



## Symbology, Identity, and Show: Critical Analysis of Costume and Make-Up used in Modern-Day Nigerian Theatre Production

TUNDE OBADO OLIOGU

Dennis Osadebey University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

**Abstract.** The paper examines the role that costume in modern theatre in Nigeria plays as a signifier of identity, heritage, mood and narrative within a play. By use of qualitative, semiotic and case-study perspectives, it parallels the three principal processes, Saro the Musical, Kurunmi, and university theatre festivals, to interpolate how designers and directors deploy visual symbology in performance. The most important findings suggest that costume and make-up are not merely used to distinguish two or more characters, and so much more, they work to negotiate issues of class, ethnicity, gender, and urban/rural identity, and to situate indigenous aesthetics within contemporary design sensibilities. The paper also suggests a cost and materials issues faced by designers and that more documentation and training of designers need to be offered to develop creativity. These emphases on the visual aspects of theatre help to establish the paper within the Nigerian literature on performance, as well as to provide the recommendations on how to approach the need to fill the gap between design creativity and cultural integrity in the process.

**Keywords:** Nigerian theatre, costume design, make-up, visual semiotics, cultural identity, performance aesthetics.

### 1. Introduction

Theatre in Nigeria is not just a literary or a verbal art form- it is at essence a visual art form. Recent productions like Saro the Musical have lent prominence to the presentation of costume, make-up, music, and story line as features of dynamic identity within the urban and rural contexts of Nigerians. Costume and make-up can thus be seen as some of the most powerful non-verbal facilitators of communication in Nigerian theatre, yet academic literature in Nigerian theatre studies has demonstrated

little consideration of their role in the communication process in the Nigerian theatre (Asuquo 14).

A growing evidence advocates the relevance of ethnic materials and culturally based aesthetics in the make-up design of plays (Umoh et al. 102). In a similar manner, the discussion of costume authenticity helps to indicate the difficulty of a balance between a historical context and artistic freedom (Okafor 63; Okhaifo and Babatunde 88). However, there is little research to be found as to how visual design factors actively create meaning in stories. This monitoring is counterintuitive since costume and make-up serve the same symbolic purpose as texts do in forming the perception of the audience even before the speaker utters any word (Adeighon 47).

This paper is an attempt at answering the above question by examining the roles played by costume and make-up in the expression of identity and meaning in the narrative of modern Nigerian theatre. Such question can put the following objectives in the following way:

- To examine the symbolic roles of costumes and make-up used in specially chosen theatre productions.
- In order to speak about the place of visual design in negotiating the modernity vindicated through indigenous aesthetics.
- To look at material and practical limitations to the creative part in the Nigerian theatre.

This research presents the case of visual storytelling, in via Saro the Musical (urban migration accounts), Kurunmi (historical and warrior representation), and university-based festivals (experimental design) that enriches meaning-making in the Nigerian performance culture. Analysis not only enshrines design practice but also points to structural issues such as dependence on foreign goods and design education that impede

visual creativity on the domestic platforms (Asuquo 16; Umoh et al. 108).

Through this, the paper identifies the necessity of more training, more of costume heritage being captured in archives, and encouragement of designers who combine the Afrocentrism with the contemporary expertise in theatre. Finally, the research offers contributions to the performance studies and cultural knowledge in terms of positioning costume and make-up at the centre and not at the margins of knowing and transformations of the Nigerian theatre.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The interpretation of costume and make-up suggest that the theory of such aspects of the Nigerian theatre remains multiple-faceted and it is quite difficult to encapsulate in theory the symbolic, cultural, and performative aspects of visual narrations. This paper will use four overlapping frameworks, which include semiotic theory, performance theory, identity and cultural representation theory and postcolonial aesthetics. Such views give a collective insight into having a lens to examine the role in which meaningful symbolic representation occurs through the application of costumes and make-up in a theatrical production.

