorcisms into the narrative of everyday life in Africa and Nigeria particularly. Present also is the ambivalent projection of ostentatious power, wealth and luxury by good or bad means, which is often the aspiration of most people and the depiction of the obligation of sharing one's wealth with family and community members as implicit in traditional communalism.

The Nollywood films use an extensive stock of traditional symbols that filmmakers instinctively understand to evoke the nostalgia and the pleasures of being African and Nigerian at the same time. Thus, every scene is situated in the circle of community, which includes the viewers too, with all of the assumed obligations to the community and with the communalistic forms of indigenous communication: dance, singing, and dramatic conversation. All of this is performed, this research argued, as part of rituals, the ground of all performances, and shows the process of ritual as withdrawal from everyday life of structure and power, to enter into a deep communalistic experience in order to return anew to this everyday life with a greater sense of authentic Nigerian (African) identity and commitment.

In Nigeria and throughout Africa, going back to the village on occasion is an integral part of life. In Nigeria particularly, the cities are virtually deserted during most religio-civic or socio-cultural festivals because it is the traditional time to return to the village for the ritual of visiting relatives, especially the elderly, and renewing one's sense of values by celebrating with community members. Nollywood encodes these movements and by so doing highlights watching the film texts as a way of returning to the village, wherever one may be in the world, to reintegrate one's globalized identity with one's own identity of origin. There is in the experience of the Nollywood films therefore, something of what Ansu-Kyeremeh defines as a 'centripetal' process of communication which counters the centrifugal process of communication from the westernized states imposing itself on the interior with a movement of cultures building African and Nigerian societies from the ritual-roots up.

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Research Filmography in Alphabetical Order

Abuja Boys, (2004), Afam Okereke, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Abuja Connection, (2003), Michael Ezeanyaeche, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Across the Niger, (2004), Izu Ojukwu, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Across the Bridge, (2005), Mac Collins Chidebe, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Afrique Sur Seine, (1955), Paulin SoumanouVieyra, Senegal.

Alice, My First Wife, (2006), Chinny Ahaneku, Nigeria, Nollywood.

A Million Tears, (2006), Tchidi Chikere, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Amadi, Ola Balogun, Nigeria, Pre – Nollywood.

Amazing Grace, (2006), Michael Apted, USA/UK.

Amazing Grace, *The* (2006), Jeta Amata, Nigeria, Nollywood.

An Inconvenient Truth, (2006), Davis Guggenheim, USA.

Bamako, (2006), Abderrahamane Sissako, Mali.

Bisi – The Daughter of the River, (1977), Jab Adu and Ladi Ladebo, Nigeria, pre–Nollywood.

Bus Driver, (2005), Oby Callys Obinali, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Biggest Boy in Town, (2006), Obi Okoli, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Billionaires' Club, (2004), Afam Okereke, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Bless Me, (2005), Ernest Obi, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Blood on Ice, (2006), Tchidi Chikere, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Boys' Cot, (2007), Afam Okereke, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Break Up, (2003), Andy Amenechi, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Camp de Thiaroye, (1987), Ousmane Sembene, Senegal.

Campus Queen, (2004), Tunde Kelani, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Ceddo – The People, (1977), Ousmane Sembene, Senegal.

Constant Gardener, *The* (2005), Fernando Meirelles, USA.

Coronation, (2004), Ifeanyi Azodo, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Coronation of King Edward VII, (1902), George Melies, USA.

Cross of Love, *The* (2003), MacCollins Chidebele, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Cry Freedom, (1987), Richard Attenborough, UK.

Day break in Udi, (1949), Terry Bishop, UK.

Dinner with the Devil, (1974), Sanya Dosunmu and Wole Amele, Nigeria, pre–Nollywood.

Dons in Abuja, (2004), Andy Amanechi, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Emitai – God of Thunder, (1971), Ousmane Sembene, Senegal.

Faculty, The (2007), Ugo Ugbor, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Festival of Fire, (1999), Chico Ejiro, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Fool at 40, (2006), Franklin Chinedum Nwoko, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Forever Yours, (2003), Afam Okereke, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Four-Forty, (2006), Emeka Nwosu, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Girls' Cot, (2006), Afam Okereke, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Glamour Girls, (1994), Kenneth Nnebue, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Glorified, (2002), Bond Emeruwa, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Gods Must Be Crazy, The (1980), Jamie Uys, Bostwana/South Africa.

Government House, (2004), Afam Okereke, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Great Attempt, The, Eddie Ugbomah, Nigeria, pre–Nollywood.

GSM Wahala, (2003), Afam Okereke, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Guy Man, (2003), Ken Egbuna, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Hear My Cry, (2005), Uzee Madubuogwu, Nigeria, Nollywood.

His Excellency and the Siren, (2004), Goddy Azu Ibe, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Hotel Rwanda, (2004), Terry George, UK.

Hunters, The (2006), Ugo Ugbor, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Igodo: *The Land of the Living Dead* (1999), Don Pedro Obaseki and Andy Amenechi, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Intruder, The (2003), Ebere Onwu, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Invisible Man, The (2006), Andy Amenechi, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Iwalewa, (2006), Tunde Olaoye, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Jaiyesimi, (1980), Hubert Ogunde, Nigeria, pre–Nollywood.

King Solomon's Mines, (1985), Lee Thompsom, USA.

Last Dance, (2006), Obi Callys Obinali, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Last Ofala, (2002), Andy Amenechi, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Late Vote, (2001), Andy Amenechi, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Le Noire de, (1966), Ousmane Sembene, Senegal.

Little Angel, (2004), Dickson Iroegbu, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Living in Bondage, (1992), Chris Obi Opia, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Mama Mia Italia, (1995), Bob Smith Jnr, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Mandabi – Money Order, (1968), Ousmane Sembene, Senegal.

Massai, *The* (2004), Paschal Plisson, France.

Moolaade, (2004), Ousmane Sembene, Senegal.

Money Power, (1984), Ola Balogun, Nigeria, pre-Nollywood.

My Best Friend, (2003), Andy Amenechi, Nigeria, Nollywood.

My Turn, (2003), Ifeanyi Azodo, Nigeria, Nollywood.

National Anthem, (2004), Prince Emeka Ani, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Never Say Goodbye, (2003), Tchidi Chikere, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Nollywood, *This is* (2007), Fracho Sacchi, USA.

Not Without My daughter, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Okada Man, (2002), Tchidi Chikere, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Oil Village, (2001), Kalu Anya, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Omugwo, (2004), Tchidi Chikere, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Orisha Shrine, (2004), Tchidi Chikere, Nigeria, Nollywood.

