

**ACCENTUATING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF IGBO CULTURAL MOTIFS TO
THE EVOLUTION OF NOLLYWOOD COSTUMES**

BY

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DEGREE IN THEATRE AND FILM STUDIES**

CERTIFICATION

I, Okadigwe, Mary Nkechi hereby declare that this work is the product of my own research efforts undertaken under the supervision of Prof. Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh and has not been presented elsewhere for the award of a Degree. All sources have been duly distinguished and appropriately acknowledged.

17th May, 2017

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APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This work is specially dedicated to the Most High God who guided me through the course of this research; and to the memory of my father, Felix Ozoemena Okadigwe, who passed on to me a love of reading and value for education. Papa, I wish you had lived to see me get to the peak of academics. May your soul continue to rest in peace.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation has examined the contributions of Igbo cultural motifs to the evolution and development of Nollywood costumes. The evolution and development of Nollywood costumes was traced from the emergence of Nollywood films. The researcher adopted qualitative research method, which involves content analyses and observation research approaches. Using ethnographic research method, literary works relevant to the research problem have been analyzed. The research had sought the opinions of experts in traditional Igbo aesthetics and symbols. Findings from this research reveal that Igbo dress culture appears to be at the pivot of the development of Nollywood costumes and has continued to play significant roles in costuming Nollywood characters. The emergence of costumes in Nollywood goes back into the 1990s, to the release of *Living in Bondage*, an Igbo language film produced by Kenneth Nnebue; an Igbo salesman. Henceforth, Igbo dress culture has been a great source of inspiration for Nollywood costume designers and has been used by them as a major form in developing Nollywood costumes. Although the major motivation behind the emergence of Nigerian film industry was purely economic, the film's narratives and costumes seem to be archetypes of the pioneer filmmakers' culture and traditions. Based on the critical analyses of eight films used in this research, the research has been able to establish that from the inception of Nollywood through the recent times, Igbo cultural motifs have been functioning effectively as the canvas upon which Nollywood characters are created. Therefore, Nollywood costumes can be said to be carriers of Igbo cultural motifs. It would thus be virtually impossible to recount an adequate history and development of Nollywood costume without mentioning the immense contributions of Igbo dress culture to the evolution of the industry's costumes and frequently accentuate how these motifs have been used to create characters. This research recommends that Nollywood costume designers should focus more on the communicative essence of costumes and their effectiveness in preserving culture. Costume designers should also be given ample time to carry out an ethnographic research in order to employ motifs appropriately.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Igbo dress culture appears to have contributed immensely to the evolution of Nollywood costumes. It seems to be the major source of inspiration for the pioneer costume designers and even to date, there can still be found in large number traces of Igbo cultural motifs in the costumes of Nollywood characters. The reason for this is believed to be due to the claim that Nollywood pioneer filmmakers are of the Igbo descent. Although much has been written on Nollywood films, no significant work has been done on the history of Nollywood film costumes. So this research constructs its account of the emergence and development of Nollywood costumes around the emergence and development of Nollywood films. Nollywood costumes are believed to have emerged with the release of *Living in Bondage*, an Igbo language film which has been acclaimed as the film that gave credence to the emergence of a blossoming industry. In tracing the origin of the Nigerian film industry, Utoh-Ezeajugh postulates that:

Scholars such as Femi Shaka, Barclays Ayakoroma, Hyginus Ekwuazi, Jonathan Hynes and Onokome Okome, have located Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in bondage* as the film that gave the impetus to what has become a multi-million Naira business" (65).

Although there are many accounts on the emergence of the film industry in Nigeria, the one most widely accepted today is based on the claim that Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry as we know it today evolved from the economic desire of an Igbo businessman; Kenneth Nnebue. Nwafor posits, "...the Igbo ethnic group have played a

central role in the development of the industry.” (112) Even though there were films done in Yoruba language and Igbo language before Nnebue’s *Living in Bondage*, these films appeared to be purely ethnic and did not appeal to the entire people of Nigeria. Ayakoroma recounting the factors that gave rise to the use of video format for film production in Nigeria postulates that:

...the Yoruba Traveling Theatre companies started recording their stage performances on video for sales in the 1970s and 1980s...Some Igbo electronic dealers like Kenneth Nnebue, saw the prospects in that business, and started with the production of Yoruba language films...Nnebue himself had attempted packaging Yoruba films for sale, when he produced *Aje Ni Iya Mi* for Shola Ogunsoola. (49)

Ayakoroma reiterates, “From the Eastern part of the country, Solomon Eze (aka Mike Oriehedinma) is said to have pioneered video film productions in the mid-80s...” (49) However, these films were not as commercially successful as *Living in Bondage*; neither did they attract the viewership of the diverse Nigerian audiences. So *Living in Bondage* is seen as the first film that had national appeal. Thus acclaiming *Living in Bondage* as the film that gave rise to the evolution of Nollywood, Nwafor opines, “The stories there-after have been that of a pacesetter, a film that introduced glamour like never before, a film that promoted the traditions and culture of Nigeria like never before and sold both the English and Igbo versions successfully.” (113) The film directed the attention of Nigerians from the Western Hollywood and Indian Bollywood to a national film that deal with familiar issue. Utoh-Ezeajugh opines that:

One can confidently assert that before this film, most Nigerians did not believe that an indigenous film could record such overwhelming success with the local people...with the first major breakthrough in the video film genre to hit the market, the Nigerian audience were at once transported from

the unfamiliar (represented by Western and Indian films), to the familiar (in terms of representation of local situations) (66).

The argument for this view holds that Nnebue's desire to create a more lucrative market for the large number of video cassettes he had imported inspired him to record *Living in Bondage* in these cassettes. According to Ayakoroma:

In 1992, the experimental effort of an Igbo businessman, Kenneth Nnebue, paid off. He, Nnebue, was originally involved in the distribution of audio tapes...Nnebue mooted the idea of putting an Igbo drama on tape for domestic consumption. The outcome was *living in Bondage*... (21)

This innovation of Nnebue yielded the desired result as *Living in Bondage* was widely accepted by Nigerians since its narrative quenched the peoples' desires for entertainment but most importantly served as a tool for moral lesson. So a large number of Nigerian film scholars believe that Nollywood film industry blossomed with the success of Nnebue's *Living in Bondage*. Spurred by the commercial success and mass appeal of *Living in Bondage* other Igbo electronic salespersons joined to produce more films. This development gave rise to what is known today as the Nigerian film industry (Nollywood). These filmmakers including costume designers naturally portrayed a worldview familiar to them in the costume design used for characters. That is, the Igbo worldview.

So based on wide scholarly accounts of Nollywood history, traditional Igbo costumes seem to have played an important role in the evolution and development of a costume culture in the industry. Consequently, the costumes almost always encapsulate signs that are akin to Igbo dress culture, hence, these costumes cannot be discussed without mentioning Igbo cultural motifs and their socio-cultural significance. The point being made here is that the socio-cultural background of the pioneer producers, marketers, and

technicians of Nollywood films had colossal influence on the films' narrative, background, location and costumes. The first set of films, that is, films that belong to the generation of *Living in Bondage* were based on the socio-cultural life of the Igbo. The films had themes of love, marriage and money ritual. Characters of these films bear Igbo names and other characteristics like: being business-minded and industrious. Hence, costumes were appropriately coined from the Igbo dress culture to effectively communicate the intended message. Consequently, Igbo dress culture was almost always used in creating the film characters.

Essentially, the relationship between Igbo dress culture and Nollywood costume culture has been kind of symbiotic as Nollywood costume designers rely on Igbo dress culture for inspiration, the Igbo cultural attires have also been revived from their almost extinct state through frequent use. As a cultural product, costume is supposed to reflect the culture that informed it and costumiers are expected to be cultural ambassadors. So, geared towards presenting characters that will effectively communicate the films' story through their costumes, Nollywood costumiers created characters that portrayed the Igbo milieu. Nwafor justifying the cause of this development argues that, "That the stories and the locations are predominantly eastern is simply in accordance and agreement with the popular saying that he who pays the piper detects the tune." (112) He however emphasized that the predominant portrayal of an Igbo milieu by Nollywood is not to say that the industry is ethnic in outlook, but rather, it is as a result of the major filmmakers creative portrayal of their immediate environment- an environment which they are well familiar with. For the costume designer, form is the outward expression of nuance experience.

This is not however to say that a costume designer cannot go beyond his/her environment to get inspiration, but Nollywood's case has been one which the pioneer costume designers were not professionals but had with constant practice learnt the art of costume designing. Probably their lack of professional training mounted a restriction on their ability to go beyond their immediate environments for inspiration as today's Nollywood costume designers do.