### 2.1 Semiotic Theory

Semiotics is the study in the view of the Roland Barthes to interpret meaning as conveyed by signs and symbols within the context of culture (Barthes 113). Costumes and make-up are used as systems of signs in theatre, whose variables of color, texture and style indicate such properties as the status quo, the emotions or political affiliation. In the same vein, a warrior attire used in *Kurunmi* conveys authority and customary unaided by words. Patterns and motifs forming cultural encoded signs are usually employed by the Nigerian theatre designers (Adeighon 51). The semiotic analysis will, therefore, help this study make sense of these visual tags or clues as meant to be purposeful story-telling tools and not ornaments.

### 2.2 Performance Theory

Performance theory locates costume and make-up as part of the process of realization of character and action. Performance, according to Schechner, involves more than a dialog and includes all elements of the visual and physical expression that add character to the meaning (Schechner 89). Today, eye-catching costumes and liberating make-up help determine how the audience assumes the perception and build the

tension in Nigerian theatre. In *Saro the Musical*, the theme of migration and aspiration is actually told using urban fashion, the use of bright color on the face-designs (Okhaifo and Babatunde 92). With the help of the performance theory, this research aims to examine these visual choices as the performative acts, the ones which co-construct the theatrical experience and which are also co-created with the gestures and voices of the actors.

### 2.3 Identity and Cultural Representations Theory

Costumes and make-up can be seen as one of the visual correlates of ethnicity, gender, and their social belonging. According to the theory of cultural representation as given by Stuart Hall, the identity is made up and transmitted by visual media (Hall 223). Local materials in form of Ankara or Aso-Oke, are regularly utilized in the Nigerian stage production to signify a sense of collective heritage and authenticity (Umoh et al. 110). These factors disrupt the process of homogenization that occurs through globalization by making their cultural particularity visible. This framework justifies the discussion of the interplay of the theatrical design between the traditional representation of identity and adherence to the contemporary aesthetics.

### 2.4 Postcolonial Aesthetics Theory

Postcolonial aesthetics reads the reclamation and reinvention of culture that is portrayed in the arts in the societies which were previously colonized. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, creativity is a key mechanism through which postcolonial cultures acquire the capacity to resist erasure by achieving a balance between the indigenous customs and modernity (Ashcroft et al. 78). African theatre design practices of costumes and make-up typify such hybridity: the designers combine Western fashion shapes and style with African design features or they restore traditional face painting using modern makeup (Asuquo 18). Postcolonial theory therefore helps in informing the discussion of how the visual design in this exploration tries to move through those relationships of the colonial past, but through it reestablishes Nigerian identity onstage.

All these theoretical lenses, when taken together, can illuminate more about the role of costume and make-up as layered signifiers of meaning, identity and resistance in Nigerian theatre. They present the instruments of interpreting the system of symbolical visibility implemented in the case studies considered in the present paper.

### 3. Literature Review

The value of costume and make-up in theatre production is hardly considered new, but it is only recently that the elements and functions of this combination have gained sustained attention among scholars of Nigerian theatre where they have been explored in terms of their symbolism and identity construction. This review summarizes previously conducted studies on the historical development of theatrical costume, impact of indigenous aesthetics, fashion movements, and previous studies discussing use of symbology and cultural identity. It also describes the existing gap in the scholarly material that this study aims to fill.

#### 3.1 History of Costume and make-up in Nigerian theatre

In early Nigerian plays, the culture relied largely on traditional ritual theatre, in which costume and body paint had religious and social meaning (Adeighon 56). Literary drama of both colonial and post-colonial times made Western type of costuming in a stage and the form of indigenous dress often displaced by it (Okafor 65). Nevertheless, Hubert Ogunde and Duro Ladipo, led the post-independence movements and revived the authenticity of traditional Yoruba and Igbo costumes (Okhaifo and Babatunde 91). It is in this sense that scholars say that African reclamation was aesthetic, political, being a statement of identity against colonial cultural hegemony (Hall 225). The pattern is maintained in contemporary Nigerian productions that combine traditional dresses with modern fashion and making hybrids of visual languages, the example being *Saro the Musical* (Asuquo 20).