One Dollar, (2002), Gabriel Moses, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Osuofia in London, (2003), Kingsley Ogoro, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Police Recruit, (2003), Charles Inojie, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Power to Bind, (2003), Teco Benson, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Return, *The* (2003), Kingsley Ogoro, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Rituals, (1999), Andy Amenechi, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Roots, (1977), Marvin J. Chomsky, John Eman, David Greene, and Gilbert Moses, USA.

Sanders of the River, (1935), Zoltan Kolda, UK.

Sango, (1998), Obafemi Lasode, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Saving Alero, (2001), Tade Ogiden, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Sound of Love, (2006), Charles Inojie, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Standing Order, (2006), Ifeanyi Azodo, Nigeria, Nollywood.

State of Emergency, (2004), Teco Benson, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Stubborn Grasshopper, The (2001), Simisola Opeoluwa, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Swiss Family Robinson, (1960), Ken Annakin, USA.

Tears in Heaven, (2002), Zeb Ejiro, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Things Fall Apart, (1986), David Orere, Nigeria, (NTA Serialization), pre–Nollywood.

Titanic, (1997), James Cameron, UK.

Totsi, (2005), Gavin Hood, South Africa.

Tribulation, (2007), S.W. Inyang, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Trinity, *The* (2007), Dickson Iroegbu, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Wheel of Change, (2005), Jeta Amata, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Widow, (2007), Kingsley Ogoro and Aquila Njamah, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Witches, (1998), Fred Amata, Nigeria, Nollywood.

World Apart, (2004), Tchidi Chikere, Nigeria, Nollywood.

Xala, (1975), Ousmane Sembene, Senegal.

Yahoo Millionaire, (2007), Lancelot Oduwa Imaseun, Nigeria, Nollywood.

21 Days in Christ, (2005), Emeka Ani, Nigeria, Nollywood.

30 Days, (2006), Mildred Okwo, Nigeria, Nollywood.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire for focus group interviews/discussions

1. Background

a. Name…………………………………………………………

b. State of Origin in Nigeria…………………………………………

2. Religion:

a. Christian ☐

b. Muslim ☐

c. Other ☐

d. None ☐

3. Ethnic group

a. Hausa ☐

b. Igbo ☐

c. Yoruba ☐

d. Other ☐ …………………………….

4. Where do you live?

a. Town ☐

b. City ☐

c. Name of city/village/town where you live……………………………….

5. **Occupation**:

a. Student ☐

b. Academic staff ☐

c. Apprentice ☐

d. Civil Servant ☐

e. Other (explain) ☐ …………………………………………………………

6. Gender

a. Male ☐

b. Female ☐

7. Present level of education

a. Primary ☐

b. Secondary ☐

c. University ☐

8 Age:

a. Between 15 – 19 years ☐

b. Between 20 – 34 years ☐

c. Between 35 – 54 years ☐

d. Between 55 – above year ☐

9. Which films do you watch most often?

(a) Hollywood films (American) ☐

(b) Bollywood films (Indian) ☐

(c) Nollywood films (Nigerian) ☐

10. On the average, how often would you watch Nollywood films?

(a) One film per week ☐

(b) One film per fortnight ☐

(c) Once film per month ☐

(d) None of the above, ☐ but……………………………….

11. Where do you normally watch Nollywood films?

(a) In the cinema ☐

(b) At home ☐

(c) In friends' house ☐

12. How do you get access to Nollywood films?

(a) Renting them from shops ☐

(b) Buying them from movie stores ☐

(c) Downloading them from the internet ☐

13. What media technology do you use most to watch Nollywood films?

(a) The DVD player ☐

(b) The VCD player ☐

(c) The VHS player ☐

(d) The Computer ☐

14. Whom do you most watch Nollywood films with?

(a) Alone ☐

(b) Family ☐

(c) Friends ☐

15. What does Nollywood mean to you?

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RESEARCH THEMES

A. ON THE CHOICE FILM SCREENED

1. What do you think of the film just screened?

2. What do you think are the main issues arising from this film?

4. What theme do you think the film presents?

5. Do you think the film has any connection with Nigerian society? What do you think

   those connections, if any, are?

6. Which characters do you like? Why?

7. Which characters do you dislike? Why?

B. CONSUMPTION ATTITUDE TO NOLLYWOOD

1. Have you watched any other Nollywood films before?

2. What type of films do you like to watch more than others?

3. What are your favourite Nollywood films?

4. Can you compare Nollywood and Hollywood representations of Nigerians (Africans)?

5. Have you encouraged others to watch any particular Nollywood film before? Why and

can you summarize the main idea of that film?

6. When do you watch Nollywood films?

7. Where do you normally watch Nollywood films?

8. Whom do you watch films with?

9. What media technology do you use to watch Nollywood films?

9. On the average, how often do you watch Nollywood films?

10. How do you get Nollywood films?

11. What films do you watch more than others?

7. What do you dislike about Nollywood?

8. What does Nollywood generally mean to you?

C. REPRESENTATION OF NIGERIAN CULTURES AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

1. What themes are often presented in Nollywood and why do you think this is so?

2. Do you think most films reflect what is going on in Nigeria either in the past or in the present?

3. Are they realistic in the way they (re)present life situations in Nigeria?

4. Do you think some films have stories applicable to some people you know?

5. Where are these films shot?

6. Can you identify with the film locations of Nollywood movies and how does this help you in enjoying the products?

7. Have you seen any Hollywood film on Africa before? What roles did the black people perform?

8. Do you notice any differences in the representations of Africans in Nollywood compared to Hollywood films?

APPENDIX B

MAP OF NIGERIA

Source: [Online] Available from:
https//www.cia.gov/cia/publicationfactbook.geos/ni.html. [Accessed 13 July 2008].

APPENDIX C

NOLLYWOOD RENTAL/RETAIL STORE

I took this photograph while conducting this study's primary research in the Port Harcourt City of Rivers State, Nigeria. It illustrates the arrangement of Nollywood films in a videofilm retail shop. This is a room display of the films showcasing the packs for customers to easily see and buy or rent according to their choices. In one street or lane it is possible to have up to ten video rental shops and audiences patronize these by making choices of what to watch. The main aspects of this business is to rent films to audiences and to market them as retail goods depending on the operation principles of the shop owner. In cases where the rental

shops are not registered with the national film and censors board, the task force agents are often sent to close them down for fear of piracy.