The study set out, not just to recount the evolution and development of costumes in Nollywood, but has also reviewed how Igbo motifs are adapted in costuming and character creation; consequently the important role Igbo culture has played in the development of Nollywood costumes are stressed. Therefore, to deeply delve into semiotics, the insights of experts in traditional Igbo aesthetics and interpretation of symbols was solicited through ethnographic research. In other words the research has carefully investigated and interpreted the socio-cultural significance of the various colours, patterns, style and mass of Igbo attires which have been adopted by Nollywood designers. Reviewing the early beginnings and development of Nollywood film industry has been beneficial to this quest. Accounts on the emergence of Nollywood film industry appear to be significant signposts through which this aim can be achieved.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although scholars have written extensively on Nollywood film, content and production quality little have been done on the evolution of Nollywood costumes. This study was thus spurred by the need to examine the emergence of Nollywood costumes in order to accentuate the contributions of Igbo cultural motifs to the evolution of Nollywood costumes. Nollywood costumes appear to be largely dominated by Igbo motifs. So there is

need to investigate the motivations behind dominance and to document the significance of Igbo culture. Costume is culture; therefore appropriate interpretation of costumes can adequately be done by investigating the culture that influenced the creation of that particular costume.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Research

The aim of this research is basically to systematically review the evolution of costume culture in Nollywood in order to note the contributions of Igbo cultural to the evolution and development of Nollywood costumes. Simply put, the research aims to use available literatures on the history of Nollywood films as base from which we can trace the evolution of Nollywood costume; with a view to noting the contributions of Igbo motifs to the evolution of Nollywood costumes. Hence, the research had sought the opinions of experts in traditional Igbo aesthetics and interpretation of symbols in order that the research will delve deeply into semiotics. The Objectives of the Studies are as follows:

- to substantiate belief on the richness of Igbo cultural motifs and their socio-cultural significance
- to present a research that would by the strength of its insights demonstrate the continuing need for critical and unbiased readings of film costumes and finally
- to recommend semiotics analysis as a useful tool for reading and interpreting motifs in film costumes

1.4 Significance of the Research

This study will add to the growing lists of scholarly works on Nollywood films. This research as an account of the evolution of Nollywood costume shall also be beneficial to

students and scholars of theatre arts. Since the study has reviewed the evolution of costumes in Nollywood from inception to date, it will profit Students of Film Studies to understand the historical development of Nollywood costumes. Students and scholars shall also find this research useful as the study covers a wide range of subjects in film costuming and dress-culture. In addition, this study shall inform, enlighten, and educate filmmakers and audience alike on the evolution of Nollywood costume culture and the significance of Igbo motifs. Thus, one can vividly appreciate the past, present and even envisage the future of Nollywood costume culture. The research also mirrors the socio-cultural history of Igbo dress culture. For instance, this study's analyses of *Ijele* and *Goddess of the Sun* gives a grasp of the dress culture in the traditional Igbo society in juxtaposition with contemporary Igbo dress culture with its attendant syncretism of diverse cultural motifs.

1.5 Scope and Delimitation of the Research

This study limits its coverage to the interpretation of the elements and principles of costumes in eight Nigerian films. These films were selected from films produced in Nigeria from 1992 to date. These films were critically viewed in order to identify the presence of Igbo cultural symbols in the costumes of the characters and to also decipher their significance. The evolution of Nollywood costumes was traced from literatures on the evolution of Nollywood industry, while ethnographic research into the insights of experts in traditional Igbo aesthetics and interpretation of symbols was also embarked on. The researcher therefore focused on reviewing the development of Nollywood costumes and accentuating the significance of Igbo culture to the costuming of Nollywood characters. The study analyses the costume of characters in *Ijele*, *Adaeze*, *African Bride*, *Cry of a*

Widow, The Priestess, My Rising Sun, Festival of War and *Better Tomorrow*. The study is limited to locating and interpreting Igbo cultural motifs present in the films.

1.6 Research Methodology

The researcher adopted qualitative research method, which involved interviews and observation research approaches. Literary works relevant to the research problem were reviewed. The researcher reviewed the evolution and development of costume in Nollywood. Since it is not practically possible to view and interpret the costumes of the entire Nigerian films, eight English and Igbo language Nigerian films were used to represent Nollywood films through stratified random sampling. Thus, seventy English language and ten Igbo language Nollywood films were divided into ten strata and then a random sample was taken from each group. Costumes of the eight films selected were read and interpreted based on the semiotics and relativist theories. This study has been organized in phases. Phase one involves analytical study of the emergence of Nollywood films, its development as well as the culture that impacted on its development. Phase two focuses on the evolution of Nollywood costume and the theoretical framework upon which this research is based. That is, the semiotic and relativist theories. Phase three dwells on analyses of the selected eight Nollywood films in order to locate and accentuate the presence of Igbo cultural motifs in their costumes. The sixth edition of MLA style of referencing was employed for the research documentation.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, the researcher has read and evaluated literature on costumes, Nollywood industry and films, Igbo costumes and semiotics. Information in the reviewed literatures have been analyzed and synthesized with the topic of this dissertation.

Film is no doubt an eclectic art that seems not lend itself to a single analytical approach. Hence, in studying this composite art, the researcher finds semiotics and relativist appropriate models for this study. The study utilizes semiotics in analyzing Nigerian films in order to present a critical interpretation of Nollywood costumes. Semiotics, the science of signs and symbols is a theory developed in Linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure for studying the structure and meaning of language. In the tradition of semiotics developed by Ferdinand de Saussure, the relation between a costume (the signifier) and its meaning (the signified) is seen as being essentially arbitrary and motivated only by social convention. Peirce Charles Sanders, a proponent of semiotics defines sign as a triadic relation. He divided sign into three parts namely: icon, index and symbol. According to Berger, Peirce defines sign as something that stands for something, to someone in some capacity. (49) This means that a sign is a relation between the sign vehicle (the specific physical form of the sign, which in this case is costume), a sign object (the aspect of the world that the sign carries meaning about) and an interpretant (the

meaning of the sign as understood by an interpreter). In essence, Peirce's interpretant points at meaning as being relative: that is, as it is understood by a particular interpreter. The importance of the interpretant for Peirce is that signification is not a simple dyadic relationship between sign and object: a sign takes on meaning only in being interpreted. This makes the interpretant central to the content of a sign, in that, the meaning of a sign is manifest in the interpretation that it generates in sign users.

Semiotics became a major approach to cultural studies in the 1960s, mainly as a result of the work of Roland Barthes. Barthes impelled by Saussure's concept of language as a sign system, produced *Mythologies* in 1957. In his *Mythologies*, Barthes shows how the denotations in the signs of popular culture betray connotations which are actually myths generated by the larger sign system that make up society. Adapting Saussure's model to the study of cultural phenomena other than language, Barthes also developed his *Fashion System* in 1967. In *Fashion System*, Barthes shows how the adulteration of signs could easily be translated into words. He explained how in the fashion world any word could be loaded with idealistic bourgeois emphasis. Thus, if popular fashion says that a 'skirt' is ideal for a certain situation or ensemble, this ideal is immediately naturalized and accepted as truth, even though 'skirt' could just as easily be interchangeable with a 'wrapper', 'boubou' or 'trousers'. In accordance with Barthes' view, Brandt submits:

Initially inclined towards an open methodology that would give the interpreter a major role in determining the meaning of any given text, professor Eco later came around to the view that there was an inherent hard core of meaning and that interpretation had been given too much theoretical scope. (279)

Barthes' *Fashion System* questions the overall utility of demystifying culture for the masses; hence it drives into a search for individualistic meaning in art.

Whereas, in the past, determinists like Aristotle saw things in terms of cause and effect, semiotics looks for signs and symbols. It challenges common sense, which believes that things have one meaning and that this meaning is pretty obvious. Semiotics tells us that meaning is constructed, as a product of shared system of signification. For instance, the traditional Igbo society denotes the wearing of two wrappers to signify that a woman is a wife and mother. Thus the portrayal of a woman's marital status by two ankle-length wrapper is a constructed meaning which has over time become the Igbo culture. Essentially, semiotics is defined as the study of signs: how they work and how they generate meanings. Berger defines semiotics as "The science that investigates the way meaning is produced and transmitted." (244) Whereas a sign is anything that can be used to stand for something else. For instance, using a white robe with cape and a cross pendant to signify a catholic priest. So, extending Saussure's view to the study of fashion, Roland Barthes shows that there is no inherent meaning in clothes- so the clothes seem natural and without code. For him, the meaning is both expressed in the image (costume in this case) and brought to the image by viewer. Saussure, Peirce and Barthes were all interested in discovering what constitute a sign and all three believe that the meaning generated by a sign is relative. Thus, to the three theoreticians, meaning is dynamic.

This study makes use of semiotic theory through qualitative methodology in order to analyze selected Nigerian films. This form of analysis has been found to allow costume a distinct voice in words dominated film. It reinforces costume as communication through motifs, lines, shape, colour, mass, fabric and texture. In semiotics, a sign is something that can be interpreted as having a meaning, which is something other than itself, and which is therefore able to communicate information that aids in decoding the sign. Employing

semiotic theory as a tool of analysis in this research reveals how the significations of Nollywood costume keeps evolving and changing with time.

Relativism also looks at a phenomenon from all possibilities of meanings. Thus, the research also employs the relativist theory. This is a theory which holds that value judgments, as of truth, beauty, or morality, have no universal validity but are valid only for the persons or groups holding them. Philosophical relativism maintains that criteria of judgment vary with individuals and their environments. Applied to costume analysis, it argues that costumes cannot be described adequately in terms of objective reality. Therefore, it holds that costume designs have no absolute definition or validity but they only have relative and subjective meaning according to differences in perception and consideration of viewers. That is to say that the meanings of costumes are always relative to some particular frame of reference, such as convention or culture. Accordingly Collins, Radner and Preacher posit that:

The contribution of recent scholarship on the constitution of audiences, their tastes, and the ways in which they give meaning to mass-media texts can hardly be overestimated. Such work has provided crucial insights into how films become social facts, acquiring diverse meanings as they circulate...recognizing the power of audiences to decode texts according to local structures of feeling, the determination to grant legitimacy to such decodings, and the refusal to subordinate them to the more sophisticated decoding of critics. (3)

It seems therefore that film costume possesses no validity in its own right but is given signification by viewers through personal experience. And if a costume has no meaning in itself, but takes on meaning from its usage; it then can be argued that emerging Nollywood film costume culture (which is an epitome of the continuous evolution of the Igbo dress culture), although a syncretism of motifs from diverse cultural background, has been

accepted as Igbo costumes by Nollywood film viewers. If a costume is adequately given meaning by its usage, then most Nollywood costume have been assigned meaning by the virtue of their being used by Igbo people in the real world. Therefore, it is the socio-cultural context of a film production that imbues costumes with meanings. This is to say that in conjunction with the culture inherent and the social codes observed, the viewers may interpret these costumes based on their own experiences, association and convention. Nollywood films are mostly deeply rooted in cultural and social life of the Nigerian people. So this research believes that semiotic theory will provide an appropriate reading for the costumes. Nollywood films appear to tell their stories most often using idioms, costume and makeup, artifacts and imagery of Igbo cultural display; semiotics will aid us in unraveling the signs and symbols in Igbo traditional and modern costumes, the way they generate meaning and the way their meanings keep changing with times and situations.