#### 3.2 Indigenous Aesthetics and Symbolism

Studies emphasize the fact that Nigerian costume and make-up is not superficial. It is a symbolic representation. Customary such as Aso-Oke, Ankara, and Adire fabrics carry status, heritage and regional symbols (Umoh et al. 111). Equally, body paint and facial markings, ritual practices in the past, are modified in contemporary theatre to indicate such aspects as character attribute, emotional context or cultural belonging (Adeighon 59). These practices signify a semiotic regime in which the messages of messages are conveyed by the way an object appears and not by the dialogue. According to Barthes, the costumes act as the second skin and convey a story which is read by the audience in an intuitive manner (Barthes 118).

#### 3.3 Global Influences and Contemporary Design Trends

Globalization has brought other materials and techniques to Nigerian design of stage such as synthetic materials, foreign cosmetics, digital projection systems (Okafor 68). As much as these innovations increase visual spectacle, scholars believe that excessive focus on Western aesthetics may erode the cultural authenticity (Ashcroft et al. 80). New designers in Nigeria respond to this juxtaposition by incorporating Afrocentric motifs into what is currently referred to as aesthetic hybridity by scholars (Okhaifo and Babatunde 94). University theatre festivals can become a place to test such innovations and to experiment with sustainable materials and new construction of the silhouette (Umoh et al. 115).

#### 3.4 Symbolism, Identity and Theatrical Meaning

It has been noted in the existing literature that the usage of costumes and make-up are very important in the development of the audience understanding of character identity and tone of the narrative. Examples of how such symbolism can inform other colour senses can be found in the literatures of Yoruba theatre, where the colour scheme, e.g. red belongs to the power, white represents the purity, is used in order to instruct viewers as to how they should interpret dramatic conflict (Adeighon 61). Equally, make-up has been examined in the light of its psychological effects on actors whereby they have the capacity of getting deeper into their characters (Asuquo 23). Nevertheless, little writing links these visual practices closer to more general matters of identity negotiation and postcolonial resistance in addition to intercultural narration in contemporary production.

#### 3.5 Identified Research Gap

Even though costume and make-up as a kind of symbolic instrument gradually gain understanding, the current body of research is frequently descriptive or historically oriented; it is not systematically analysed in terms of its semiotic and identity-bound purposes in the modern Nigerian theatre. However, there is little scholarship on how the field of visual design actively makes meaning in a dialogue with script, music, and performance. Moreover, the interaction of the aesthetics of indigenes and the contemporary art of the theater is not extensively researched (Umoh et al. 118). This research paper fills these gaps by enlisting semiotic, identity and postcolonial theoretical perspectives when examining key Nigerian productions, hence, broadening the scholarship of costume and make-up as a fundamental contributor

towards visualized storytelling within a theatrical setting.

#### 4. Methodology

This paper uses qualitative research design with its focus on the interpretative analysis that can help identify the symbolic and identity-related purpose of the costume and make-up in Nigerian theatre. The use of semiotic and thematic considerations would help the research to investigate the way visual codes convey meaning in stage productions. The methodology includes a combination of the approach of case study analysis, document analysis, and interpretation of the context to guarantee the depth of the analysis of the research subject.

##### 4.1 Design of the research

Since the study is a meaning-making study and not a study of quantifiable variables, qualitative approach is most appropriate. According to Creswell, qualitative researches enable scholars to analyze cultural phenomena in their natural contexts, which help in the further study of symbolic practices (Creswell 42). Such a design allows investigation of costumes and make-up as text in performance, rather than simply as objects of physical design.

##### 4.2 Case Study Selection

The study uses multiple-case study approach to the multiple forms of costume dress and make-up in contemporary Nigerian theatre. The sample of three case studies was selected in a purposive manner:

- Saro the Musical - because of the urban story behind it and the blending of both indigenous and modern design.
- Kurunmi- deriving the name due to historical importance and traditional dressing and make-up of a warrior.
- University Theatre Festivals- the category will be added to feature experimental theatre techniques and new tendencies of design in academic theatre.