APPENDIX D

COMMUNITY CULTURAL FESTIVALS IN IMO STATE

No	Festival	Community	L.G.A.	Period	Purpose/Significance
1.	Ekpe/Ikoro	Umuopara	Ikwuano/Umuahia	January	A Period of merriment to mark the end of the year.
2.	Ekpe	Ohuhu	Ikwuano/Umuahia	January	Celebration in remembrance of ancestors who were the originators. It is also a ceremony that brings all the citizens of the community together once a year.
3.	Ikwaezi	Mgbidi	Oru	January	To preserve girls who are experiencing their menstruation for the first time....it is also a way of ensuring that young girls retain their virginity.
4.	Chioha	Mgbidi	Oru	January	To invoke the ancestral gods of the land to herald the 'Ikwaezi' festival.
5.	Osuawa	Oguduasa	Isikwuato	January	To Usher in the farming season.
6.	Ofo ala	Eziukwu Aba	Aba	January	To mark the beginning of the farming season.
7.	Ifeji	Nnebukwu	Ohaji/Egbema/Oguta	January	For thanksgiving and Sacrifice to the ancestors for prosperity in the new planting season.
8.	Ekekerebo	Obodo Ujichi/Akabo	Ahiazu Mbaise	January	To announce the approach of farming season and to appease the gods of the land for good yields.
9.	Itu aka	Ogwuama/Amuzi	Ahiazu Mbaise	January	To declare the approach of the farming season and give directives on its approaches.

10.	Emume Mmiri	Akwakuma Uratta	Owerri	February	To celebrate the settlement of nworie river in the town.
11.	Akaraka Ngo Inye	Ngo/Ihitte	Owerri	February	1. To thank the gods of the land for a successful farming season. 2. To make arrangement for the planting season. 3. Decision on the last day for harvesting.
12.	Nwakpo	Umu Ngwa	Etiti Obowo	February	To declare the farming season open.
13.	Ihite Ite Uhie	Umuapu	Oru	February	A period when young maidens choose their husbands and also expectant mothers are confined to houses until their new babies arrive.
14.	Ajala	Umunnekwu	Isikwuato	February	To sacrifice to the ancestral fathers.
15.	Nkiriji	Owerre-Ebeiri	Orlu	February	To mark the beginning of the planting season with yams tied up the stakes in the barns.
16.	Ibupu Akwukwa	Umuawala	Owerri	February	To avoid quarrels, fighting and injuries during the planting season.
17.	Ime ala and Ime Ogwugwu	Ogberuru	Orlu	February	To mark the beginning of farming.
18.	Nwakpo	Umugwa	Etiti	February	To declare the farming season open.
19.	Igba Ugali	Orlu	Orlu	March	Rituals to inform the gods that farmers are at work.
20.	Aka Ntu	Ntu	Owerri	March	To give gratitude to the god of productivity for both crops and children.
21.	Aka Eziama	Eziama	Mbaitoli	March	To mark the beginning of planting season.
22.	Chioha	Umudieze	Okigwe	March	Celebrated in honour of the god of farming.
23.	Igbusa Egwuchukwu	Isunjaba	Isu	March	To mark the commencement of planting season.
24.	Ogbanamma	Umuaka	Orlu	March	For entertainment
25.	Emume Ala	Okporo	Orlu	March	Prelude to farming season.
26.	Okonko	Eziama Obaire	Orlu	March	Entertainment to both

					members of community and non members.
27.	Asara	Orsu-Ihiteukwu	Orlu	March	To offer sacrifices of praise to the gods and rejoice over the gods' protection. Also serves as a milestone in the calculation of ages and recording of events.
28.	Idankwu	Awo Idemili	Orlu	April	To mark the end of farming season.
29.	Oriri Mkpur Oka	Umudi	Mbano	April	It gives the people the sense of oneness and promotes interaction among the people and encourages the people to take to farming.
30.	Olo	Ekoli Edda	Afikpo	April	A maiden dance which is partly ritualistic and partly ceremonial. All the women join and lead their wards to the water fall – Olo.
31.	Agu Ukwu	Oguduassa	Isuikwuato	April	To sacrifice to the ancestral gods.
32.	Idori	Akaeze	Ohaozara	April	A women festival which marks the beginning of farming.
33.	Owu	Nnebukwu	Ohaji/Egbema/Oguta	April	Celebrated in honour of their dead fathers.
34.	Ogwugwu Achara	Iho	Ikeduru	April	To promote unity, love and progress, and to implore the gods of sunshine & rainfall for harvest.
35.	Ekeleke	Orodo	Mbaitoli	April	To mark the beginning of the planting season.
36.	Ahiajoku Itu	Mgboko Itu Ngwa	Obioma Ngwa	May	A period when sacrifices are offered to the god of yam (Ahiajoku) for better yield in yam cultivation.
37.	Owu	Oguta Nkwesi, Orsu Obodo, Awo Omamma.	Ohaji/Egbema/Oguta ,, ,, ,, Oru	May ,, ,,	Celebrated in honour of their dead fathers by their male children and members of Edina cult.
38.	Abia Ukwu	Edda	Afikpo	May	1. Praying to god of fertility for rich farm harvest.

					2. Girls' wrestling period.
39.	Mgba	Edda, Afikpo, Uwana.	Afikpo	May	1. Recreation and leisure period after intensive farming period. 2. Family re-union 3. Community re-union.
40.	Agwnwafor	Owerre Nkwoji	Nkwerre	May	Acts as a unifying factor.
41.	Nta Festival	Umuozu	Mbano	May	Signals the end of hunger and to show gratitude to the gods for protecting them and their crops.
42.	Oghu	Atta	Ikeduru	June	Celebrated to appease the gods
43.	Oziza Amaokwaraeke	Amigbo	Nkwerre	June	A symbol of unity.
44.	Oriri Mkpuru Oka	Owerre Nkwoji	Nkwerre	June	To rejoice over the first fruits of the farm.
45.	Igba Odi	Orsu Ihiteukwa	Orlu	June	To rejoice over past farming activities and encourage futher action to completion of work in the season.
46.	Isi Achara	Akaeze	Ohaozara	June	For exchange of gifts among relations.
47.	Ita Achicha	Imenyi	Isiukwuato	June	Wrestling matches and lesiure.
48.	Mbomuzo	Etiti	Ihitte/Uboma	June	An occasion of clearing all the traditional roads in the communities.
49.	Oriri Mgba	Ovim	Isuikwuato	June	To herald the new yam festival.
50.	Owu	Awo Omama	Oru	June	Gratitude for sustenance.
51.	Owu	1. Mgbele 2. Oguta 3. Afara 4. Orodo 5. Ogbaku 6. Eziama/ Obiato	Ohaji/Egbema/Oguta ” Mbaitoli ” ” ”	June	1. Recreational 2. Praying for rich harvest 3. Gratitude for sustenance 4. Ceremonial eating of new yam.
52.	Ihe Udummiri	Umuapu	Ohaji/Egbema/Oguta	June	Gratitude to the gods for the rains.
53.	Igba nta	Umunwoha	Owerri	June	To order and control society.
54.	Igba Anwu	Amainyi	Ihitte/Uboma	June	Occasion characterized by fetching of firewood for the elderly.
55.	Iri Ji Ohuru	Ohazu, Eziama,	Aba	July	Ceremonial eating of

