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# **TRADITIONAL GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVES FROM NIGERIAN VIDEO FILMS**

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## CHAPTER FIVE

# TRADITIONAL GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVES FROM NIGERIAN VIDEO FILMS

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### INTRODUCTION

**D**espite extensive research on the factors that make mutually beneficial progress possible, little is known about how African indigenous governing institutions can serve to promote mutually productive development. By and large, research on African indigenous institutions have called for either the replacement of or a return to all African indigenous institutions without giving attention to the varying capacity of these institutions in driving societal progress. Generally, multilayered governing arrangement has long been recognized as the main driver of mutually beneficial progress. Societal progress tends to be fostered, nurtured, accelerated, sustained, and mutually beneficial when the socioeconomic, political and ecological circumstances of a people primarily shape their governing institutions at different governance levels. To serve as an instrument of liberty, equality, accountability, fiscal equivalence, and mutually productive interdependence, governing arrangements need to be autonomous, nested within each other, and flexible enough to match solution efforts to diverse, changing scales of public goods/services (Sawyer, 2005). The positive relationship between governing arrangements and societal progress may however be rendered functionally ineffective, organizationally weakened, and unproductively hidden through unguided imitation, adoption and borrowing of foreign development models and forms, as well as through contextually insensitive art and science education, disregard for time-and-space-information, unrealistic claims of human infallibility in political development, institutionalized corruption and command-and-control mentality by public officials, and destructive dialectical relationships between state institutions and indigenous institutions (Oyerinde, 2004).

Indeed, Olowu and Erero (1996) argued that if indigenous institutions cannot digest and process information from external, formal institutions and their external context, they will be unable to adapt to changes and new challenges in the global economic environment. The possibility of their growth and their ability to cope with increasingly complex and competitive choices will be

stunted. If they do not adapt to the external formal environment, these informal institutions will gradually become irrelevant. Not offering viable alternatives (especially to the growing number of young-generation Africans) is increasingly being perceived as a constraint rather than a coping mechanism - except in times of dire crisis, when they provide the only viable safety nets. If these institutions fail to re-invent themselves, they will be discarded as relics, or be used opportunistically as a free-riding system by those who have lost faith in African tradition and culture but cannot "make it" in the formal world. Thus they argue that neither total 'institutional transplant' (external enclaves) nor "traditional fundamentalism (conservationism) is a viable alternative for Africa's development.

In the case of Nigeria, the destructive relationship between state institutions and indigenous institutions has created a conflicting sense of public morality. Corrupt state officials are cheerfully rewarded with hometown solidarity and protection for looting the state's treasury as long as their loots have benefited their hometowns. At the same time, and in a somewhat unchallenged manner, state officials have found an effective tool for institutionalized corruption and domination in turning ordinary individuals into timid and passive subjects with a mentality to perpetually depend on state officials for development initiatives and the provision and production of all imaginable public goods and services (Onyeozili, 2005).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The way the media (home video in this case) portrays issues and phenomena undoubtedly affects the overall perception and acceptance or rejection of such issues, especially in the long run. Gerbner's cultivation theory alludes to this view. Hence, this study examines the varying perspectives and themes on African traditional governance portrayed in Nigerian video films popularly called Nollywood.

The failure of governmental structures inherited from the colonial state in Africa, has stimulated renewed interest in indigenous knowledge and institutions in recent years. This renewed interest is based partly on the fact that these institutions have proven to be resilient; in addition they are effectively institutionalised and are relied upon by African people to provide them with required leadership in the face of the failure of the formal, colonial-based structures. On the other hand, there is recognition that these indigenous institutions also have their weaknesses they are small scale, heterogeneous, have dictatorial tendencies, concentrate power among others.

This study investigates traditional governance paradigm(s) projected in selected Nigerian movies and discusses the implications on the perception of traditional institutions.

### **Objectives**

The study set out to establish the nexus between home video portrayal of traditional institutions and popularity and rejection of such institutions by the society. The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Examine the themes on traditional governance in Nigerian movies.
2. Assess the various perspectives on traditional governance portrayed in Nigerian movies.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the dominant themes on traditional governance in Nigerian movies?
2. In what ways were traditional governance portrayed in Nigerian movies?