2.2 History of Theatrical Costume

The evolution of costumes in the theatre can be traced back to the evolution of theatre productions. The most widely followed account on the origin of theatre is based on the assumption that theatre evolved from ritual. This account envisions theatre as emerging out of myth and ritual. The account believes that at the early stage of the development of a society, the society becomes aware of forces that seems to influence its food supply and well-being. The argument for this view according to Brockett goes thus:

In the beginning, man viewed the natural forces of the world, even the seasonal changes, as predictable, and sought, through various means, to control these unknown and feared powers. Those measures which appeared to bring the desired results were then retained and repeated until they hardened into fixed rituals. Eventually stories arose which explained or veiled the rites' mysteries. (65)

Again Brockett and Hildy recount that:

Frequently the myths include representatives of those supernatural forces that the rites celebrate or hope to influence. Performers may wear costumes and masks to represent the mythical characters or supernatural forces in the rituals or in accompanying celebrations. (1)

These ancient rituals contained the elements of theatre because music, dance, masks, and costumes and makeup were almost always used. Reiterating this view, Hartnoll opines:

The origins of the theatre go back far into the past, to the religious rites of the earliest communities. Throughout the history of mankind there can be found traces of songs and dances in honour of a god, performed by priests and worshippers dressed in animal skins, and of a portrayal of his birth, death and resurrection. (7)

It follows then that theatre emerged from such dramatic rituals like impersonation of gods and animals. Brockett reiterates that:

Since considerable importance was attached to avoiding mistakes in the enactment of rites, priests usually assumed the task for the tribe. Wearing masks and costume, they often impersonated men, animals, or supernatural beings, and mimed the desired effects - success in hunt or battles, the coming of rain, the revival of the sun – as an actor might. (66)

It can therefore be deduced that theatrical costumes evolved from ancient ritual performances. However, the earliest recorded history of costume came from Egypt in North Africa. Brockett notes that “Ritual probably dates back to the dawn of human history, but our knowledge of it first begins take definite shape about 4000 B.C., when the civilizations of Egypt and the Near East entered an advanced stage.” (67) There were records on Pharaoh’s tomb and flower vessels. Accounts on Abydos Passion Play which recounts the death, burial and resurrection of the god, Osiris; complete with script, and actors wearing costumes and makeup were documented. Making reference to the Egyptian Abydos Passion Play, Brockett notes that, “...all we know of it is deduced from an account left by

Ikhernofret, a participant in the ritual some time between 1887 and 1849 B.C.” (68) No similar evidence is however available for majority of the African continent. Much of the early African costume history has been pieced together from art, oral histories, myths, and traditions that are continued by present-day tribal members. Hence, Utoh-Ezeajugh opines that:

Before costumes and make-up developed into specialized arts in the theatre, they existed in African society and played similar roles in the life of the people as they do in the theatre of today. They constituted an essential part of the people’s heritage.” (83)

Costume refers to the items of clothing and accessories used to portray characters in an art form such as a traditional festival, play, or film script, dance piece or ritual drama.

According to Utoh-Ezeajugh:

Costume and make-up are the visual elements in any traditional African performance. They are the effects used to transform a dancer, singer, drummer, bride, groom and any other performer or participant in any of the numerous festivals, into the image or character they are to portray. (83)

Costumes may be for a theatre, film or musical performance, traditional festival and ritual drama like the Roman Catholic Mass celebration and African masquerade festivals.

Accentuating the significance of costumes in masquerade festivals, Perani and Wolff opine that:

Cloth also plays an important role in dressing the spirit, making it visible. Masqueraders throughout sub-Saharan Africa are contained in costumes of cloth which not only conceal the human shapes who carry them, but layer their bodies with meaning, charging them with spiritual agency. (42)

Simply put, costume is clothes and accessories worn by actors for stage or film productions. Russel defines costume as:

...all the body garments worn by the actor, all the accessories he carries as part of his character, all the items related to his hairdressing, and everything

associated with his face and body make-up, including masks if they substitute for a facial makeup. (9)

2.3 Traditional Igbo Costumes

In West Africa specifically in Igbo of south-East Nigeria, costume was an essential part of Igbo people's way of life because all their festivals were celebrated with spectacular costumes. Perani and Wolff posit that,

In the African context, ancestors are common spiritual entities who appear encased in costumes of cloth. Among many peoples living along the Niger/Benue river valleys in Nigeria including the...Igbo, cloth is used to fabricate a spectacular ancestral masquerade. (42)

There were also performers who costumed themselves for dances and wrestling. Although, these evidences were not documented, we learn about them from myths and legends, folklores, poetries, play scripts, folklores and oral traditions. *Fate of an Orphan*, a play by Asigbo Alex provides us with information on some aspects of Igbo traditional clothing designs. Describing an Igbo traditional prophetess, the playwright relates that, "She's attired in a red wrapper. A white head band covers her hair and on hand she carries a lump of chalk." (7) To adequately describe the Igbo ancient costumes, we have to look at the socio-cultural life of the traditional Igbo people. Hence, Perani and Wolff postulate, "As a product of human culture, cloth dresses the body, packages artifacts and defines space to impart cultural meaning." (25) Further describing the traditional Igbo clothes Lyndersay quotes Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*'s description of the Igbo attire of the day thus: "Okagbue was [in] his underwear, a long and thin strip of cloth wound round the waist like a belt and then passed between the legs to be fastened to the belt behind" (Achebe: 82)." (407) Traditionally the attire of Igbo men generally consisted of little clothing as the purpose then was to conceal private parts, although elders were fully clothed. Quoting

Hawkins's descriptions of Igbo dress in the late 1790s, Lyndersay relates: "Both sexes...go almost entirely naked, the loins and waist only covered...The men from the age of puberty only, wear a narrow bandage of cotton round the waist." (405) Utoh-Ezeajugh in her account of the evolution of the traditional Igbo dress culture, postulates that, "For the Igbo of South East Nigeria, the dress culture for men evolved from *Ikpachi* or *Aka Nwoke* which was a woven cloth tied at the side of the waist, creating a kind of slit-opening from the waist down the length of the cloth..." (38) Children were usually nude from birth till their adolescence but some ornament of beads and cowries were worn around the waists. Describing the use of cowries for body adornment in the traditional Igbo world, Isichei relates:

The curved back is cut away, and the shell, open on two sides, is threaded on double thread to place around the neck or body...Some boys wear no other clothing or adornment but these chains of white shells on the neck or the body. (17)

Uli body art was also used to decorate both men and women in form of lines forming patterns and shapes on the body. Emphasizing the significance of *uli* makeup in Igbo culture, Aniako posits that:

What seems paramount aesthetically is the graphic quality of designs painted on the body which has endeared this art form to the Igbo women as a tool for the visual alteration, expansion and manipulation of the human body for aesthetic effects." (334)

For theatrical performances, dancers used colourful costumes- maidens wore short waist beads, neck beads, anklets with bare chest; men wore loin clothes barely covering their manhood. Describing the costumes of the cast and crew of *Egedege* dance, Utoh-Ezeajugh (2006) relates:

The Queen Mother who leads the dance, is costumed spectacularly in colourful and shimmering costumes of sequined peach satin flowing gown

or sequined white shimmering gown, gathered at the waist and reaching down to the ankles. This is completed by a crown, a staff...and *nza*... This costume is calculated to project splendour... (89)

The traditional seers who mediate between the community and the gods wore symbolic clothes and accessories like feather signifying mark of grandeur. Accentuating this claim, Umukoro opines, “Ritual costumes are consciously designed to bear the *esoteric* aura in line with its persistent vision... Examples are found in diviner and hunter costumes...” (52)

There are various traditional theatrical genres in the traditional Igbo society. Therefore, different kinds of costumes are used to portray the different characters situations of the diverse performances. There were traditional performances like the *Ozo* cult of Onitsha people and the *Ine Ezi* of Anam people. These performances are done mirthfully. While rituals like the *Igu-Aro* of Umueri people and *Iti-Mmanwu* (masquerade performance) are done in a more serious heightened mood and so were performed in serious costumes which inspire awe and respect. According to Aniakor, “...spirit forces incarnated as masks exercised executive, juridical and legislative authority in many Igbo villages and towns.”

(346) Describing the costume of the *Ozo* society, Utoh-Ezeajugh (2011) postulates:

The *Ozo* society popularized the use of the long diagonally stripped cap which has a furzy end and folds to one side when worn. The cap is usually a combination of three colours-red, black and white. Special walking sticks, hand fans and ivory tusks as well as anklets and beads used by *Ozo* titled men. (38)

An account of costumes used in *Ine Ezi* ritual celebration is also given by Nnachor. He relates that Anam people of Omambala area in Anambra state of South-East Nigeria celebrated *Ine Ezi*, a ritual festival used to announce to the public that an age bracket of young maidens are ripe and ready for marriage. According to Nnachor, “The essence of *Ine Ezi* in Anam, (though no longer in vogue), was to declare to eligible bachelors that an age-

bracket of young maidens had matured to be joined in marriage with men.” (73) It was an annual festival performed around September. After this outing ceremony, all celebrants who participated in the ceremony were expected to get married before the end of December, that is, before *Nzide Ani*. And if perchance, any of these girls was unlucky not to get married before *Nzide ani*, she will be publicly satirized by the *Adah* masquerade. Describing Igbo masquerades as embodiments of theatricality, Aniakor notes:

...masks also provided, at the level of festivals, theatrical and dramatic performances and presentation, visual levels of entertainment and a spectacle of colours, designs costumes, forms and symbols based on a well conceived kin-aesthetic system. (346)

Before the advent of the Europeans and their attendant influence on the dress code of the Igbo people, *Ine-Ezi* was celebrated naked. The skin served as costumes for the young maiden. They had their skins designed with *Uli* motifs, on top of their heads they wore beautifully embroidered coiffure; aesthetically designed with beads. Describing the dress culture of the ancient Igbo people, Utoh-Ezeajugh (2011) postulates that:

Uli designs also serve as clothing as well as cosmetics. This is peculiar to the period in traditional Igbo society when manufactured materials were not available, and even where the traditional woven materials were scantily available, certain categories of people such as young unmarried girls and boys did not easily have access to them until after marriage. In some cases, therefore, apart from a few strings of beads, *Uli* designs made as camouflage for clothes, substituted for costumes. (39)

Similarly, Aniako posits that, “In some cases, the entire body was in the past covered with markings, consisting of short strokes of design cut into the body in the form of keloids in a complex composition that tended to simulate the effect of dress.” (334) The actresses (celebrants) of *Ine Ezi* rituals wore *Nja* on their legs. They also wore *Olopko* (Anam variance of *jigida*) on their waist which merely covered the pubic area leaving the buttocks to public view. The *Olopko* coral is mainly used to beautify the girls and not for modesty.