			Eziukwu.		new yam
56.	Mgba Omenala	Eziukwu Aba	Aba	July	Intervillage wrestling contest used to determine the villages that are superior to the others.
57.	Arurua	Aware	Ohaji/Egbema/Oguta	July	To mark the beginning of the eating of new yams.
58.	Alikiri	Umuokirika	Ahiazu Mbaise	July	Atonement and thanksgiving, sacrifice for a rich harvest.
59.	Oriri	Orlu	Orlu	July	1. Ceremony to mark the arrival of new crops from the farms. 2. Festival during which new born babies are presented at the market squares.
60.	Iri ama/Igwa ala (ritual)	1. Abiriba 2. Ndi Uduma Ukwu	Ohafia	July	Ceremony signifying the end of farming season.
61.	1. Omume Unwu 2. Ikpa Ihe 3. Ita achicha 4. Mgba omunala	1. Alayi 2. Umuimenyi 3. Item 4. Umuhu	Bende	July	A celebration to end farming period and the preparation for the new yam festivals is fast approaching.
62.	Omoha	Akaeze	Ohaozara	July	Celebration of wrestling matches and preparation for the New Yam festival.
63.	Nta	Ugiri	Mbano	July	For progress and protection.
64.	Ime Iwa	Umualumaku Umuihim	Mbano	July	Celebrated to thank the gods for keeping the people alive.
65.	Eleri (Iwaji ritual)	Ezinnachi Ndibe	Afikpo	July	Sacrifices and thanksgiving to herald the new yam festival.
66.	Ibo Eke Ngwu	Ishiagu	Ohaozara	July	To offer special sacrifices to the ancestors and deities of the land for protection.
67.	Achicha	Achara Uturu	Okigwe	July	It marks the end of the planting season.
68.	1. Oruru Ochi 2. Awa 3. Achicha 4. Iro Iyiechu 5. Odu	1. Nneato 2. Umuduru Egbeaguru 3. Achara Uturu 4. Okigwe 5.Ezinnachi/Ugwuaku	Okigwe	July	1. Sacrifices to the god of existence 'Chi' for protection and progress of the community. 2. Celebrated in honour of ancestral

					gods for protection. 3. Celebration that determines when new yam festival is due. 4. For protection against epidemics in the community. 5. Celebrated in honour of the god of farming. 6. Ceremony of taking food to relatives and in-laws.
69.	Ajana	Umuhu	Ikwuano/Umuahia	July	Celebrated in memory of ancestors.
70.	Oru	Owerri	Owerri	July	Gratitude to the gods for fertility of the soil.
71.	Mgbugba Uzo	Owerri	Owerri	July	Anniversary of the settlement of Ekem Arugo from Umuorii in Uratta to Owerri.
72.	1. Ahiajoku 2. Okorosha	1. Mbieri 2. Ogbaku	Mbaitoli Mbaitoli	July	For happy reunion and to promote peace.
73.	Ozuzu Omumu	Ezi Awo	Oru	July	To take census of daughters married outside the town.
74.	Nwiyi	Amakaohia, Ihite Umuihi and Obowo	Ihitte/Uboma and Obowo	July	Road clearing and spiritual purification ushering in new yam and masquerades are dispalyed.
75.	Igwa ji Ebele	Eziama Obire	Orlu	July	Gives the community unity of purpose in their enviroment.
76.	Emume	Isunjaba	Orlu	July	Marks the commencement of new yam festival.
77.	Oriri	Orlu	Orlu	July	Marks the end of planting season.
78.	Nchetanna	Ihite Owerri	Orlu	July	In rememberance of dead fathers.
79.	Oriri	Amaokpara	Orlu	July	Offers rest after serious farm work.
80.	Mgba	Isunjaba	Orlu	July	For entertainment.
81.	Nwiyi	Amakohia and Umuihi	Ihitta/Uboma	July	New Yam festival used to depict Agu Okonkwo
82.	Iri ji (Mgbonwanu)	Amaokpara	Orlu	August	To mark the beginning of harvest period.
83.	Iri ji	Atta	Ikeduru	August	To celebrate the end of farming period and thank God for protection.

84.	Mgbu Onwa Ano	Obibi Ochasi	Orlu	August	To mark the end of the period of planting.
85.	Iti mmanwu	Ihite Owerri	Orlu	August	For entertainment and enforcement of local by-laws.
86.	Igbu Nkwo Ututu	Umudi	Nkwerre	August	To celebrate the first fruits of the year.
87.	Iwa Ji	Umuozu	Nkwerre	August	Offers people opportunity to commune not only with Ahiajoku and their dead fathers, but also with the living.
88.	Nkwoukutu	Owerre Nkwoji	Nkwerre	August	Gives members of families the feeling of renewed loyalty to the head of the family.
89.	Oghu	Okwudor	Isu	August	Serves as calendar period of relaxation from farm work, period of peace and stability.
90.	Igbu Awa	Isunjaba	Isu	August	Thanksgiving and harvesting of new yam
91.	Okorosha	Isunjaba	Isu	August	Thanksgiving and harvesting of new yam.
92.	1.Ite Adi Ugwu 2.Iri ede 3. Ihejioku	1. Okigwe 2. Umuna 3. Nneato	Okigwe	August	1. To celebrate new yam festival. 2. Women festival to mark the harvesting of cocoyam. 3. To celebrate new yam festival.
93.	Ikpo	Amasiri	Afikpo	August	Wrestling for the selection of wrestling champion for initiation into 'Atamaja' cult.
94.	Isu ara	Uburu	Ohaozara	August	Festival to honour the god of yam.
95.	Ibu ji aro	Umueziala	Mbano	August	To usher in new yam.
96.	Mbamama	Umunomo	Mbano	August	To usher in new yam
97.	Ahiajoku	1. Ibiasoegbe 2. Awomamma	Oru	August	1. To sacrifice for purification of the community. 2. Period of reconciliation with neighbours before arrival of new yam.
98.	Ikwa mpi	Oforola	Owerri	August	Appeasement of deity and thanksgiving for rich farm harvest.
99.	Ikpukpu mpi	Owerri	Owerri	August	Commemorate the