### **The Role of Traditional Leaders**

A number of studies have affirmed the resiliency, legitimacy and relevance of African traditional institutions in the socio-cultural, economic and political lives of Africans, particularly in the rural areas. Juxtaposed with this is the sometimes parallel "modern State", vested with enormous

authority in rule making, application, adjudication and enforcement. As Africa seeks to build and strengthen capable States, there is the need to recognize and fully address this "duality". This is principally borne out by a growing recognition that capable democratic states must be grounded on indigenous social values and contexts, while adapting to changing realities. This will require among other actions, aligning and harmonising traditional governance institutions with the modern State. The roles that traditional authorities can play in the process of good governance can broadly be separated into three categories: first, their advisory role to government, as well as their participatory role in the administration of regions and districts; secondly, their developmental role, complementing government's efforts in mobilizing the population for the implementation of development projects, sensitizing them on health issues such as HIV/AIDS, promoting education, encouraging economic enterprises, inspiring respect for the law and urging participation in the electoral process; and thirdly, their role in conflict resolution, an area where traditional leaders across Africa have already demonstrated success.

Traditionalists noted that although heredity often served as the basis for assigning leadership posts, many systems had means for "de-stooling" or otherwise displacing leaders that did not meet with the community's approval (Osabu-Kle 2000: 18). And with the absence of semi-permanent hereditary leaders, the continent's more cephalous system of rule, for example among the Somali and the Neur, might be seen as more democratic. Keulder (1998) captured many of these features in his description of the "traditionalist" perspective: for them the institution of traditional leaders and its procedures of governance is not only a simpler form of government, but also a more accessible, better understood, and a more participatory one. It is more accessible because it is closer to the subjects than any other system of government; subjects have more direct access to their leaders because they live in the same village and because any individual can approach the leader and ask him or her to call a meeting.

As a result, decision making is based on consensus which creates greater harmony and unity; it is transparent and participatory because most people may attend tribal meetings and express their views directly and not through representatives; and lastly, harmony and unity prevail because the interests of the tribal unit, rather than an individual or group of individuals, are pursued and expressed. In contrast, the so-called "modernists" argue that patriarchal traditional systems often silence the voices of women and the youth. Molutsi (2004) contends that in Botswana, "the 'Kgotla democracy' was made up of male tribal elders from senior tribesmen" (p162). These systems are also described as unaccountable, and based on a coercive "demand for consensus," rather than freely given consent (Mattes, 1997:5). Critics further charge that traditional authorities rely on deference, place the community ahead of the individual, and that, in fact, "traditional authority constitutes an anti-democratic, or at best a non-democratic form of governance" (Mattes, 1997: 546). Modernists thus believe that these "institutional obsoletes" impede the development of a virile, prosperous, democratic, and just society, and thus must have no place in any progressive society.

The shifting allegiances of traditional authorities are sometimes characterized as being primarily self-serving. Van-Kessel and Oomen (1997:562) observe that "Chiefs often align themselves, whether wholeheartedly or for tactical reasons, with the powers that seem to offer the best chances of safeguarding their positions". But Williams (2004:121) suggests that this "ability of Chiefs to straddle the state-society dichotomy" and serve as necessary intermediaries for their people is a strength of the institution that helps to explain its survival. Of course, the issue is made still more complex by the fact that traditional systems were, and are, extremely diverse.

### **Resolving the tradition/modernity nexus**

In pre-colonial era, as well as a substantial part of the colonial era, traditional authorities played a significant and active role in the governance and development of local governments, yet today the very essence of the institution is being questioned (Tonwe and Osemwota, 2013).

The relevance of traditional authorities in the country's modernizing polity is a highly controversial one, as there are divergent opinions and interest. Egwurube (1985) identifies three schools of thought in this regard. One school contends that the institution of traditional rulership should be *abolished*, as it is archaic in a democratically elected local government system, guaranteed under Section 7(1) of the 1979, 1989 and 1999 Constitutions, and the parallel institution of traditional rulership is abnormal. While one envisages a competitive and participatory process, the other is a system based on authoritarian, personalized tradition. The supporters of this school conclude that, if the country is serious about ensuring that the citizenry adopts the democratic and participatory culture needed to quicken the pace of modernization, then decisive steps need to be taken to *'jettison this archaic institution once and for all' in order to enable people develop the required orientation in line with the reality of the present age and time.*