However, they also served to signify economic status - as girls from wealthier homes wore fuller *Jigida* and *Nja*, while others wore scanty *Jigida* without *Nja*. *Nja* is made of brass; it runs from the knee through the ankle. All the girls wore neck beads and wrist beads. Their breasts were left uncovered. Those who were betrothed were signified with long chewing sticks. Aniako maintains that body adornment is used by Igbo people to define social states of their wearer. He posits that:

These may be hair coiffures in varied styles, costumes assortment of textiles, forged or bitten metal hand bands or anklets, body markings... For example the period of childhood is realized in some cases through the use of a simple line of circlet, *jigida*, along the waistline as an item of body adornment...From this, body adornment begins to gain in elaboration with increasing age. (334)

With colonialism and its consequent European influence, the wearing of tiny piece of cotton wrapper was adopted. It was sown into *Peteli*, a mini skirt gathered at the waist. Maidens who were from wealthy families used *Akwaete* to make their *Peteli*. For their tops, they had simply made blouses with straps for sleeves.

2.4 Western Costumes

The history of Western theatre costume as recorded by Oscar Brockett evolved from the ritual performance in worship of the Greek god, Dionysus. Recounting the evolution of costume in Western theatre Cohen posits:

The first theatrical costumes were essentially ceremonial vestments. The *himation* (a gown-like costume) of the early Aeschylean actors was derived from the garment worn by the priest-chanter of the dithyramb; the comic and satyr costumes, with their use of phalluses and goatskins, were likewise derived from more primitive god-centered rites. (147)

Early Greek theatre costumes were basically ceremonial robes. The chiton was a gown-like costume similar to the robes worn by the priest who chanted the choral odes. Brockett and Hildy submit that, "Several historians have argued that the standard costume for all tragic

actors was a sleeved, highly decorated tunic (*chiton*), usually full-length, although sometimes shorter.” (22) Actors who played tragic roles wore boots called *cothurnes* that elevated them above other actors. When playing female roles, the male actors donned a “*prosternedia*” which is a wooden structure worn in front of the chest to simulate breasts. Elaborating more on the details of Greek tragic costumes, Oklobia and Bakare posit that in the Classical Greek period, “The exaggerate costumes, masks and symbolic ornaments were more than extensions or enlargements of everyday regular cloths.” (103) The Greek mask was a significant element in the worship of Dionysus at Athens; it was used in ceremonial rites and celebrations. The mask is known to have been used since the time of Aeschylus and considered to be one of the iconic conventions of classical Greek theatre. However, because of the ritualized style of the theatre, many masks were used in giving each character a specific look and they varied depending on the genre of the play they were used for. Some masks were constructed with a cheerful look while some were constructed with a serious countenance. Costumes have been a very important factor of the production, because they could determine the characters by gender or social status. In the early productions actors have been using body painting. Gradually they started using animal skins, ears, even feathers. There are frequent allusions to costumes in the work of Aristophanes, the classical Greek comedian. The attire of the chorus was extremely fantastic, and always suggestive of the part represented. Thus, in Aristophanes’ *Birds*, they appear with large open beaks, and in the *Wasps* with huge protruding stings.

When the poets introduced the use of costumes, they imitated the contemporary dressing (the *chiton* which is a simple tunic garment of lighter linen, worn by female and male genders and all ages and *hemateon*, a basic outer garment worn over the *chiton*). Both

of these clothes (*chiton* and *hemateon*) were decorated and worn by actors depending on the occasion. *Chiton* usually fell to the ankle of the wearer, but shorter ones were sometimes worn during vigorous activities by athletes, warriors or slaves. A *soccus*, or thinly-soled buskin, took the place of *cothurnus*, and the masks were lighter, but distorted beyond all resemblance to human features. The same is true for the Romans who continued the mask tradition which made the doubling of roles easy.

During the late Middle Ages in Europe, dramatic enactments of Bible stories were prevalent, hence actual Christian vestments were worn for theatrical performances. Oklobia and Bakare suggest that, “The Medieval period saw stage costumes as a marvelous mix of the real and the symbolic...” (103) Costumes in Medieval drama were nearly identical to the robes worn by the priests who originated the liturgical texts. Cohen opines that “The priest who first enacted the *Quem Queritis* trope (liturgical text) in medieval Europe simply wore their sacred albs...” (147) Costumes in Japanese Noh drama were based on the spiritual rather than secular world. Brockett and Hildy opine that, “The most typical Noh plays have as protagonist ghosts, demons...Noh plays are extremely varied, all draw on...Buddhist views.” (626) Cohen also posits that:

...the actors of the classical Japanese noh drama even today wear costumes that relate more to spiritual sources than to secular life. Ancient uses of costuming have served primarily to separate the actor from the audience, to “elevate” the actor to a quasi-divine status. (147)

Later, in Elizabethan performances during the 1500-1600s in England, costume became the most important visual element. Garments were very expensive because only the finest fabrics were used. The majority of characters were clothed in Elizabethan fashion. The Elizabethan costumes were regal and ceremonial but were rarely used to establish character. Cohen opines that, “English theatre of this time was known throughout Europe

for the splendor of its costuming, but apparently little effort was made to suit costume to characterization.” (148) In Shakespeare’s time, it was common to see some actors wearing contemporary clothing alongside some who dressed for the period in which the play was set. Brockett records that, “Like the medieval, the Elizabethan mind had little sense of history, and characters from almost any place or time could be dressed as Elizabethans would.” (170) Otherwise the costumes could be divided into five categories: “Ancient”, which was used to represent another period; “Antique”, which were made of older additions to contemporary clothing to distinguish classical characters; “Dreamlike”, which were fanciful garments to represent supernatural or allegorical characters; “Traditional” which were clothes used to represent characters like Robin Hood, and “Racial” which were costumes intended to set apart a specific group of people. In the commedia del’arte pieces of Renaissance Italy, costumes for recurring characters helped in signifying gender, occupation, age and education.

Costuming more similar to what we know today came acquired much of its present attributes during the 18th and 19th centuries when more realist elements began to dominate both the Western and African theatres. According to Cohen: “The shift of stress in costuming from a “dressing up” of the actor to a defining of the character came about gradually in the theatre’s history.” (147) The idea of visual unity and a production as a total concept was established in the early 1900s, and the director evolved to fuse the different elements- text, concept, performance, design, and lighting into a seamless whole. Lyndersay posits that, “The evolution of a stage costume is towards its ultimate purpose: to create and dress an image which clearly enhances the delineation of a character.” (3)

Hence, it was a gradual change whereby we started to see costumes used in a realistic mode.

2.5 Igbo Dress Culture

Clothing in Igbo society has existed since pre-colonial times. Pre-colonial Igbo people were said to have made clothes from the tree-backs and white cotton wools. These tree-backs are beaten into soft materials which the ancient people used in covering their private parts. Investigating craftsmanship in Western Igboland, Isichei and Ohadike conducted an interview with Josephine Ojeah, a native of Isele-Uku. Excerpt from the interviewee account reads: “In the pre-colonial days we made use of cloth which was made locally. This was hand-woven. The weaver made cloth from the cotton plant *mkpulu olulu* which we planted in our farms.” (159) Isichei’s account records that “The *mkpulu olulu* and *ufa*, after processing, end up as white threads, hence the cloth produced is white. But some weavers produced cloth with red and black patterns.” (159) Sometimes ornaments such as *jigida*, rings, bracelet and anklets were worn. Isichei describing the ornaments used by the traditional Igbo people for beautification records that:

...they also wear finely made metal rings – also simple brass bands...and sometimes even ornately worked rings of gold...some wear chains made of wire [*dalla*] round their necks; others wear a bracelet of wire round the wrist, [*undalla*] or a horseshoe shaped brass ring [*balla*] round the ankle. (16)

Similarly, Lyndersay describes the variety of Igbo women’s adornments. According to her:

Women and girls always showed a fondness for trinkets...fashions varied; ear and hair ornaments were (and are) very popular...and in one part, huge plate-like brass anklets found most favour...at Onitsha, ivory is preferred to brass or copper. The anklets *odu* are formed of largest elephant tusks...They vary in depth; the usual size being about six inches, and form two to three inches in thickness. (419)

In the traditional times, maidens from rich homes at Awka celebrated the *ngba nja* ritual. That is, the fattening room outing for girls from rich homes. During the preparation, the traditional costume and makeup designer who prepared the young maiden for the theatrical performance; kept her in her house. As step to making the celebrant up, the traditional designer scrubbed the celebrant's skin with *uvie* (red cam wood) for some days before the outing day. The *uvie* illuminates and makes the skin supple and more attractive.