					harvesting of new yam.
100.	Ike ji	Item	Bende	August	To mark new yam festival where various dances are displayed for eight days.
101.	1. Igwa Agwu (Ritual) 2. Eke Mbu	1. Mkporo 2. Abiriba	Ohafia	August	1. Sacrifice to the gods of the land for peace. 2. Marking the first Eke Day in the cultural new year and new yam festival.
102.	1. Ihu ala 2. Ahiajoku 3. Ahiajoku	1.Ogwa 2. Eziama Obiato 3. Amakohia Ikeduru	Mbaitoli Ikeduru	August	1.To thank god of fertility 2. Celebrate in honour of yam god. 3. Celebrate in honour of yam god.
103.	Mgba Onwa Ano	Obibi Ochasi	Orlu	August	To mark the beginning of the period of plenty.
104.	Isu Afo	Akaeze	Ohaozara	August	Marks the end of farming and ushers in new yam festival.
105.	Eyirieyi Obohia	Obohia	Ahiazu	August	To appease the gods of the land.
106.	Ofo Ahiajoku	Obokwe	Ukwa	August	To commemorate the harvest of new yam.
107.	Iri ji/Ahiajoku		Mbieri	August	To mark the beginning of eating new yam.
108.	Mbomuzo	All communities in Etiti	Etiti	August	Ceremonial eating of new yam.
109.	Iri ji	Umunnekwu	Isuikwuato	August	Ceremonial eating of new yam.
110.	Ahiajoku	Isumawu	Isuikwuato	August	The sale of new yam in the market to enable all partcipate in Ikeji festival.
111.	Igbu nkwo Ututu	Umuwala	Owerri	August	Signifies happiness and paying tribute to the god of yam and 'ala' for protecting farmers.
112.	Isaa Okposhi	Umuwala	Owerri	August	To rejoice over the first fruits of the farm.
113.	Igba Nzu	Ngozu Edda	Afikpo	August	To mark the end of New yam festival.
114.	Ike ji Arochukwu			September	To celebrate the rites of passage and maiden dancing and celebrate new yam.
115.	Iriji	Mgbidi	Oru	September	Gives yam the honour

					it deserves.
116.	Igba Amuma	Umuwala	Owerri	September	To pay tribute to the god of yam and 'ala' for protecting farmers.
117.	Ogwugwu	Abajah	Nkwerre Isu	September	A period of jubiliation and reconciliation , self examination and exchange of gifts.
118.	Egbenkwu	Avutu	Nkwerre Isu	September	Thanksgiving for good harvest.
119.	Ekeleke	Okwudor	Isu	October	For entertainment and relaxation.
120.	Ntumaka	Umuezegwu, Atoneri, Amuzi Amakohia, Alike, Umuariam/Achara, Okenalogho and Ikwuato	Obowo	October	To appease the god of palm and productivity.
121.	Ututuru-Egbe	Awuchinumo	Obowo/Ihitte/Uboma	November	War ceremony to mark repulsion and defeat of aggressive neighbour.
122.	Ibo Uzo Iyi	Awuchinumo, Onicha-Ubomma, Abueke, Okata and Ezimba.	Ihitte/Uboma	November	1. Occasion when women clear all stream parts. 2. Outing of new born babies. 3. Formal introduction of newly married women to the elders.
123.	Igba Amuma	Umudi	Nkwerre	November	To mark the end of the year and appease the gods of the land.
124.	Igba Akwu	Umudi	Nkwerre	November	Marks the end of 'Igba Amuma' festival.
125.	Amaedemmiri	Nnempi	Oru	December	To retain the custom of their forefathers.
126.	Okorosho	Eziama Obire	Nkwerre	December	Unifying factor to the village.
127.	Ekpe	Amigbo	Nkwerre	December	Encourages social interaction and re-union of social groups and families.
128.	Ebu na Anu	Amigbo	Nkwerre	December	A Unifying force, protes social and cultural interaction.
129.	Okorosha	Amigbo	Nkwerre	December	A Unifying force, protects social and cultural interaction.
130.	Amuma	Abaja	Nkwerre	December	Celebrated in honour of the god of birth and harvest called 'Eze

				Alakalam'.
131.	Igba Amuma na Uyara	Ahiara	Ahiazu Mbaise	December	To appease the gods of the land.
132.	Omume Okochi	Imenyi	Isuikwuato	December	To usher in the farming season.
133.	Iwa Akwa	All sections of Etiti Communities	Ihitte/Uboma	December	To mark the turning of age of young men ready to take up responsibilities.
134.	Nwekpo	Umungwa	Ihitte/Uboma	December	To declare open the farming season activities.

Source: Ekechi, F.A.O., (ed), *Imo Cultural Heritage***, Published by the Ministry of Information and Culture, Owerri, Imo State.**

These rituals and festivals do not exhaust the entire list of communal rituals in the society that Nollywood represents in the films. There are so many other festivals from other localities which are not mentioned here since this list only covered the old Imo State which incorporates the present day Imo and Abia States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (South-East zone). There is no mention of other family or kindred rituals like child-naming ceremony, traditional-marriage ceremony, title-taking ceremony, adult-initiation ceremony, funeral-rite ceremony and a lot more, which are as much communalistic as they are community based. However Christianized or influenced by colonialism and culture contacts, these rituals are still being intensely celebrated among communities in Nigeria and form a resourceful background to Nollywood storylines. Hence, the movies recreate and regenerate nostalgic resonance in audiences whose cultures these are when they encode them.

APPENDIX E

CLASSIFICATION OF NOLLYWOOD FILMS BY THE NIGERIAN CENSOR'S BOARD ACCORDING TO YEARS AND LANGUAGE CATEGORIES, AVAILABLE AT: WWW.NFVCB.ORG, ACCESSED 23/06/2007.