The abolitionists have a point in that the principles behind democratic local government and the institution of traditional rulership are opposed to each other; the solution advanced by them does not appear realistic. For one thing, the high degree of acceptance of traditional authorities particularly in the rural areas cannot be dismissed as inconsequential, nor would be abolition of the institution of traditional rulership easily obliterate rulers' legitimacy and public acceptance (Tonwe and Osemwota, 2013). The abolitionist solution is confrontational and can create chaos in local government operations (Egwurube, 1985: 38). Perhaps sometimes in the distant future when the polity is fully modernized, there may be no need for the institution of traditional rulership. However, at this stage, it is desirable to handle the issues relating to traditional authorities with caution and tact, if the objective of achieving a democratic, stable and durable local government system is to be achieved. A second school of thought argues for *political enhancement*, contending that traditional rulers should be allowed to participate in politics to enhance their political position in the present system, envisaging a situation where traditional rulers make an effective contribution to local politics. The adoption of this strategy is bound to be clouded with a number of difficulties. Section 7(1) of both the 1979, 1989 and 1999 Constitutions guaranteed a system of local government by democratically elected local government councils and as such does not envisage any active role for personalized institutions in the operation of local government. Part II of the Fourth Schedule of the 1989 Constitution (the 1999 Constitution has no provisions in this regard) set out the functions of a Traditional Council at the local government level. The second clause of the Schedule clearly states that *'nothing in the schedule shall be construed as conferring any executive, legislative and judicial powers on a Traditional Council'*. The chances that the Constitution will be amended to reflect the political enhancement solutions are very slim. The high degree of legitimacy traditional rulers enjoy in the eyes of the citizenry is based on the belief that the institution of traditional rulership is a sacred one. Subjecting traditional authorities to the rigors of the electoral process and petty politics of society would make them a target of public scrutiny, and would destroy their sacredness thereby destroying their major strength. While the intention is to carve out a prominent role in local governance for traditional authorities, their strategy may in fact lead to the collapse of the institution in the country (Egwurube 1985).

The middlepath in the continuum between the abolitionists and the political enhancers is the *retentionist* school of thought, which favours retention of the traditional authorities as

participatory local government actors in advisory and non-executive capacities. The adoption of the retentionist strategy as Egwurube (1985: 35) rightly observed would not only ensure stability and continuity of an emergent local government system based on democratic and participatory principles, but would also tap the strength of traditional authorities in the sphere of citizen mobilisation and acceptance of local government policies. This involvement of traditional rulers in local government affairs, in addition to their other ceremonial functions, would reduce potential acrimonies and confrontation between local government actors and traditional authorities. While the retentionist strategy may well serve the need of the present time, the future of traditional rulership would depend on its adaptability to its evolving setting and how ingeniously it modernizes to maintain the balance between reconciliation with modernity and obliteration of tradition. Some developing countries have adopted the radical policy alternative of abolition. In Africa for example, outright legal abolition of traditional authorities has been pursued by Guinea in 1957, Burundi in 1960, Mali in 1961, Rwanda in 1962 and Zaire in 1973. In India, after initially opting for the retentionist policy, abolished the Zamindari (Feudal) institutions through the land reform policy, and later through the *Constitution of India, 26th Amendment Act, 1971*. In all these countries, what is evident is that the system got smashed, but not wiped out.

### **Overview of Nollywood**

Nollywood, Nigeria's movie industry is one of the leading global producers of feature films. Miller (2012) observed that although Nollywood is virtually invisible to many in the global North, but throughout sub-Saharan Africa and the global Africa Diaspora, Nollywood is known as a dominant force throughout sub-Saharan Africa. UNESCO (2009) ranks the industry as the second largest producer of movies in a global scale after India's Bollywood. It has overshadowed Hollywood, Bollywood, and much local production to dominate the movies sector in Nigeria and in countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa. This situation has caused complaints of oversaturation of local screens in some smaller sub-Saharan African countries (The Economist, 2010; Miller, 2012).