On the day of *ngba nja* performance proper, the maiden is wrapped with *nja* (a brass spiral leg band) from her knee through the ankle. Based on Basden's account, Lydersay relates that:

These are forged out of solid brass bars by the Awka blacksmiths...[and are]in size from seven to fourteen inches in diameter...Young girls were fitted with smaller sized samples...spiral rings made of...brass. A complete pair called *nja*... [is] never worn after marriage. (419)

Similarly Aniako maintains that, "It is, however, the period of maidenhood which provides the dramatic focus for body adornment among the Igbo. This is more so because change of status is affected by the considerable use of body adornment." (334) *Nja* in Awka signified affluence. The *Igba nja* celebrant wore *jigida* coral which reached her thigh. Her skin previously scrubbed with *uvie*, was then adorned with *uli* of beautiful motifs. Describing the dress culture of traditional Igbo people, Utoh-Ezeajugh posits that:

The most significant aspect of Igbo dress culture is the intricate body decorations made with *Ufie*, *Uli*, *Ogalu*, *Uli Ogbu*, *Nkasiani* and *Nzu*...*Uli* body decoration was made on the body for the purpose of enhancing beauty and defining socio-cultural circumstances. (39)

Igbo women traditionally carry their babies on their backs with strips of clothing binding them to their babies and knotted at their chests. Maiden wore mini-wrappers with waist beads. Lydersay opines that, "...unmarried girls usually wore a one-piece wrapper tied

from the bust, reaching to the knees and or upper calves. A short skirt (*mbe n' ukwu*)...was worn as underwear.” (417) Men wore loin clothes that wrapped round their waist and between their legs and then fastened at their backs. These style f clothing was appropriate the harsh elements as well as jobs such as farming, palm-wine tapping and hunting. Umukoro posits that:

From a broad perspective however, the classification of the Nigerian traditional dress is first and foremost founded on gender lines. That is to say that the male and female dichotomy is usually evoked in the different ethnic collections of dress and accessories belong to the different categories associated with the different Nigerian groups and subgroups. (52)

With the influential of colonialism, Igbo people adapted the Western dress cultures. The immigrant Europeans gave the indigenes Western clothes as gifts in order to encourage modesty. Thus, modesty was a major reason that propelled the people to wear Western clothes. Before colonialism, married women wore two pieces of wrapper, with the one closest to the skin reaching to the ankle, and the second wrapper reaching to the knees. These wrappers are worn with a blouse made of the same material. According to Lyndersay, “The imported Dutch printed cloth (*abada*) was mostly used by women when not wearing locally hand-woven cloth. Special cloth or garments (*afe uka*) were set aside for wearing to religious services.” (417) With European influence, some Awka men began to wear *bante* (panty-like clothe with rope in the front to aid adjustment). This style was influenced by the *iwa-ogodo* (loin clothe) design of the traditional Igbo people.

Basically costumes then were used to indicate wealth, as the wealthy women were identified with *odu*. Men of prestige wore *ichi*. Aniako accentuates:

...the ultimate in men's body markings which are worn on the forehead, are the prestigious *ichi* markings which serve as the badge of authority of the wearer, his status symbol...They define his social and political identity and

accord him social visibility...Igbo woman of status would waddle in a pair of heavy metal anklets...as a sign of wealth, prestige and social influence... (337)

Traditionally, young Igbo men wore lion clothes, older men were dressed in calve-length cotton wrapper gathered and knotted at the belly. Some Igbo clothes were worn to help modify the wearers movements, making him/her move in a dignified way. Thus, giving the wearer a dignified posture and in turn signifying an elevated economic or social status. Examples of such costumes are the *odu* of the Onitsha *Otu-odu* women, the *nja* of the *igba-nja* maiden-group of ancient Awka, the *nja* of the *Ine-ezi* maiden-group of Anam and the costume of the *Ijele* masquerade of the Umueri communities of Anambra state. These ornaments were used to symbolize merits, authority and status in society. Hence, we can deduce that the Igbo traditional society has a lot of accessories which Nollywood adopts and uses in character creation.

2.6 Theatricality of Costumes

Theatricality of costumes defines the differences between costumes and everyday dress. Theatric characters tend to communicate with costumes. Theatrical costumes could supplement dialogue. It can be interpreted on the basis of a code that is assumed to be generally known in our culture. Costume elements could therefore function as emblems and signs with meaning. According to Lyndersay, “In theatre, there is a sharp division between ‘theatrical’ and ‘ordinary’ clothes. It is the theatricalness of costume that is the distinguishing factor between dress as ‘ordinary’ and ‘costume’.” (2) Costumes tell viewers of theatrical productions who the characters are, what they are like, how they feel, or what they would like to be – a glance at character’s costumes may tell you who the character is. So, costuming determines to a great extent the first impression audience make of

characters. So clothes must be transformed into costumes for use on stage. So, theatrical costumes can also serve as a repetition of a spoken word. For example, if a mourner says “I lost my husband and she is wearing a black costume, the black costume repeats and continues to emphasize her speech. In this scenario, the costume constitutes the same meaning as the verbal signs –it is repeated and substantiated. This according to Lyndersay “...is accomplished through a careful selection, adaptation and blending of the options available.” (2) Hence, for centuries characters have used costumes and other body adornments as forms of nonverbal communication to indicate occupation, rank, gender, locality, class, wealth and group affiliations. According to Gillette, “There may be some truth to the adage that “clothes make the man.” (385) Gillette maintains that:

A study, summarized in the book *The Four Minutes Sell*, by Janet Elsea, indicates that during the first four minutes of contact with a stranger, our understanding of that person’s nature and personality will be based on three primary, but equal factors: appearance, 55 percent, tone of voice, 38 percent, and what the person is saying, 7 percent. (385)

So, from Gillette’s submission, we can deduce that theatre character’s appearance and costuming determine to a larger extent the first impression they create. Categorically, what an actor/actress wears and how he or she wears it says a great deal about the character he/she is portraying and the society in which he or she lives. Russell opines that, “Costume can establish the locale of a production. That is, whether it is set in the city, the country, a particular nation, or north, south, east, or west of a particular continent or country.” (9) Similarly, film uses costume as a form of nonverbal communication to reveal characters. Costume as element of film production is therefore a form of communication. Costumes not only embrace clothing but also skin colour, accessories, hairstyle and jewelries. What

actors wear in films; provide the audience with shorthand to subtly read the surface of the film's background and social situation. Lyndersay posits that:

They can become emotionally charged through the subtle and careful use of colour, line, texture and sound, suggesting a multitude of sensations, thereby, putting the viewing audience in the appropriate mood for the action of the event... (2)

While the basic component of film is the actor, most films are incomplete without the addition of costumes. Costume plays an important role in the film, character creation, and visual aesthetic in film production. Brockett opines that the purposes of costume design are, "to aid understanding and to interpret the play." (555)

Film costumes to a large extent are however culture-dependent. According to Barthes ideals, film costume would operate effectively and meaningfully within the confines of a specific setting. In agreement, Umukoro accentuates, "Drama and society are so inextricably interwoven that the study of dress as a basic theatrical concern tends to hinged on the study of dress in social reality, usually of the perceived background of the play." (47) To Barthes Roland however, no meaning is inherent or natural. Thus, film-costumes must be interpreted based on its composition and the setting of the film, because meaning in semiotics is a product of culturally-shared signification and a cultural product.

2.7 Film Costume Design

Film costume is clothing and accessories specifically designed and worn for dramatic performances that are recorded in films. It connotes whatever is worn on the performer's body. Film costume conveys information about the character and aids in setting the tone or mood of the film. According to Umukoro, "...costume...bear indices and attributes which most appropriately evoke the personality of the actor(s)...it serves basically as tool for character delineation..." (54) Furthermore, Utoh-Ezeajugh defining costume submits,

“These instruments are used to physically transform performers, thereby aiding them to lose their own identities and assume that of the characters they are impersonating...they are universally regarded as indispensable aids to performance.” (83) Film costume may also refer to the style of dress particular to a nation, a class, or a period. They are produced to denote status and visual interest to a film character.

Thus costume is regarded as a language that has its own dialectics and is used by film to tell its story. Film costume however does not refer to some phenomenon outside the film’s world, but to a concept in the film’s milieu; that is culture inherent, and not the culture external to the film being viewed. It is the film’s milieu that mediates the reality of the viewer. He/she see only what costume (in the context of a particular film) allows him/she to see both inside and outside the character. Umukoro suggests therefore that,

...costume as a cultural sign should incorporate meaning bearing emblems that point the direction not only to the social and cultural background of the play but as well as those of the individual characters. This should include such characteristics as mood, age, time, status or rank. (56)

Reading of film costume requires reading of the signs and symbols inherent in the particular costume. In other words, semiotics the study of signs is a means by which the language of film costume is read and analyzed. Semiotics however, sought to determine not what the costume means but how it generates its meaning. French linguistic Ferdinand de Saussure, who is generally regarded as the father of modern linguistic following Nietzsche’s ideal about objective truth, proposed a model for studying language. According to Berger:

Ferdinand de Saussure described his hopes for the science of semiotics in his book *Course in General Linguistics*...A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable, it would be part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology. I shall call it

semiology...Semiology would show what constitutes a sign, what laws govern them. (48)

Saussure's idea swept away the 19th Century correspondence model between words and things and gave us language that is connected only conventionally and arbitrarily to the world outside it. One of the concepts important to Saussure's explanation of language system is that of signs, which he describes as being composed of two parts: 'signifier' (which this research takes to mean accessories, hand-props, makeup and elements and principles of costume design), and its meaning, called the 'signified'. A crown for instance, is a signifier of royalty. The concept that flashes into our mind when we see crown on a character is the signified. So in this case royalty is the signified. According to Berger, "We must keep in mind the point made by Saussure, that the relation between a **signifier**, or marker (what he called a sound or object), and its **signified**, or meaning, is arbitrary and based on convention." (23) So a film costume can no longer be conceived as a symbol that represents a character outside of it, as it had conventionally been known. So if a film character is dressed in lab coat, we will not instantly conclude that he is a medical doctor. Rather we will look into the character, situation and context of film to know who the character really is. Previous actions, context and situation may help to reveal the character. These will help us to know whether he is an assassin pretending to be a doctor in order to get into a ward and kill a patient. In other words, lab coat will now be defined in relation to the character and situation. Thus in semiotic terms, lab coat becomes a symbol representing a context, situation and a character.