TOTAL NUMBEROF MOVIES CLASSIFIED BY CATEGORY

	G	C	PG	NC	18	RE
1994	3	0	0	0	0	0
1995	174	3	0	0	0	0
1996	215	3	0	0	15	0
1997	161	0	0	1	52	0
1998	151	1	0	3	101	0
1999	301	0	0	1	87	0
2000	441	0	0	2	269	0
2001	562	0	0	0	412	0
2002	139	0	0	0	879	0
2003	52	0	30	0	679	0
2004	40	1	42	0	999	0
2005	219	9	150	2	1331	0
Totals	2558	17	222	9	4824	0

TOTAL NUMBEROF MOVIES CLASSIFIED BY LANGUAGE

	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO	ISOKO	HINDI	ITSEKIRI	URHOBO
1994	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
1995	19	12	145	1	0	0	0		0
1996	62	15	155		0	0	0	1	0
1997	113	16	84	1	0	0	0	0	0
1998	147	7	153	48	1	0	0	0	0
1999	146	3	100	138	2	0	0	0	0
2000	238	1	160	187	2	1	123	0	0
2001	342	2	241	258	0	0	131	0	0
2002	290	7	413	265	0	0	43	0	0
2003	487	1	193	76	4	0	0	0	0
2004	721		224	110	25	0	0	1	1
2005	1120	2	316	254	18	1	0	0	0
Totals	3685	66	2187	1338	52	2	297	2	1

TOTAL NUMBEROF MOVIES CLASSIFIED BY YEAR	
1994	3
1995	177
1996	233
1997	214
1998	356
1999	389
2000	712
2001	974
2002	1018
2003	761
2004	1082
2005	1711
Totals	7630

Statistics for Film works processed in 1994					
1994	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO
G	0	0	3	0	0
C	0	0	0	0	0
PG	0	0	0	0	0
NC	0	0	0	0	0
18	0	0	0	0	0
RE	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	0	0	3	0	0

Statistics for Film works processed in 1995					
1995	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO
G	17	12	144	1	0
C	0	0	0	0	0
PG	0	0	0	0	0
NC	2	0	1	0	0
18	0	0	0	0	0
RE	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	19	12	145	1	0

Statistics for Film works processed in 1996

1996	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO
G	52	10	152	0	1
C	0	0	0	0	0
PG	0	0	0	0	0
NC	1	0	2	0	0
18	9	5	1	0	0
RE	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	62	15	155	0	1

Statistics for Film works processed in 1997

1997	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO
G	68	14	79	0	0
C	0	0	0	0	0
PG	0	0	0	0	0
NC	0	0	0	0	0
18	45	2	5	1	0
RE	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	113	16	84	1	0

Statistics for Film works processed in 1998

1998	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO
G	78	4	132	36	1
C	1	0	0	0	0
PG	0	0	0	0	0
NC	2	1	0	0	0
18	66	2	21	12	0
RE	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	147	16	153	48	1

Statistics for Film works processed in 1999

1999	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO
G	83	3	84	130	1
C	0	0	0	0	0
PG	0	0	0	0	0
NC	0	0	1	0	0
18	63	0	15	8	1
RE	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	146	3	100	138	2

Statistics for Film works processed in 2000

2000	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO	ISOKO	HINDI
G	196	0	139	167	2	1	26
PG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
18	132	1	21	20	0	0	95
RE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	238	1	160	76	2	1	123

2001	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	212	0	44	54	0	0	102
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	342	2	160	76	0	0	131
RE							
Totals	342	2	160	76	0	0	131

Statistics for Film works processed in 2002

2002	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO	ISOKO	HINDI
G	34	2	15	85	0	0	3
PG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	256	5	398	180	0	0	40
RE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	290	7	413	265	0	0	43

Statistics for Film works processed in 2003

2003	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO
G	18	0	6	28	0
PG	0	0	0	0	0
12	27	0	3	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	0
18	442	1	184	48	4
RE	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	487	1	193	76	4

Statistics for Film works processed in 2004

2004	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO	ITSEKIRI	URHOBO
G	21	0	2	85	16	0	0
PG	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	33	0	7	0	1	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	666	0	215	180	23	1	1
RE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	721	0	224	265	25	1	1

Statistics for Film works processed in 2005

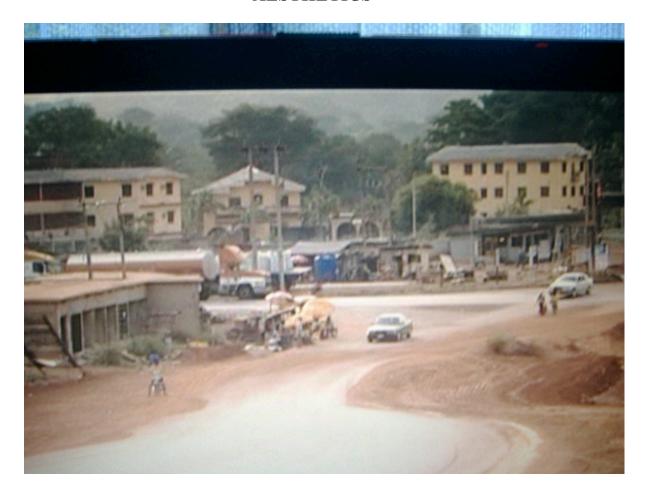| 2005	ENGLISH	IGBO	YORUBA	HAUSA	EDO	IBIBIO	URHOBO
G	178	0	2	39	0	0	0
PG	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	135	0	13	1	1	0	0
15	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	796	2	301	214	17	1	0
RE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	1120	2	316	254	18	1	0

APPENDIX F

SAMPLES OF FILM POSTERS FOR ADVERTS

APPENDIX G

SCENE DEPICTING NOLLYWOOD'S EMANCIPATORY AESTHETICS

This scene is from *Fool at 40*. It is used here to depict wide angle shots in Nollywood that does not focus only on the 'speaking heads' that fill the screen frame of most Euro-American films. As discussed in African and Nollywood aesthetics in Chapters one and three, the environment is captured in most Nigerian films to showcase the deep ecological existence that characterizes Africa's worldview and film aesthetics. The dynamics of this wide angle shot showcases the emancipatory aesthetics of an endless vastness of nature and land mass that unifies human beings with their immediate environment. In this instance, Barlet argues in relation to

African cinema aesthetics that 'space is the measure of time, as in those movements from one hut to another, or from the village to the town, which would be left out in western films. African cinema shows these in their full extent; otherwise, it would lose this fundamental sense of time' (2000: 173). He further juxtaposes this kind of aesthetics with mainstream Western genres such as Hollywood and the British Film industries by arguing that, 'focusing primarily on human beings implies an overall vision of the individual caught up in his environment, whereas the Western approach tends to present only a selective vision, stressing the psychological dimension. Thus, the close-up is used more to link two shots than to reinforce a dramatic situation. When they film conversation, African filmmakers prefer to use long shots or mid-shots taking in elements of the backdrop rather than the traditional shot and reverse-shot approach' (2000: 160).