Unlike Hollywood and Bollywood firms, however, Miller (2012) observed that Nollywood movies are not made to be shown in big screen theatres, instead, they are produced as straight to DVD or VCD formats, although they are also shown on terrestrial and satellite television in all small screen sets. Osei-Hwere and Osei-Hwere (2008) corroborate that the popularity of Nigerian video films transcends the borders of Nigeria to other countries in Africa, Europe and North America, making it one of the country's fastest growing cultural exports. It also makes Nigeria an important digital media content producer on the African continent. These video films, especially the ones in English are popular in other African countries because they tend to focus on themes relevant to other Africans on the continent and Africans living in Diaspora (Osei-Hwere & Osei-Hwere, 2008).

The wide appeal of these video films to African audiences and international audiences may be attributed to the hybridization of Africa and Western cultures that are endemic to many past colonial African urban societies (Akpabio, 2009; Alozie, 2010).

Abah (2011) explained that while their commercial nature might make the video-films appear apolitical and grounded in an unapologetic commercial culture and seem quite indifferent to the social responsibility agenda of contemporary cinema, several examples of popular entertainment media still serve social responsibility functions. Ogunlewe (2003) noted that their treatment of political themes reflect a basic concern with good governance and ethical conduct in civil

matters. Haynes (2000) concurred in the assertion that despite their melodramatic forms and portrayal of negative themes, video films are political and exhibit social consciousness. Jean-Francois (2006) noted that Africans now spend an enormous amount of time watching home video and concluded that home videos have significant social effects.

The dominant themes reflected in Nigerian video films, according to Alozie (2010), include religion, cultural values, modernity, social mobility, materialism and everyday life. Others include regional orientation, folklore and folktales, crime and violence, sex and sexuality, love, occultism, witchcraft, stereotype, melodrama, propaganda and educational themes. Alozie (2010) further reported that the contents and themes in Nigerian film industry have come under intense attack. He explained that a devastating criticism of themes in Nigerian video films came in 1999 when Ademola James, Executive Director of the Nigerian National Film and Video Censors Board complained that the films focused too much on the negative aspects of Nigerian culture, including occultism, cultism, witchcraft, sexuality, prostitution, incest, violence and spiritualism. Alozie (2010) noted that two years earlier, he had complained that story lines revolved around polygamy, child abandonment or desertion, prostitution and other negative behaviour.

Ebewo (2007) observes that while Nollywood acknowledges its problems, the use of the supernatural and home grown themes are what have given the industry its vitality. The prevalence of negative contexts and contents in Nigeria video films has prompted some critics to describe the medium as a vast wasteland. These critics argue that these video films could serve as an important tool to educate domestic and foreign consumers about the country. They contend that video films could be used to showcase Nigerian cultural values in a positive light to promote socio-economic development in order to raise the welfare of the masses. Defenders of the industry on other hand point out that to a large extent, Nigerian video films do a fair job of representing the current contexts of corruption, social ills, religious hypocrisy and political violence in the country. Although some of these depictions can be seen as an exaggeration, they can be attributed to how people relate to the themes and the way people deal with the issues.

### **Portrayal of Traditional Governance in Video Films**

Nigerian films that portray traditional governance are often based on traditional political rule, particularly kingship and chieftaincy. While political themes in the modern context have not in any significant way but should have appeared in video films, Haynes (2006) argues that politics, nevertheless, is at the core of many melodramas, crime thrillers and genres that deal with traditional (tribal) leadership. Alluding to this position, Alozie (2010:8) writes:

Such commentary comes through in the way the filmmakers allegorically treat the ruler characters and the issue of ruler ship. For example, a film by Kelani titled “Ti Oluwa Ni Ile” produced in 1993 is called a masterpiece and deals with a king who wants a new wife and creates jealousy in the already polygamous relationship. The film also deals with the king and his chiefs' corrupt relationships with foreign entities that bring personal wealth to the characters. The film ends with a journalist confronting the king and a protest demonstration that turns into armed rebellion. The thinly veiled similarities to fictional and modern-day political situations do not go unnoticed. These kinds of films also serve as a channel for political legitimacy, the health and welfare of the community, and the character of rulers.