Film costumes therefore do not simply record our world or provide labels for what it means, instead, according to Saussure's ideal, costume constitutes the world of the character wearing it; it structures his/her experience. Consider, for example how costume

designers of different video films tend to have differing views of the interpretation of characters (they see the world through different cultures). Thus, a Hollywood costume designer interprets a witch through the eyes of the Western culture, while a Nollywood costume designer interprets a witch through the eyes of African culture. Within the Saussurean tradition, the task of analyzing costumes therefore goes beyond looking at the specific costume colour, fabric, texture, and style. Signs in costumes take the form of colours, insignia, images, textures and styles of clothes and accessories. Film costumes are not studied in isolation but as part of cultural and social systems. According to Berger, “There is a science that is of great utility in helping us understand how visual phenomena communicate- a field of knowledge called semiotics, the science of signs.”(48) Berger believes that semiotic is the key for unlocking meaning of all things. Saussure developed the principles of semiology as they apply to language; Roland Barthes extended these ideas to media costumes (magazines). Barthes developed a semiotic system for interpreting the discourse of fashion. Barthes’ *The Fashion System* suggests that costume can be understood as a language composed of codes, signs and significations. Barthes wrote on fashion’s relationship to temporality, memory and history. He critically investigated the potential of dress as metaphor in literary and visual analysis. Barthes was convinced that semiotics would provide an appropriate reading of modern culture since it is a science of signs that not only possesses a notion of ideology against which the truth of science can be measured, but promises a scientific way of understanding popular culture. Conforming to this, Umukoro opines that “Identifiable attributes of dress signifying a cultural unit are often found to be constant, persistent and repeatedly accentuated in the existing types in proliferation.” (50) Nollywood film costumes are therefore adaptations of the traditional,

ancient and modern dress codes of the Nigerian people. In his work, *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure focuses on the linguistic sign, making a number of crucial points about the relationship between the signifier and signified. In his view, the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary. Different languages use different words for the same things. Similarly, the meaning we ascribe to a costume in a film is based on collective behaviour, convention or culture. Apart from cultural and social meaning, film costumes are neutral. They only assume meaning through cultural context of the film which holds it. Quoting Saussure Berger states, “Concepts are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms in the system.” (51) For instance, a black costume is defined by its relationship with a white costume (which is its opposite). Consequently, we define black as connoting gloom or evil, since white has culturally been attributed with purity. Meaning of film costumes therefore, are determined not by content but by relationship. Enahoro analyzing *Xala* by Sembene Ousmane posits that “The colour BLACK which signifies leaving the marriage is the opposite of WHITE, which signifies entering into marriage. The two costumes are logically related but are normally widely separated in time.” (56)

Through the elements of costumes, the costumes of film characters will read much like conversation, highlighting certain colours, fabrics, textures and lines to represent sentences that are able to acquire identity. According to Gillette, “What a person wears, and how it is worn, says a great deal about that person and the society in which he/she lives.” (387) However, the meaning one ascribes to a costume depends on previous knowledge of the meaning of clothes’ code and the socio-cultural realities of their environment. In one of the films analyzed in this proposal, *African Bride*, there are many specific signs that convey

messages for the audience to decode. The scenes that we see Adaugo wearing sleeping dress, suggest the time of day. They are subtleties within the film's costumes that allude to time, social status, career, and emotional makeup of the characters. *African Bride* amongst other things uses costume to introduce notions of evil dispositions of Adaugo. When taking account of the emotional forlornness and desperate attitudes of Adaugo, we can definitely establish links between costumes and emotional disposition. The black clothes and red lipstick she wears may thus serve as some kind of external manifestation of her inner turmoil and pessimistic outlook on life. The fraudster's outfits in dark grey colours underline the dark aspects of his character. His grey caftan, with an unusual puffy long-sleeves and unusual embroidery, further hints at his inhumanity.

Pierce according to Berger categorized the patterns of meaning in signs as iconic, symbolic and indexical. (49) An iconic sign looks like what it represents. A crown, cow tail (*nza*), beads (*akah*), and red cap may stand for royalty in Igbo society. Umukoro posits that:

Royal costumes as the name suggests refers to insignias of royalty. These comprise the King and Queen's regalia as well as those of other recognized members of the royal family. Inclusive are accoutrements of the royal office such as the royal staff of office and the throne. (52)

It should be noted that an icon is easy to interpret. Hence Umukoro reiterates "The king's regalia is an assemblage of readable signs..." (52) Secondly, an indexical sign is logically connected to what it represents, for instance, spaghetti top and sagging trousers representing a prostitute and a cultist respectively. Michael in *War College* by Okereke wears big black eye glasses, sagging jeans, with his jacket buttons undone revealing his chest- he is a notorious cultist in the film. The meaning of a symbol like Rosary beads worn

by Michael in this film is determined by social convention. In other words, its meaning is based upon agreement and learned through experience. Although rosary beads are traditionally sacred object used in prayer, in the social context of the film, Michael's wearing of rosary connotes rebellion. Berger suggests that "We have to learn about this connection and do so, often, simply from everyday life." (49) A good symbol, on the other hand, has conventional meaning, and there is no logical connection between this meaning and the symbol itself. It is something we have to learn, as with khaki clothes and the army. However, applying Pierce's idea can be quite complicated as Saussure suggests in his *Course in General Linguistics*. According to Saussure, the relationship that exists between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary or conventional. In other words, the relation is not natural but must be learned. Therefore, in Saussure's view, no signifier is self-explanatory neither does any signifier imply a specific signified. Hence, a black clothe can suggest bereavement, formalness or authority depending on the situation. In Saussure's opinion, a concept does not mean anything on its own; it is often defined in terms of how it differs from another concept. He opines that "Concepts are purely differential and defined not by positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms in the systems." (117) Meaning is therefore determined by relationship and not by content. The meaning of white costume is determined by its relationship with a black costume. Yet it depends on the situation or context of the film one is analyzing. So if the film is centered on the evil of man to man, white can then be used to signify the good, while black can stand for the wicked. But if the film revolves around life and death, then green can stand for life while black signifies death. We can thus say that, we make sense of signs by their opposites.

So, Berger submits that, "...a colour's impact depends to a great degree on the colour around it." (52) Black clothes in Igbo community used to be perceived as connoting evil. So people consciously avoided wearing plain black cloth because in those days it entirely signified bereavement and mourning. Therefore Lyndersay opines that, "For funerals...Women used *akwa uru*, a mourning garment which was usually black cloth or sackcloth." (421) Contemporary times however come with the Igbo people's acceptance of black clothes as being fashionable. Similarly, white clothes have also been adopted for mourning. So we see meaning changing with convention and time. Similarly, in the past among the Omambala people of Anambra state, women who are seen in plain white cotton clothes are quickly termed traditionalist (those who practice traditional religion), but in recent times, white clothes do not wholly suggest that the person is a traditionalist. The meaning of plain white clothes in this area now depends on the accessories used. If the person wears white tiny beads, it becomes a symbol of mourning. Originally, young people who wear the rosary beads on their neck are immediately identified as devout Catholics. But conventionally, the use of rosary beads as necklace has been found to connote that one goes with fashion trends.

Thus, analyses of film costume focuses on the social and cultural meaning of signs and codes of clothes and accessories. The meanings of signs depend on the relationship between the costume and what it points to. For example, people learn that the colours red and green as signifiers have certain signified meanings-stop and go with the referent being stopping and starting a car on the street based on a set of cultural codes and conventions. According to Berger, "A sign, from semiotic perspective, is anything that stands for something else." (49) For instance, there are several ways to suggest that an actor is

portraying a medical doctor. The actor could say, "I am a doctor", or a narrator could tell us. Or the actor could wear a lab coat and stethoscope. All these are signs that taken together suggest a medical doctor. The film itself is a sign- a representation of the real world. Talking about the theatre being a representation of the real world, Honzi gave an illustration with a voice in a radio drama. According to him, "...in radio plays, voice and sound represent not only dramatic characters but also all the other facts that make up the reality of the theatre: the stage, scenery, props and lighting." (270) Looking at therefore, costume as a sign in the theatre, a sign which stands for something else, Carlson reveals, "Costumes...almost inevitably make some kind of continuous commentary in the theatre." (291) Film costumes are therefore symbols worn by actors in films to represent characters' personalities, culture, religion, marital status, social and economic status, mood, time, place and preference. According to Oklobia and Bakare, "Costumes...are often used to suggest the locality and period that a dramatic action is set...Costume and make-up are one of the four elements that comprise the visual scene or environment of a theatre." (101) Film costume is a form of visual language used by filmmakers to tell their stories. According to Caldwell, "...filmmakers use visual elements to evoke ideas or to elicit an emotional response from the audience." (7) Costume is among the elements that contribute to a film's overall picture. Caldwell defining film costume posits that, "**Costumes** are the clothes, make-up and accessories worn by the characters. Other elements include the colours of the clothes and personal props. Costumes give viewers critical information about characters." (12) Film costume designers interpret the symbolic codes of costume (which include colours, lines, textures and mass of the costumes) in a number of different ways.