APPENDIX H

COMMUNALISTIC MEETING OF VILLAGE ELDERS

Consultation with one another as a community is a significant aspect of communalistic living. Here, the village elders are seen to gather together in consultation over a message from the oracle's chief priest that the community will face difficulties unless they bring back one of their own who has been chosen to be the next traditional ruler (*Igwe*) of their community. At this stage, there is tension in the land because the deadline given to them was coming to a close and they are seen to consult as a community to avert the wrath of the gods. The symbols that reveal their roles as elders in this film are mainly their hats and their staffs (walking sticks). Especially in the South-East of Nigeria, these are the common attributes of the elders. Their office is sacred and revered as elders and custodians of traditions which is been signified by their

traditional hats. Their staff is a staff of authority to wade off evil in the community. In a case of some heroic accomplishment for the community, like winning a fight or battle for the community, one is honoured by this group with titles which would warrant a feather of an eagle to be attached to the one's traditional hat, signifying by this, that the person is a hero and has achieved some difficult task for the community. The elders grey hairs command respect as in any other culture, but in Africa, this goes with the recognition that they are the eyes of the gods and very close to the ancestors.

These issues are dominantly represented in the movies especially when married women and young people stoop low to greet their elders and when they discharge duties on behalf of the community. Thus, here again, we see communalism in action, by the elders working to keep the society in peace and safety, and also by their consultations as a community to find solution to their dilemma as seen in this scene from *Fool at 40*.

Meetings like this often take place among kindred people and kinsmen. It was depicted in *Igodo: The Land of the Living Dead* and in *Things Fall Apart* when communities consulted among themselves to avert dangers. It is a special meeting that can be held at the village square or at the *Igwe's* palace according to importance and urgency of what to discuss. Sometimes the oracle's chief priest (called *Eze mmuo/Dibia afa* in Igbo or *Babalawo* in Yoruba, meaning the 'wise one' or the chief priest of the gods) is invited to join this meeting in most difficult cases or when there are messages from the gods that might warrant sacrifices.
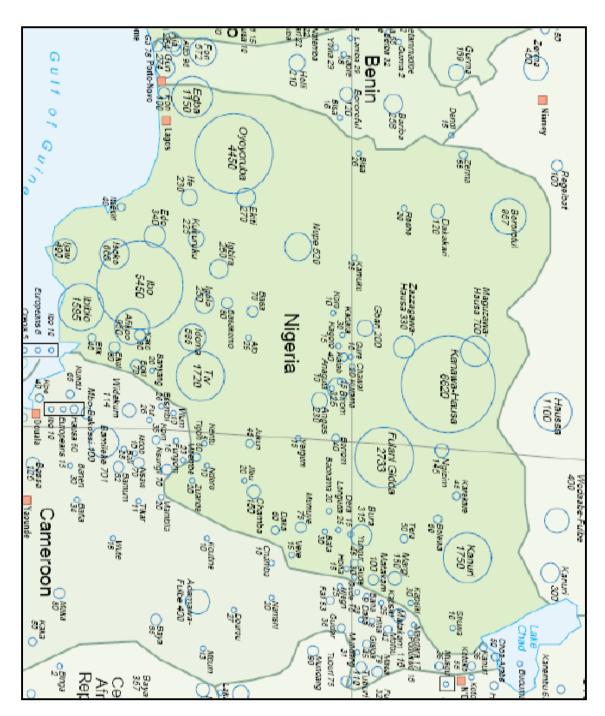
In the context of these consultations, suggestions are sought by lineage or kindred members as required by tradition and custom to carry out functions for the community. As listed by Bourgault, apart from dealing with the gods, the demands also 'might involve the maintenance of roads, or bridges, the construction of communal meeting places, or the performance of certain rituals –

funeral rites, naming ceremonies, circumcision rites, and seasonal rituals involved with agricultural cycles' (1995: 3).

The village square as mentioned, where this meeting takes place, is called *ogboto* or *mbara* in the Igbo speaking part of Nigeria. If not held in this communal place, then the traditional palace of the ruling king can serve as a welcome alternative. As Ansu-Kyeremeh highlights, the 'venue-based communication transactions involve certain geographical places in villages which serve as meeting points where conversations naturally develop. At these gatherings, information is passed through structured or unstructured conversation among people who are present' (1997: 46). Thus, corroborating this, Moemeka asserts that 'meetings, conversations, and discussions that surround the unique position of the community as a supreme authority, concern the frequency, quality, and value of each individual's contribution and how such contributions have influenced the community's social order' (1997: 175).

APPENDIX I

PRODUCTION AREAS OF NOLLYWOOD IN NIGERIA

The **three Production areas of Nollywood** are showcased in the map of Nigeria with bigger circles around Lagos (Yoruba), Onitsha (Igbo) and Kaduna (Hausa). Source: [Online] from: Kunzler, (2007) at: http://www.suz.unizh.ch/kuenzler/talks/Bergen2.pdf, [Accessed 23/05/2008].

APPENDIX J

Demographic Statistics of Focus-Group Participants

Real Names	Gender	Geopolitical Zone	Age	Job Category	Pseudo names
Richard Mofe Damijo	Male	South/Edo	35 -54	Actor/Lawyer	**Gabriel Ibe**
Bob-Manuel Udokwu	Male	East/Anambra	35 -54	Actor/Director	**Matthew Ike**
Nwachukwu Amarachi	Female	East/Imo	20 -34	Student Nurse	**Nkiru Eke**
Nwokorie Veronica	Female	East/Imo	20 -34	Student Nurse	**Victoria Ibe**
Ugochukwu Chizoba	Female	East/Anambra	20 -34	Student Nurse	**Stella Ibe**
Ogu Kasarachi	Female	East/ Imo State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Emeh Sandra**
Emesaraonye Faustina	Female	East/Imo State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Eucheria Ede**
Uche Adaobi	Female	East/ Imo State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Ngozi Adaobi**
Echeme Onyinyechi	Female	East/ Imo State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Rita Onyeka**
Nduka Stella Nneka	Female	East/ Imo State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Vivian Uka**
Osuji Chilee	Female	East/ Imo State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Gozie Eke**
Ibezim Priscilla Chidimma	Female	East/ Imo State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Ikeri Oluchi**
Abbey Chiweta, A.	Female	East/Enugu State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Chimaka Obasi**
Ogoh Kelechi E	Female	East/ Imo State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Julieth Okoro**
Lilian Ibezim	Female	East/ Imo State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Chikaodi Eze**
Amaka Obiajunwa	Female	East/ Imo State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Amarachi Ukah**
Chimaraoke Uchechi	Female	East/ Imo State	20-34	Student Nurse	**Adaku Uchechi**
Onyemekara Ijeoma	Female	East/ Imo State	20-35	Student Nurse	**Maureen Ibe**
Cordelia Ovon	Female	South/ Delta State	20-34	Married with four kids	**Jane Ukor**
Obidake Edwin	Male	South/	20-34	Unemployed Youth	**Emeka**