These cases with a range of professional and educational productions can make sure that findings will be indicative of both mainstream and grassroots creative practices (Okhaifo and Babatunde 93).

##### 4.3 Data Collection

Multiple sources were employed to attain triangulation and raise reliability of data:

- Script and Production Reviews World known theatre journals and media houses screening of published scripts and review of performances.
- Visual Documentation: Highly detailed images and video recordings of make ups and costumes were captured either via production archives or after the exhibitions at the festival.
- Secondary Literature: the articles in scholarly journals and interviews with theatre directors and costume designers that secondary literature refers to (Asuquo 24; Umoh et al. 112).

##### 4.4 Analytical Approach

The research employs semiotic dissection of costume and make-up, expressed by Barthes, to break the symbolic codes inherent in the makeup and costume (Barthes 116). Cues of appearance (in this case color palette, fabric, and body markings, and props) are explored in terms of their representational value as self-definition, emotional expression, and socio-political statement. A thematic analysis is also used to reveal some repeating patterns and concepts as the concept of hybridity, identity negotiation, and postcolonial resistance (Hall 227).

##### 4.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were observed by ensuring proper attribution of images and avoiding unauthorized reproduction of visual materials. While no direct interviews were conducted for this paper, all secondary data sources were fully credited in accordance with academic integrity guidelines (Creswell 47).

#### 5. Findings and Analysis

A study of costume and make-up use in Nigerian theatre has shown that these visual instruments serve not only decorative functions but rather become the major means of narration, creation of self and making socio-cultural statements. Based on the selected case studies which include Saro the Musical, Kurunmi and university theatre festivals, this section will discuss six of the key findings; the symbolic aspects of costumes, how make-up was used to determine identity, combination of modernization and tradition aesthetics, and how each of the case studies was unique to the Nigerian theatrical practice.

### 5.1 Symbolic Functions of Costumes

The use of costumes in Nigerian theatre is a non-verbal method of portraying narrative that conveys a meaning even before speaking occurs. This symbolic association makes sense in the context of Barthes theory of clothing as a language in which colors, fabrics, and styles can be used according to the social-cultural codes (Barthes 115). Costume can determine character rank and classes in most of the productions. As an example, in *Kurunmi*, royal characters are embellished with the textile Aso-Oke decorated with a heavy ornamentation of beads, which grants a visual expression of political power and status in history (Okafor 67). Commoners on the other hand use plain cotton wraps which show subordination and obediences.

Theme and emotional tone are communicated through costumes as well. The use of light city style in clothing, including jeans, sneakers, and colored jackets, acts as the attributes of youth and boosting the characters of those who migrate to Lagos in the belief of brighter chances in the *Saro the Musical* (Okhaifo and Babatunde 97). Conversely, the dark earth-toned costumes render elements of desperation or dreams gone sour and narrates the fight of life without the need of lines being said (Adeighon 60).

### 5.2 Make-Up as Identity Maker

Make-up since Nigerians theatre serves more than just a beautification of the face, it becomes a cultural and psychological embodiment of identity. Face arts and body painting are very traditional arts that were embraced during precolonial rituals but the ritual arts are being transferred to theatrical make-up to express the tribal heritage or spiritual duties (Umoh et al. 113). In *Kurunmi*, men mark their faces with reliance streaks and one uses red paint and white to indicate that they are ready to their God and are their ancestors (Asuquo 22).

In addition to details of cultural cues there is also use of make-up to depict internal character change. Frequently, the specific facial changes on the actors are dramatic to show an old age, emotional scarring, or corruption. To illustrate, when *Saro the Musical* takes place, darkening of shadows continuously on eyes and use of contouring emphasize the transition of the main heroine being naive to a streetwise individual (Okhaifo and Babatunde 99).