Film production is a field in Theatre arts, and according to Russel, “The art of the theatre is often understood to consist of two parts; the literary and the visual, or more specifically, the writing of the play and the presentation before an audience.” (3) In film, the production is filmed as shots and saved in video compact discs or computer devices and accessories and played at will. So, in designing film costume, the work of the designer requires a realistic presentation of characters through costume designs. Unlike a stage character that is ephemeral, the film character is immortal. Hence, the film viewer has a better opportunity to read and analyze character’ costume. Films can be viewed as often as desired to enable effective reading of symbols encoded in costume in relation to the culture being portrayed. Though, one may argue that photographs of costumes on characters can be taken during a stage production and thereafter studied for costume analysis. The fact still remains that even though a full portrait of characters may be captured in a stage play, the fleeting nature of stage production must have limited the spectator’s ability to critically study the culture inherent in the stage production. The costume analyst may then be required to consult the play script for a better understanding of the culture inherent in the play. Costume as mentioned earlier, is a product of culture which portrays personalities of a particular culture. Umukoro accentuating the relationship between dress and ethnicity posits:

Next to physical geographical demarcation, dressing, more than any other aspect of the Nigerian culture is often acknowledged as the most perceptible index of cultural disparity...The traditional Nigerian dress is thus that kind which is seen to belong to an identifiable Nigerian group. They may also be referred to as ethnic dress. (51)

Thus when a film costume depicts the marital status of a character, its depiction usually depends on ethics and codes of a particular culture. In other words, film costume is heavily dependent on the cultural code of the culture being portrayed by the film.

The Nigerian film industry has been using costumes and accessories as forms of nonverbal communication to indicate culture, occupation, social statutes, gender, sexual availability, locality, class, and wealth and group affiliation. Film costume connotes whatever is worn on the performer's body. It conveys information about the character and aid in setting the tone of the film. According to Umukoro, "...costume...bear indices and attributes which most appropriately evoke the personality of the actor(s)...It serves basically as tool for character delineation..." (54) Furthermore, Utoh-Ezeajugh defining costume opines, "These instruments are used to physically transform performers, thereby aiding them to lose their own identities and assume that of the characters they are impersonating ...they are universally regarded as indispensable aids to performance." (83) According to her, costume transposes the actor/actress into the reality of his/her role, and illuminates the character both for the impersonator and the audience. (83) Countering the submission of Peter Brooke and Jerzy Grotowski, she posits that costume as an element of play production, remains an integral part of characterization, so much so that performances would decidedly be incomplete without costumes. (84) Hence, listing costume as one of the "Sign Systems Common to all Dramatic Media", Esslin submits, "These, then, are the means, the tools by which the originators of a dramatic performance can establish their characters, paint their background and environment, and tell their story." (306)

Nollywood has two major categories of film namely the epic and the contemporary films. The epic mainly depends on the Nigerian ancient life and tradition, while the

contemporary extends to portray the Nigerian city social life. The social life of the Nigerian city people is an integration of diversified Nigerian tribal cultures, Western and Eastern cultures. It is a common knowledge that the Indian Sari has become the favourite of most Nigerian women. The Indian silky george is now preferred to the traditional type made with cotton. To this effect Umukoro suggests:

It may also, by persistent contact of an ethnic group with some others, be a feature borrowed appropriated and seemingly endorsed by its widespread acceptance and used as one of its ethnic symbols. Such emblems incorporated into the dressing cultures of an aboriginal group, play a signifying role: hence are seen as cultural icons. (50)

Hence, it will be right to define Nollywood costume as an embodiment of traditional motifs and Nigerian popular dress culture.

However, this research views film costume as an embodiment of signs. That is, signs that can be decoded by recalling the meanings of culturally assigned dress code but cannot be restricted to these assigned definitions. In conformity, Caldwell postulates:

In many classical Hollywood melodramas, black represents evil or suggests death; white represents innocence; red indicates passion, lust, seductiveness; and brown is earthly and practical. However, these stock colours can be used differently, so don't assume that they can just be learned and applied to all films. (33)

In *African Bride*, a Nollywood film, we often see Adaugo clad in black dress with her well made up face which is an indication that she is not bereaved (since Igbo culture stipulates that a widow who is still in mourning period should not have any form of beautification on her body- the culture of the characters is Igbo; as their names indicate). We therefore conclude that she is an independent woman with people under her authority. Ultimately, the colour black holds cultural significance for Igbo society (which is locale of the film) –

black is used for mourning and as Craig posits "...black has been associated with mystery, tragedy, and silence." (209) However, colours often have different meanings in various cultures. Black in films can be overpowering or make the wearer seem aloof or evil. Witches often wear black. Nollywood film costume as a cultural product comprises mainly of the Igbo traditional clothes and costumes drawn from popular culture. The individual items of clothing and accessories used in Nollywood films may be neutral but their functions are not. The functions of the Nollywood costumes are cultural and social. It is the uses to which they are put to and the functions they fulfill that produce meaning. Describing the functions of costume, Umukoro observes:

Functionality plays a pivotal role both in dress designation and categorization. The ritual dress for instance functions differently from the dance costume or even the hunting apparel. Each in its cultural context is perceived and conceived differently. Thus, by the unanimous and collaborative use of sign-vehicles for purposes of delineation, each in its individualized form assumes its own identity. While the ritual dress type is consciously assembled to carry an *esoteric* aura, the dance costume is conceived with a measure of fanfare and therefore *spectacular*. (53)

Although, Nollywood film costumes are neutral; their uses are cultural and social. Clothes put on by an actor in a film signify the identity of the character he is playing. Thus film costume is the embodiment of cultural and social signs, symbols and codes. The motif of film costume which is the sign language of costume is open for the viewer because it is understandable in his culture. It comes with recognizable features known by the viewer. Film costume is a cultural product used by filmmakers to portray personalities and traditions. When a film costume depicts the marital status of a character, it does so in relation to a particular culture. So viewer's familiarity with the inherent culture will aid his decoding the message embedded in the costume. For instance, if a viewer is not familiar with the signs and codes symbolizing a married woman in Indian clothes, it may be

difficult for the viewer to instantly decipher the message in an Indian film portraying an adulterous married woman on her visit to her lover. This is why film costume is culture bound. Nollywood film costume is therefore at parallel with semiotics of Igbo motifs and Nigerian popular fashion. Film costume is a signifying medium portraying clothes and their socio-cultural values. Barthes approached clothes as exemplified in fashion magazine from a semiotic point of view. Barthes recommends a total ideological description of culture to rediscover the articulations which men impose on reality. So the meaning of film costume is arbitrary and based on differences among textures, fabrics, lines and colours. The contrasting concepts such as smooth/rough, white/black, horizontal/vertical and satin/cotton make it possible for us to decipher the other more fully.

Film costume designer makes characters, ideas, story, and dialogue visible and audible through costumes. He/she creates a visible equivalent of happenings in the script on set. Film costumes use signs and symbols in the form of elements of costume design to communicate. Ihemnacho defines symbols as "...representative concepts, objects, ideas or images which express and signify something else, other than which is perceived or observed in reality." (99) Elements and principles of costume carry with them not only beauty but also messages. Film costumes do not only carry meaning but evoke the definitions of the characters wearing them. Leaning towards Barthes' ideal, words are supplemented with signs found in colours, lines, textures and other elements of costume design. For Saussure, a sign consist of two entities that cannot be separated from each other – "signifier" and "signified" Signifier in this study represents signs like colour, line, and texture, while the signified represents the idea they express. The relationship between a film costume and its meaning is conventional and based on agreement.

2.8 Signifying Elements in Igbo Costumes

It was culture and tradition that gave rise to theatrical activities. Hence, semiotics which is also culturally dependent is well suited for the study of Igbo costume. Nollywood films are based on Nigerian traditional culture. Nollywood's film can be categorized into two genres, namely: epic and contemporary genres. The contemporary films depend on urban Nigerian culture, while the epic films have been basically ancient culture.

Igbo people of South-east Nigeria have ancient clothes as well as clothes with new concepts integrated into the Igbo native clothes either by cultural evolution or by outside influence. Igbo costumes and body adornment are classified as Igbo arts. The culture of the Igbo people include their visual art, music and dance form, clothes and language dialects. Aniako posits, "To the Igbo, art, like language, is one of the most useful and effective tools for defining and shaping the artistic and cultural consciousness of the people. It is a cultural tool of survival in the Igbo world." (345) Hence, the Nigerian film industry has been using films to exhibit the array of indigenous Igbo clothing, makeup and fashion accessories. According to Umukoro:

The most pervasive Nigerian features found in indigenous Nigerian drama is the traditional Nigerian dress. Among the dynamic creations of human today, dress uncontroversially ranks top most of things that most pervasively distinguish or evoke him or her. (49)

Hence, Okadigwe making reference to costumes and makeup used in *Goddess of the Sun*, a Nollywood epic film, maintains that the costume and makeup used in the film are "homage to traditional Igbo heritage". According to her, "*Goddess of the Sun* has been able to portray to an extent the Igbo traditional world view in its use of costume, especially in the film's used of fabrics. The traditional Igbo society is

identified with Akwete material.” (65) Hence, it can categorically be said that studying the costumes of epic Nollywood films is parallel to studying the Igbo cultural clothes.