		Bayelsa State			**Eke**
Yusufu Augustine	Male	South/ Edo State	20-34	Youth Leader	**Austin Gazuma**
Dioru Edwin,	Male	South/ Delta State	20-34	Undergraduate/ UNIPORT	**Marcel Dioru**
Igben Peter	Male	South/ Delta State	20-34	Youth Member	**Matthew Edet**
Harry Madukani	Male	Malawi/ Lomwe tribe	20-34	Internship Worker	**Jerry Marshal**
Anselm Ughaerumba	Male,	East/Anambra State	35-54	PgStudent/CESACC	**Anthony Eboh**
Cajethan Isah	Male	North/Kaduna State	20-34	PgStudent/CESACC	**Stanley Isah**
Anthony Umoh	Male	South/ Akwa Ibom State	35-54	PgStudent/CESACC	**Umana Tony**
Ezika John Bosco	Male	East/Anambra State	20-34	PgStudent/CESACC	**Ezeka Bob**
Mark Alewo Odoguja	Male	North/Kogi State	20-34	PgStudent/CESACC	**Macus Edeh**
Anthony Okehie	Male	East/ Enugu State	20-34	PgStudent/CESACC	**Chinonso Ike**
Mary Patlyn Amadi	Female	East/ Imo State	20-34	PgStudent/CESACC	**Sarah Obi**
Mike Umoh	Male	South/Akwa Ibom State	35-54	PgStudent/CESACC	**Mark Uka**
Denne. E. Otipoi	Male	South/Delta State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Ikpiki Denis**
Okoliegbe Chinenye	Female	East/-Imo State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Chinyere Udoh**
Nwachukwu Onyebuchi. J.	Male	East/ Imo State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Onyekachi Uka**
Ibe Chinonso M.	Female	East/Imo State	15-19	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Chika Nwuda**
Anyanwu Henry	Male	East/Imo State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Anya Tony**
Onyenibeji Henry	Male	South/Delta State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Michael Obi**
Mba Fortune	Female	East/Imo State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Felicia Ike**
Ohanaka Albert U.C.	Male	East/Imo State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Ohaja Alban**
Ada Okpara Lynda	Female	East/Imo State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Adaeze Obi**
Iheanetu Stanley U	Male	East/Imo State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Eze Stanley**
Umo Imaobong Nkoli.	Male	South/ Akwa Ibom	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Sade Edet**

Nwanti Chinenye K.	Female	East/Imo State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Nwachi Ebere**
Iroegbulem Joseph O	Male	East/Imo State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Iro Jerome**
Anyanwu Amarachi, J.	Female	East/Imo State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Jacienta Ibe**
Okolo Stanley C	Male	East/Anambra State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Ogoke Stanley**
Okoro Edwin Nzubechukwuka	Male	East/Ebonyi State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Nze Gabriel**
Egeonu Hyacinth C.	Male	East/Anambra	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Ezeonu Godwin**
Nwagbo Decency E.	Male	East/Anambra State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Anoliefo Luke**
Aneke, Michael Ifeanyi.	Male	East/Enugu State	20-34	Undergraduate/IMSU	**Anselm Udoh**

N.B: Real names are not used in the analysis carried out in the main body of this study to ensure anonymity. For this reason we gave each participant a pseudo-name as can be seen in the table above while retaining their real names and those of their institutions.

APPENDIX K

RELIGIOUS SCENE IN *BLESS ME*

This is the opening sequence in *Bless Me*, depicting the early morning rising of a newly married couple singing praises in worship to God and offering him their morning prayer. This is a usual ritual of the religious sentiments of most families in Nigeria. While the worship ritual of God or gods through prayer is almost a universal phenomenon, we are signaling here the Nigerian practice of it as represented in Nollywood films and underscoring it as one major aspect of African communalistic life. In *Things Fall Apart* and other traditionally based movies, this ritual is performed by the elders or fathers of families pouring libations before their shrines, carrying out sacrifices and incantations to seek protection for their entire household. What this scene showcases is the new popular way of doing this ritual within family homes, especially as performed by most Pentecostal and Charismatic families. However, the point here is not how it is being done or who does it, but to corroborate what most African scholars (Mbiti, Onwubiko, Moemeka, Uwah) have identified as a significant aspect of African communalism as explicated in the context of religion as a way of life for the African especially in the Chapter six of this research.

APPENDIX L

KEY PERIODS OF CINEMA HISTORY IN NIGERIA

1500 – 1800 Trans Atlantic Slave Trade

1807 – 1865 Abolition of Slave Trade

1861 -- Nigeria became a British Colony

1884 – 1885 Partition of Africa and arrival of Early Christian Missionaries

1885 – 1901 Period of intensive presence of European powers in Nigeria

1901 – 1914 Amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates of
                 Nigeria

1903 – Screening of First Film in Lagos

1914 – 1918 Period of First World War

1919 – 1929 Intensive Trade in Africa's Mineral Resources by Colonial
                 Powers

1929 – 1935 Women's Riot over Colonial Taxation and Great Depression

1935 – A Nigerian, Orlando Martins featured in Edgar Rice Film, *Sanders of
             The River* partly shot in Nigeria

1939 – 1945 Period of Second World War

1945 – 1952 Calls for Political Independence become intensive

1955 – First African Film by Senegalese Filmmaker, Vierya

1960 – Independence Was Granted Nigeria

1969 – Formation of FESPACO

1960 – 1980 Period of Early Celluloid Films in Nigeria

1972 – Indigenization Act

1980 – 1990 Period of the Implementations of the Structural Adjustment
                 Programmes of World Bank and International Monetary Fund

1992 - First Nollywood Film, *Living in Bondage* is released on VHS tape
       format

1994 - Second Nollywood Film, *Glamour Girls*, was released

1992 – 2008 Intensive Nollywood Productions, over 1,000 films released
       in a year starting from 2004

2006 – 2007 First Nollywood films shot on 35mm were released: *The
             Amazing Grace* and *The Concubine*.