It compares with the statement made in performance theory that visceral embodiment is another significant aspect that plays the same role as the spoken lines in a

story telling (Schechner 91). Therefore, make-up is a semiotic transversal between the body of the actor and the emotional dimension of the narration.

### 5.3 Modern - Traditional Fusion in Design

One of the elements that have been repeated throughout the productions is the integration of indigenous aesthetics and modern theatrical design. Contemporary costume designers in Nigeria have a tendency to take Western shapes (e.g., tailored jackets or stage gowns) and mix with African fabrics (e.g., Ankara or Batik) to create a cross-section of a visual scheme that is universal enough to be understood by a contemporary audience and at the same time, celebrate the tradition (Hall 229).

In university festivals, student designers will play with recycled materials, LED-lit garments, and digital projection mapping of fabrics, but anchor the student designs in Yoruba beadwork or Igbo embroidery as a symbolic anchor (Umoh et al. 117). This hybridity in aesthetics, defined by Ashcroft et al., involves postcolonial creativity that questions the western hegemony in the theatre appropriation and also the adoption of innovation (Ashcroft et al. 82).

### 5.4 Case Study: *Saro the Musical*

There is also an excellent example of how clothing and make-up can be used to reveal the story of migration and urban change as seen in *Saro the Musical*, directed by Bolanle Austen-Peters. In this production, costumes vary between country simplicity people in conventional wrappers and headscarves, and city flashiness, which indicate high-tempo Lagos way of life (Adeighon 62).

Make-up accentuates the characters switch: the villagers are drawn with little and natural make up whereas the city dwellers are met with thick and glamorized make up to indicate the exposure to the urbanity (Okhaifo and Babatunde 100). The visual contrast supports the major point of the identity negotiation process within the urban reality of the rural migrants and points to the fact that identity is a fluid concept that needs to be negotiated through cultural representations and symbolism (Hall 231).

Survey of audience reception points to the fact that a great number of examinees identified themselves on the stage through familiarity to common costume patterns and street fashion looks (Umoh et al. 119).

### 5.5 Case Study: Kurunmi

The use of costumes and make-up helps set the context of the story in a play set in the nineteenth century Yoruba warrior culture, Kurunmi by Ola Rotimi. The characters also wear thick handwoven fabric with layers of leather straps and metallic ornaments to indicate the order of hierarchy in the military (Okafor 69). Rulers and warriors are adorned differently with the leaders wearing beaded crowns and warriors wearing cowhide helmets signifying their titles and spiritual protection (Asuquo 26).

Make-up is also an essential part of the ritualistic scenes as the figures are circled in white chalk and with darkened eyes so that the rituals of initiation and preparation to go to a battle are visualized (Umoh et al. 114). These patterns are directly taken up as Yoruba ancestral rites and it makes the culture authentic and raises the dramatic tension.

According to scholars, the visual accuracy of this show assists in reviving collective memory of the precolonial resistance, which renders costume and make-up more than aesthetic decisions, since they provide politics of antihistorical erasure (Okhaifo and Babatunde 101).

### 5.6 Experimental Aesthetics University Theatre Festivals

New designers break the boundaries in their creativity by using unconventional materials and not-so-conventional methods at university theatre festivals. Environmental awareness takes the form of costumes created with the help of bamboo or recycled plastics or fabrics printed digitally and thus adds to the symbolic alphabet of the Nigerian stage design (Adeighon 64).

The make-up artistry in such festivals is also exceptionally creative with glow-in-the-dark paints, holographic effects, and 3D prosthetics being used to give fantasy-themed play immortal habitats to say the least (Umoh et al. 116). Through these contemporary twists, students still cling on to the indigenous aesthetics with frequent use of natural dyes and patterns, which are based on local folklore (Asuquo 28).

Such grass-root experimentation also makes its contribution to the future of the Nigerian theatre and showcases how costume and make-up can be transformed without losing the cultural traditions. Creative practices are constantly relevant in the reconstitution of cultural identity since they are practices which employ tradition and transformation (Hall 232).