Traditional values are displayed through the respect for the elderly. There is, however, a clash between tradition and modernity. Tradition and modern capital values tend to collide because there is a need to portray wealth within Nollywood films. And it is precisely the dramatic rendition of this theme that lies at the core of the greatest number of African films, especially those set in urban contexts (Haynes, 2007).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in framing analysis. The manner in which media messages are framed influence how people understand and interpret the world. The research on framing has a history in both sociology and psychology (Reese, 2001). Furthermore, research has shown that how information is framed can lead to reversals of preferences. The twin acts of selection and salience are key in Entman's (1993) definition of framing. In the process of communication, Entman explains that some bits of information can be highlighted through "placement or repetition" (p.53) and thus made to achieve greater salience for receivers/audiences. The importance of repetition, emphasis or stress in media framing is also something that Nelson, Clawson and Oxley (1997) agree with when they suggest that "media frames influence opinions by stressing specific values, facts or considerations, endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have under an alternative frame" (p569). At the same time as frames include and stress, they also exclude or deemphasize some other things. Entman (1993) observes, "Most frames are defined by what they omit as well as include, and the omissions of potential problem definitions, explanations, evaluations, and recommendations might be as critical as inclusions in guiding the audience" (p54).

### **Method of Study**

The study adopted the qualitative content analysis method. Four epic films produced in Yoruba language, widely spoken in South-West Nigeria were purposively selected and content analysed for the study with scenes on traditional governance as the unit of analysis. The films watched include Oranmiyan, Ija Ominira, Ilu Ominira and Aworawo. Epic films were purposively selected as they deal with past stories and heroic deeds of a society, and often with traditional themes and setting. Results of the qualitative study are presented under these broad themes: palace scenes, the king, the queen, the prince, the princess, the chiefs, security, servitude, war scene, entertainment/sports, and festival/culture. Traditional governance with its manifestations was taken as the unit of analysis. Qualitative analysis deals with trends and themes inherent in the video films.

### **Discussion**

Several themes and perspectives related to traditional governance were found in the video films studied. They include maintenance of social order and security, prominence of the monarch, administration of justice, festivals and culture, among others.

### **Maintenance of Social Order and Security as a Perspective**

One of the major themes reflected in the films is the maintenance of social order and cohesion. Prior to the arrival of the colonialists, the African society, especially territories now known as Nigeria were relatively peaceful and united in their various traditional systems of government. In Oranmiyan for example, the Yoruba speaking emir-like king was clad in white agbada and a cap wrapped with turban to cover his face to the neck. The emir king with chiefs in council hosted Oranmiyan and expressed their gratitude for his assistance in saving them from warring attackers. The main agenda of the meeting was the enactment of strategies on how to defeat the enemies and ensure social order within the community. That led to lasting peace and order among



the people. If the town hunters or Vigilante apprehended a stranger, they labelled him a thief or spy, arrested him, took his staff and took him before the Emir king of Tapaland. “Stand still, you are a thief, if you run, poisoned arrow will hit you.....we shall take you before our king who will determine your case...” And so, the supposedly war spy or thief was led before their emir king. Three hefty men wearing dansiki tied with red rope and one servant on black knee-length pant, black monkey jacket, red band on head and forearms. The apprehended spy or thief was wearing a blue, sleeveless, love-shaped neck top and 'soro' or 'sokoto' pant. He had charms and amulets on the wrists, forearms and neck, holding a staff.

The above reflection in the video films helps to reinforce the collective social cohesion and security of the Nigerian traditional society, educating large audiences along certain established lines: developing collective memories of the past, maintaining a distance from the threatening present, and projecting a peaceful life for the future.