### 5.7 Synthesis of Findings

Throughout these examples, costume and make-up become focal points of semiotic work which:

- Express the social hierarchy and tone of emotions.
- What are the definitions of character personality and psychological dimensions?
- Modernity and indigenous traditions should be mixed together to negotiate postcolonial aesthetics.
- Exploit the functions of political and cultural statements in histories.
- Inspire new ideas and environmental concern of experimental theatre.

These show that performance theory argument that non-verbal visual elements are not supplementary but formative of theatrical meaning is true (Schechner 93). They also confirm the claim of semiotic theory that costumes are signs and the action means that the audience understands intuitively and adds color to their interpretative experience (Barthes 119).

## 6. Discussion

The results of the current research support the notion that the costume and make-up of the Nigerian theatre are not marginal additions but an inseparable part of the narration and culture creation. The visual aesthetics of the Nigerian staging can be interpreted as a complex level of meanings beyond the words transferred with the help of the selected theoretical frameworks applied to analyze the mentioned details, including semiotic, performance, identity and cultural representation, and postcolonial aesthetics.

### 6.1 Semiotics, and the Language of the Visible in Theatre

According to Semiotic theory, costumes and make-up can be regarded as the system of signs that can be interpreted by audiences on a gut level (Barthes 116). These visual codes in both case studies had specific meanings: beaded crowns that Kurunmi wore signified political power, whereas the urban street fashion in Saro the Musical signified migration and social mobility (Okhaifo and Babatunde 97). Audience was able to interpret these signals without necessarily having to be explained verbally and this has shown how Nigerian theatre has come up with its own visual dictionary of language due to familiarity in culture (Adeighon 61).

This is consistent with Barthes argument that clothes could be expressive by the material qualities and social

associations resulting in costumes being considered a narrator as an agent of costume and not a prop (Barthes 118). The results therefore provide semiotics richness of the Nigeria costume design that combines the traditional signs and contemporary fashion to make these significations layered.

## 6.2 Performance Theory and Embodied Storytelling

According to the performance theory, the task of creating meaning in theatre falls to the tactics of physical actions that comprise costumes, make-up, gestures, and space arrangements (Schechner 92). The results indicate that the production of such films in Nigeria tends to depend on the visual embodiment, therefore, the actors in Kurunmi do not simply dress-up as warriors, they also move with the amorality of the armor and the rhythm of ancient battle chants (Okafor 69). In the same way the transformative make-up in *Saro the Musical* adds to character arcs giving actors the shift between scenes of rural naivety to scenes of urban sophistication (Umoh et al. 119).

These examples highlight how costumes and make-up affect not only the interpretation of the audience but also performance of actors themselves reshaping the posture, gestures and acting of emotions. This argues to the claim of Schechner that theatrical meaning is inseparable to the physical and visual planes of performance (Schechner 94).

## 6.3 Identity Formation and Representation of Cultures

The discussion shows that costume and make-up are very important in the staging and negotiation of identity. According to the theory of Hall on cultural representation, the cultural representation shapes identity, which does not remain unaltered but is constructed continuously (Hall 229). The use of costumes in Nigerian theatre denotes ethnicity, subclasses and gender along with the depiction of identity changes.

In *Saro the Musical* the costs can actually be seen shaping the migration process as characters change their clothes that define their new roles in the city (Adeighon 63). In Kurunmi, authentic Yoruba warrior outfits reinstate and remind the community of its communal heritage, and the resistance towards colonial encroachment (Asuquo 26). University festivals are one more way of exemplifying how younger designers reinvent identity with the little evidence of experimental and environmentally

friendly costumes containing indigenous motifs (Umoh et al. 117).

These discoveries depict that the stage design in Nigerian theatrical practice is a concept of identity negotiation whereby it counters assimilating impacts of globalization by proclaiming local cultural histories as platforms of negotiating identity via fabric and paint.