### **Prominence as a Perspective**

The prominent personalities presented in traditional governance include the king (in most cases a male), the chiefs (often dominated by males), the palace guards and servants, the prince, the queen and then the princess, in that order. Most traditional governance scenes occurred in the palace, usually elaborately decorated scenes representing the seat of traditional power and authority. The traditional system is still present worldwide including the monarch in Great Britain, but to a large extent, it has been reduced to mere ceremonial system only recognized for historical relevance and restricted judicial operations. The films for this study corroborated this pattern as they entirely displayed contents suggesting traditional governance. Oranmiyan was an epic, narrating the deeds and adventures of heroic or legendary Oranmiyan, a king and warrior in the past history of the Yorubas. The film depicted kings and warriors as the heroes of that legendary past with powers of life and death. Justice, political authority, economic ties, local market dynamics, cultural heritages, worship and religion among others lie within their ambit. The palace is not just a place, but a significant setting, convergence, historical and archaeological museum as well as the oral library of ancient communities. Major decisions affecting the progress, present and future of the town is determined at the palace either by the king, the king in council or the king and the chief priest. Usually, the palace is the centre of gravity for every town in the Yoruba traditional setting; it is the seat of power and the centre of all activities in every town. The peace of the town is dependent on the palace, the progress or the growth is dependent on the palace, and the economy of the town is anchored on the palace, as well as religion, culture, security among others. The palace is equally a centre of entertainment with standby drummers, singers, praise-singers, and cultural or religious/festival celebrants; as a place of wealth and opulence, it is expected to be replete with entertainment to keep the king cool headed at all times. Instances of this include the marriage ceremony and procession to the throne of Oba of Benin land in Oranmiyan. In the middle of the palace with a raised seat is the king, who wields enormous powers in the ancient times, and actually in ancient times is referred to as decreemaker after the gods (alase ekeji orisa). He is the symbol of authority, wealth, justice, and custodian of culture as well as the traditional practices of the community; he is in fact the symbol of unity and the rallying point for the town. He is next only to the gods in rank and that is why the Yoruba's hailed him saying: 'kabiyesi' (no one can query his actions/deeds/speech). However, as powerful as he is, the chiefs can challenge him as well as oppose him if need be. His selection to the throne and procedures for throne mounting and coronation is by the chiefs; in one word, the chiefs make but after seating on the throne, he is greater than them. The chiefs exercise delegated authority and in actual fact represent the king and town in their dealings. In the present system, the palace and the king still retain their honour and grandiose/royalty but have lost absolute

power to govern in the modern political democratic system. One critical focus of the few films is contention to the throne among the heir apparent sometimes becoming so bitter that they scheme to eliminate each other. Like the current governance with political appointees as ministers or commissioners, the traditional system relies on chiefs and priests in governance of the traditional society. The major traditional chiefs include: the Otun, the Osi, the Balogun, the Iyalode, and the chief priest expressly depicted in the films except *Ilu Ominira*.

### **Administration of Justice as a Perspective**

A spy was caught and brought before the emir king who was interrogating the spy with the chiefs and was about ruling that he (the spy/thief) be taken away to be punished when some town's people ran in to the palace. A commotion ensued as women ran into the scene with shout or cries for war. In the ensuing milieu, the spy grabbed his staff from the security or guard or servant, held it with some incantations and disappeared. The women that ran into the scene or palace wearing white hijab scattered. In *Ilu Ominira*, a land grabber was killed by a warrior in the defence of an innocent individual whose land had been forcefully taken. This shows jungle justice or show of power by warriors in administration of justice in the town. In administration of justice, the king guided by his chiefs especially the chief priest rules in matters of judicial requirements. However, in Aworawo, the king in the making broke the rule of 7-day seclusion and purity and the Osugbo led by the chief priest had to rule based wealth of knowledge in culture and tradition that the law breaker was no longer entitled to the throne and his generations forthwith banned from ascending the throne. Likewise in Aworawo, the king administered justice in the stealing of the queen's money in the palace, where Adewuyi, the son of the prince who had contended the throne with oba Adeleke, was found with the stolen money of the queen.

### **Festivals and Cultures as a Perspective**

The five films were replete with cultural depictions in terms of language, clothing, food, setting, the markets, bare-foot walking, war vocation and family trade, hunting vocation, ascension to the throne, respect for old age, religion as a way of life, supremacy of the community over the individual, sanctity of authority, marriage rites, the dressing of palace personalities including the king, queen, prince, princess, the chiefs, palace guards and servants among others. Noteworthy is the fact that Oranmiyan, *Ilu Ominira* and Aworawo are purely set in the earliest traditional setting while *Ija Ominira* is a blend of the old and the modern. Two prominent festivals are the Ogun/Egungun (god of iron/masquerade) and Ijamido deity worship. In *Ilu Ominira*, two friends: one, a war lord and Egungun head and the friend, an interpreter of the war lord's actions and activities. Egungun festival holds in an open space with dances, songs, gun shots among others. The war lord's friend addressed the town people and prayed for them in the name of his forefathers to live to celebrate next year's festival in peace, abundance and plenty. The war lord also in full war regalia and necklace beads signifying chieftaincy as war lord prayed for the people reminding them that the festival is an annual event he inherited from his forefathers, and must continue. The head of the Egungun or Ologbin is baba Egungun (not a palace Chief) also blessed the people and the Egunguns. Gunshots were repeatedly fired into the air as part of the celebrations. One major feature in the festivals is 'esa pipe' (poetic recitations usually for the diety or the personalities involved like the king, war lord or chiefs). Likewise, the form of greeting communication ('loogun o fe oooooooooo') for a war lord filled the film. The warriors and hunters were depicted as the ones responsible for the security and safety of the town/community. They serve the function of the modern military and sometimes the police.

### **Servitude Perspective**

The concept of servitude filled the films where servants especially in the palace serve the king, queen, the prince and the princess as life time devotion. In Oranmiyan, the servants were clad in knee-length shorts, bare torso or short jacket top, with red bands on the fore arms and head. They serve the king and palace personalities and may not have a life of their own. In Ija Ominira, a modern setting, the king has a palace servant standing always behind him and runs errands for the king. This class of people become servants either by being captured in war, sold to slavery, indebtedness of parents or themselves or were born into slavery. In Ilu Ominira, Ogunsewe, the war lord's son and warrior himself, on arrival from a war expedition, spotted and took out a woman from the war loot planning to later take her as a wife without the knowledge of his father who trained and sent him on the war expedition. The father saw this as betrayal and for this reason killed his own son. The war lord's friend commenting on the state of a slave says slaves do not have any rights, could be killed for rituals, and could be used any how without recourse to any legal restraint. Though this system no longer exists, most epics still portray them to show the class distinctions in traditional societies but how realistic such is in modern time is questionable.

### **Rumour Handling Perspective**

One of the items in traditional society is rumour and its handling. In Oranmiyan, the issue of motherhood of Ajaka and Sanngo (the two sons of Oranmiyan) was handled by portraying two women on their way to farm almost engaging in a fight over the issue after some arguments, and then, a man came on the scene resolving the matter on the basis of knowledge of paternity of the sons (why fight each other when you already know the paternity of the boys as Oranmiyan). In a similar scenario at Oyo, two women met Ajaka, the little prince on the way accompanied by two palace guards, greeted him with obeisance and congratulated him on the birth of his younger brother. The little boy was too young to respond, it took the servants to respond on his behalf. Thereafter the two women on their way said the Tapa woman has now born two male children for Oranmiyan and that settled the rumour. In Ilu Ominira, it took a spy among the warriors to come tell the war lord events behind him for him to act, and actually commended the spy for his efforts as his personal spy for some seven years and the credibility of the spy's reports.

### **War Perspective**

War and inter-tribal conquests was a major feature of traditional societies and as a result, kings are expected to lead conquests or have war lords that are very powerful. In Oranmiyan, the Tapa land people were pursued by enemies who used both arrows and bows. In the ensuing war Oranmiyan used his staff to make way for the Elenpe people (Tapa people) to cross the river on dry land, they crossed the river such that the enemies could not cross. Then he used the power from his staff to attack the enemies who died at the river bank while others fled. The war was between Tapa land and Kemberi. War and warring was a major occupation for some individuals and families or family lineage. Oranmiyan was a very powerful king and warrior who went to places and left a landmark in each of the places he visited as a warrior (Tapaland and Benin kingdom as instances). In Ilu Ominira, the war lord handed over charms, war cloth etc to his son who according to him has come of age to inherit and begin to carry out war expeditions as the family vocation and tradition. However by implementing the spy's information, he killed this same son and himself was attacked by a woman. To avoid shame and death as is the tradition with powerful people of old, he entered into the ground to be worshipped as a deity while his friend also followed suit.

### **Entertainment or Sport Perspective**

Three Chiefs clad in white wrappers and Edo-styled bead necklace each were playing ayo olopon (a local game) while the Prince joined them. They were talking as they played. The greeting symbol was crossed hands as form of greeting exchange with the Prince. One Chief defeated the other at the game, and the Chief was mocked while the prince had attempted to tutor the defeated who had refused. Then the Prince decided to play the game and beat the Chief three times. While at the game he started making sounds and attempted pronouncements leading to his healing from hearing and speech impairments. This showing the game served as a therapeutic, healing him from deaf and dumbness. The game ended without a fight.