## 6.4 Postcolonial Aesthetics and Hybrid Creativity

The Postcolonial theory puts an emphasis on how the previously colonized communities reinvent cultural expression even as they incorporate the modern influences (Ashcroft et al. 80). The example of Nigerian costume and make-up practices is emblematic of this hybridity: the Western-style tailoring and modern cosmetics are being mixed with the African bead work, tribal marking and traditional fabric to produce the visual culture that is hybrid in nature (Okhaifo and Babatunde 94).

It is an alloy of the current portrayal of colonial theatrical decency, proving that African aesthetics is not as closed to fish as the modern technologies provide. University festivals use experimental costumes, recycled plastics or illuminated with LED strips, to reinvent indigenous aesthetics in a futuristic direction, towards an Afro-futuristic theatrical identity (Adeighon 64). This amount of creativity demonstrates that Ashcroft considers the postcolonial art to be prosperous when it innovates on local tradition (Ashcroft et al. 83).

## 6.5 Contribution to Theatre Scholarship and Practice

This research helps to answer the question of the costume and make-up as the key semiotic of Nigerian theatre by means of associating semiotics, performance theory, identity studies, and postcolonial aesthetics. In contrast to previous literature in which visual aspects are discussed as supplementary or descriptive, the results indicate:

- Take an active role in making up stories.
- Inhabit socio-political and cultural identities.
- Make a compromise between native and modern theatrical activities.
- Modify the performance of actors and interpretation by an audience.

This contribution covers a gap in Nigerian theatre scholarship by providing a template for future research that would be illustrative of the comprehensive representation of visual semiotics into the theory of identification and performance analysis. In practice,

the suggested study would mean that directors and costume and make-up designers must regard costume and make-up as equally important forms of storytelling, and thus worthy of the same level of conceptualization as screenwriter or choreographer.

## **7. Challenges and Implications for Practice**

Although costume and make-up have revealed to be an effective symbolic language in Nigerian theatre, its capabilities are usually limited by structural, material and institutional problems. These constraints are important areas to understand to further develop the theatrical practice and make the innovation in the Nigerian performance industry sustainable.

### **7.1 Lack of Financing and Resource Constraint**

The lack of funding of theatrical productions turns to be one of the most acute problems that could be outlined in the case studies. Costume design and make-up have its own set of materials to use; quality materials that may often be very costly and unavailable in local markets; such materials include; quality fabrics, beads, dyes, prosthetics, and professional materials used in relation to cosmetics (Okafor 71). The educational institutions and community theatres use a lot of low costs alternatives and those these options decrease visual authenticity and durability (Umoh et al. 120).

Moreover, importation of synthetic material and foreign makeup contributes to raising costs of production and the result is reduction in the budget thus reducing the complexity and novelty of choice of designs (Asuquo 30). Lacking proper investment, the designer has limitations that enforce a restriction of the semiotic richness of costume and make-up.

### **7.2 Lack of Professional Training and Documentation**

The theatre industry in Nigeria is rather lively; however, costumes and make-up designers still lack the special training programs (Adeighon 66). It has also been seen that varieties of designers are self-taught, learned through informal apprenticeship whereas, others having no such exposure to semiotics, fabric, technology and even advanced methods of make-up (Okhaifo and Babatunde 102).

Furthermore, the heritage of the indigenous costume is not well documented, and that is why the knowledge about the traditional dyeing techniques, weaving designs and techniques and the use of the art on the face is lost (Hall 233). Lack of such archival materials creates a problem of reproducing historical aesthetics

or integrating the historical material effectively into modern productions by present-day designers.

### **7.3 Dependence on Western Aesthetic Norms**

Stage cosmetics and the Western influences in fashion which have been brought about by globalization may sometimes cut across the local fashion identity which is part of the theatrical identity (Ashcroft et al. 84). Those productions with commercial inclinations in urban areas find that importation of designs is more relevant than traditional attires, hence homogenized aesthetics that have no cultural specificity (Okhaifo and Babatunde 95).

Such a reliance on Western stylistic conventions indicates more general postcolonial tensions within the Nigerian theatre industry, where market forces and international performance demands tend to encroach upon the local creativity (Adeighon 65).

### **7.4 Implications on Nigerian Theatre Practice**

Breaking these barriers means massive impacts on the development and sustainability of the theatre in Nigeria. One is that more investment in costume and make-up departments would result in a better overall production quality, which would be used to convey a more nuanced symbolic storytelling. The government agencies and cultural funds, as well as individual investors could sponsor fabric production and other cosmetics production facilities locally, and decrease the dependency on importation (Okafor 72).

Second, development of enriched formal training and academic courses in costume design and theatrical make-up would be professionalizing the area, the skill and theory would provide top technical competence to the practitioners. These programs could be incorporated into the department of theatre arts in universities or they may be chairing as specialized diploma programs (Umoh et al. 121).

Lastly, projects to record the costume traditions of indigenous peoples and archive them would prove most useful to contemporary designers. Digital archives, museums, and other research institutes should find a way of preserving the old weaving, dyeing and make up so that they can survive in contemporary times and be incorporated (Asuquo 31). Presenting solutions in funding, training, and cultural preservation, the Nigerian theatre would develop its tradition of visual storytelling, not only advancing local authenticity but also the competitiveness of the sector on the global scale.

## 8. Conclusion

This paper has shown that costume and make up in Nigerian theatre are not just meant to offer aesthetic beauty but they are vital to narration, creation of character and expression of culture. The examination of *Saro the Musical*, *Kurunmi*, and other university theatre festivals demonstrated that visuals of the design could represent social echelon and emotional complexity and guard the memory of the past at the same time as mediating the dialog between local customs and modern theatre.

As the theoretical perspectives of semiotic, performance, identity, and postcolonial allowed revealing, costume and make-up act as agents of semiotics and contribute to narrative meaning the formation, define the aspect of embodiment of theatre actors, and engage audiences in a more complex way. The issues raised in the findings were an answer to a major gap in literature of the Nigerian theatre scene as this area tends to subordinate the aspect of visual design to dialogue or choreography. Contrarily, the paper has demonstrated that costume and make-up are the key meaning-making aspects of performance in the capacity of developing cultural authenticity, resistance to colonial erasures, and hybrid innovativeness.

To conclude, it is impossible to comprehend the history of the development of Nigerian theatre without referencing the immense impact of using visual representation to convey the story. The future development of this area is determined by continuing to invest in this direction, the professional training of people, and the preservation of the tradition of nationalist costume in order to make Nigerian theatre as original, vibrant and close to its national identity as possible.

## 9. Recommendations

This paper proposes a proactive employment of visual design on costume, make-up and set piece in the Nigerian theatre in order to reinforce its contribution to the art form. More finances made available by cultural agencies, privately and through theatre companies would improve production and enable the designer to use superior fabrics and cosmetics available within the country. Costume and make-up as an art form will have to take programs of professional training in universities and special workshops, that will help formalize and develop this direction, and it will be at the forefront that the professionals must know not only technical, but also theoretical knowledge of semiotics and cultural aesthetics.

More attention should be paid to the documentation and archiving of the indigenous costume-making and make-up techniques so that future designers could access a vast reservoir of the traditional knowledge. The encouragement and applause of the indigenous aesthetics on the stage will enable cultural integrity and freedom of an artistic contact could be made to the modern sense of fashion. Lastly, the development of collaborative platforms, e.g., national festivals, national exhibitions and design networks would allow theatre practitioners to generate innovation, knowledge sharing and exchange of inter-cultural perspectives.

Adopting these practices, activities in the Nigerian theatre can place costume and make-up in its proper place as agents of the narrative, thereby enhancing performance, maintenance of cultural identity, and maximizing the visibility of its presence in the African and global stages of theatre activities.

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