### **Community Life as a Perspective**

The African sense of community is one of recurring themes found in the portrayal of traditional governance in the videos analysed. Indeed, an African is known and identified in, by and through his or her community. The community is the custodian of the individual; hence he must go where the community goes. In the material term of reference, the individual must go to the "community centre" or village square which is a social, political, judicial and religious centre. It is the communal meeting place for political discussions, communal tribunals, sports and games. It is therefore a traditional place of congregation for the entire community. In this sense the community is "man-made". Again, the important events in and around the community are well known to its members. And because at the community centre, their tutelary deity often has a shrine, the centre therefore also doubles as the centre of communal religious worship, sacrifices and festivities. In this sense the community there gathered becomes "god-made". This community also, within this transcendental term of reference (god-made), becomes the custodian of the individual's ideas. Therefore the Africans emphasize community life and communalism as a living principle of which the basic ideology is community-identity. Its aim is to produce and present an individual as a community-culture-bearer. Culture is a community property and must therefore be community-protected.

### **Respect for Authority and elders**

Africans generally have deep and ingrained respect for old age, and even when we can find nothing to admire in an old man, we will not easily forget that his grey hairs have earned him right to courtesy and politeness". Though it is natural for the African to respect an elder, this respect in some cases, can be relative to what "we can find" and admire in an elder. It is true that respect for elders starts within one's immediate family. This is why the Yoruba say "Obileye", which means, parents have dignity and respect. The elders in Africa are respected for many reasons. For example, they are believed to be the teachers and directors of the young. Among the Efik, it is said: "The words of one's elders are greater than amulets", which means that they give more protection than the amulet does. In the same way, the Igbo say: He who listens to an elder is like one who consults an oracle. The oracles are believed to give the infallible truths, thus the elders are also believed to say the truth and their words and instructions are needed for the promotion of good behaviour among the young. This was well captured by the various videos.

### **Dignity and Sanctity of the Throne and Royalty**

Although critics have condemned several recurrent themes such as witchcraft and the proliferation of black magic, which they find repulsive, it is also true that these themes have roots in popular cosmology. Furthermore, such themes are only employed for didactic purposes to show that good always overcomes evil. The didactic elements in Nigerian films are somewhat similar to the moral and cultural ideology of the Nigerian people.

### **Marginalization of Grassroots Participation in Decision Making**

The grassroots people were rarely given significant roles in the political process. Most of the films in both traditional and civil political scenes in the home videos did not show the grassroots involvement in political process as a major factor; emphasis is often given to the power brokers and their contenders. This portrays the traditional African society as a ruler-centred society.

### **Conclusion**

This study set out to examine the varying perspectives and themes on African traditional governance portrayed in Nigerian video films popularly called Nollywood. Ambivalence was found in home video framings of traditional governance among the Yorubas in South-West Nigeria, as the institutions were presented as neither good nor bad. Some of the themes found included maintenance of social order and security, prominence of the monarch, administration of justice, festivals and culture, among others.

The way and manner Nigerian institutions are portrayed may influence audience perception of such institutions and their subsequent relationship with the institutions. When people respect traditional institutions and constituted local authorities, the society becomes better and tendencies of anarchy are reduced. Therefore, the media, including, the entertainment industry, especially Nollywood, has a crucial role to play in consciously framing traditional institutions for the overall benefit of the society. More so, it is necessary for movie producers to objectively portray traditional institutions, highlighting both their positive and negative aspects in order for viewers to be informed on what they really stand for. Such portrayals can aid the right understanding of the institutions by viewers home and abroad. At the long-run, it has the potency of helping people make informed decisions on how they should be governed.

In Nigeria, traditional rulers still record a high degree of legitimacy in the eyes of the people. There remains the need to integrate the institution into the country's contemporary local government system. Political and economic development would be more successful when rooted in widely shared institutions and cultural values which traditional authorities represent. Traditional institutions constitute crucial resources that have the potential to promote grassroots governance and to facilitate access of rural communities to public services.

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