The clothes of the Igbo people generally consisted of little clothing as the purpose of clothing then were to conceal private parts, although elders were fully clothed, children were usually nude from birth till their adolescence, but sometimes ornaments such as beads were worn around the waists as a form of beautification for girls. Lyndersay posits that, “Children are believed to have nothing to hide and are usually naked until adolescence. A child may wear a string of beads around the waist...”(416) Men wore lion clothe, while women tie two wrappers, first wrapper is tied on the chest through the ankles, while the second one is tied on top of the first wrapper. It runs from the waist through the shins. *Uli* body painting was also used to decorate both men and woman in the form of lines, motifs and shapes. Aniako submits, “What seems paramount aesthetically is the graphic quality of designs painted on the body which has endeared this art form to the Igbo woman as a tool for the visual alteration, expansion and manipulation of the human body for aesthetic effects.” (334)

However, the Igbo traditional clothes are heightened because of the various sub-groups of Igbo community. According to Umukoro:

The Nigerian play, which often carries with it the eclectic disposition of its diverse cultures, presupposes that a costume designer working on the Nigerian play would necessary have to toe the line of showcasing cultural disparities in each subgroup by highlighting the varying cultural indices that illuminate such. (56)

Nudity for children is common among the ancient Igbo people, but fabrics worn by adults differ according to towns. Costume is an essential part of Igbo traditional culture because all their festivals are celebrated with splendid and spectacular costumes. Asigbo in his play

Fate of an Orphan, describes some aspects of Igbo costume designs based on the Anam people's culture. Describing an Igbo traditional prophetess, he posits, "She's attired in a red wrapper. A white head band covers her hair and on hand she carries a lump of chalk." (7) The signifying elements here are the colour red, the colour white and native chalk. In the Igbo traditional world, white symbolizes sacredness, while red clothe and native chalk point to the ritualistic terrain of the moment. Here costumes do not only portray social status, but also indicates situation and event. To describe the Igbo ancient costumes, we have to look at the socio-cultural life of the traditional Igbo people. Lyndersay describing traditional Igbo clothe opines that:

Chinwe Achebe (1958) in his internationally acclaimed novel, detailed many aspects of Ndigbo men's clothing habits in the late 19th century. Traditionally men wore loin cloths in place of wrappers to cover their private parts. *Okagbue* "was [in] his underwear, a long and thin strip of cloth wound round the waist like a belt and then passed between the legs to be fastened to the belt behind" (Achebe: 82). 407.

Loin clothes in the Igbo traditional world signify youthfulness. Wrestler wore it during their wrestling performance; hunters also wore it during their hunting escapades. It is still worn in the omambala area of Anambra state during the *ilo nmuo* (ancestral worship celebration). The *Ngba nja* of the ancient Awka people and the *Ine-ezi* of the Anam people both made use of *nja* (a brass leg-band signifying wealth).

2.9 Evolution of Nollywood Costumes:

Nollywood is the Nigerian film industry. It is the appellation of Nigerian's thriving film industry which began in Lagos in 1992. Nollywood films can be defined as the totality of films produced in Nigeria, be it in English Language, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Edo, Efik, Ijaw, Urhobo, Itsekiri or any other Nigerian language. The fact that these companies produce films abroad at times does not exclude these films from Nollywood films.

Nollywood has come to be a metonym for the motion picture industry of Nigeria. The release of *Living in Bondage*, its mass attraction and commercial success spurred other electronic gadget salesperson to join the emerging lucrative venture of film production. Consequently, a prominent film industry began to evolve, eventually becoming the most recognizable film industry in Africa.

The evolution of costume in Nollywood can be traced to the early beginnings of film production in Nollywood industry from 1992. Several scholarly accounts of Nollywood's history help to detect the evolution of costume culture in the industry and at the same time, define the dress culture that gave it form. Although, not much has been written on the history of Nollywood costumes, scholarly works on the history of Nollywood provide useful signpost on the evolution of Nollywood costumes. The Nigerian film industry as we know it today is believed to have emerged with Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* in 1992. Although, there were films done in Yoruba language and Igbo language before Nnebue released *Living in Bondage*, these films appeared to be purely ethnic and did not appeal to the entire people of Nigeria. Hugo posits that Nnebue, "Inspired by an existing informal film industry that consisted of amateur VHS recordings of the performances of Yoruba theatre troupes..." (20) Agber submits "The home video industry in Nigeria began with the production in 1992 of the video *Living in bondage* by Kenneth Nnebue, an Igbo businessman." (73) Hugo accentuates this claim as he recounts that:

The first Nollywood film was produced by a Lagos-based businessman named Kenneth Nnebue. He was, reputedly, having trouble selling a consignment of blank VHS tapes from Taiwan and thought he might shift the tapes quicker if there were something on them...Nnebue decided to have a go at making a video himself. His first film titled *Living in Bondage* was

released in two parts in 1992 and sold an unprecedented 500,000 copies.
(20)

Before now, the Nigerian film producers shot films on celluloid before they shifted to video format. So many factors prompted Nigerian film production shift from celluloid to video film: These include among others, cultural and security reasons. However, a primary reason was concern for economy. Hence, Ayakoroma observes: “The commercial success of *Living in Bondage* was an impetus for other artisans and peripheral businessmen, who joined to jumpstart what has become an industry.” (21) Agber also emphasizes:

The success of that pioneering effort led to the influx of several other producers including Amaka Igwe...among others into the industry. Since then, these producers have churned out thousands of video of varying themes into the Nigerian and international market. These developments have led to the emergence of a burgeoning industry... (73)

Reiterating this point Ayakoroma (2014) posits, “The business prospects of the contemporary Nigerian film industry received closer attention when Kenneth Nnebue came out with *Living in Bondage*... an Igbo language film, which was an instant hit.” (50) He reiterates, “Kenneth Nnebue, an electronic equipment dealer has the credit for recording a breakthrough in 1992, with the production of the first commercial video film, *Living in Bondage*...” (2) *Living in Bondage*, the pacesetter of the Nigerian film industry was done in Igbo language and subtitled in English language. *Living in Bondage* attracted the viewership of a mass audience of the Nigerian populace mainly because its story was familiar to the people. Unlike the foreign film which had hitherto captured the attention of most Nigerian audience with its story set in alien culture; *Living in Bondage* portray a world familiar to the Nigerian audience; thus making it popular among large Nigerian audience. According to Hugo:

In retrospect it comes as no surprise that *Living in Bondage* was so popular. Nigeria was being sold a (sensational) story of her own modern urban reality, packaged seductively in the same cellophane-wrapped manner of imported movies. Furthermore the plot truly spoke to Nigerians: Andy, the protagonist, eager to make it in the city of Lagos, gets sucked into a cult that demand demands the ritual sacrifice of his wife in exchange for riches. (20)

Although the major part of *Living in Bondage* was set in Lagos city, the costumes of its characters are replicas of clothes worn by urban Igbo people. As this film was immensely enjoyed by large number of Nigerians, both Igbo people and Non-Igbo people, other Igbo businessmen in the electronics market started pumping films done in English language into the market. According to Ayakoroma, opines “Though the film was in Igbo language, it opened the floodgates for producers to experiment by expressing themselves in a new filmic medium – the video film.” (2) From then on, the industry has continued to witness unprecedented progress. Ayakoroma posits that, “The commercial success of *Living in Bondage* was an impetus for other artisans and peripheral businessmen, who joined to jumpstart what has become an industry.” (21) The result was release of film like *Living in Bondage (Part 2)*, *Circle of Doom*, *Taboo*, *Rattle Snake* among others. All these films were done in Igbo language and depict Igbo characters. Thus costumes of the characters were designed to portray the culture of the characters that are mainly Igbo characters. The dominant presence of Igbo motifs in Nollywood costumes can therefore be attributed to the influence of the pioneer filmmakers in the industry who are mainly Igbo businessmen.

Nwafor posits that:

The story of the video film industry in Nigeria cannot be told without mentioning the contributions of the Igbos of South-East Nigeria. In fact the Igbo ethnic group have played a central role in the development of the Industry. That the stories and locations are predominantly eastern is simply in accordance and agreement with the popular saying that he who pays the piper detects the tune. (112)

Authenticating this claim, Ayakoroma reiterates:

It was believed that the experimentation would be a flash in the pan but it was not to be as the industry has grown beyond the wildest imagination of media watchers. For instance, buoyed by the unimaginable success, Nnebue did not waste time in coming out with a sequel, *Living in Bondage Pt. 2...This*. Unarguably, brought the Nigerian video industry or *Nollywood*, the popular parlance by which the Nigerian video film industry has come to be known, into existence. (2)

Thus, the various accounts of the history of Nollywood film industry are pointers to the origin of costume in Nollywood film industry. The origin of costume in Nollywood film industry therefore goes back to the costuming of *Living in bondage* and its contemporaries. From introduction of costume culture in Nollywood, there can be found in various costumes traces of Igbo cultural motifs with the characters and narratives attesting to the cultural significations of these motifs in relation to the film milieu. We can infer a veritable example from *Living in bondage*. Although, some female characters were costumed in Western dresses (which is in consonance with Igbo dress culture of the time), the male characters are most times shown in traditional attires. There is an instance where Paulo is dressed in the famous *isiagu* jumper with a black bowler hat. It follows therefore that the first phase of costume culture in the history of Nollywood is an embodiment of Igbo cultural motifs.

From the era of first Nollywood films, costume designers have made efforts to improve upon what was achieved by the first set of costume designers who were not professionals but have with constant practice learnt on costume designing and interpretation of characters through costumes. In the desire to improve on what was obtained previously, Nollywood costume designers relied on their immediate culture for inspiration. Fortunately for the designers, the continuous production of films took the

industry to a level where genres began to emerge in film production. So apart from the contemporary films which were centered on themes such as the *osu* (outcaste syndrome), get rich-quick-mentality, the industry expanded to include other genres that have national theme. Ayakoroma posits that, “In the bid to improve the circulation of video films beyond the Igbo enclave, Nnebue again pioneered productions in English with *Glamour Girls* (Onukafor, 1995).” (6) The theme of the film centers on the prevalent prostitution of Nigerian girls abroad. Thus English language Nollywood films were ushered in. Fortunately, the emergent English films were set in a world that is very familiar to the costume designers. It is note worthy to mention here that the narratives of the films portray the community, religious, cultural and social life of the ancient people.

Another development of costume in Nollywood films comes with the introduction of the epic genre of Nollywood films. Nollywood epic films are clear depiction of ancient traditional society. The costumes of the earliest Nollywood films were modeled from the Igbo traditional clothes. *Ijele* exemplifies the dress code of the Igbo people of the ancient times. The film shows maidens costumed in mini wrappers with clothes wrapped around their breasts. Married women in *Ijele* wear two maxi wrappers. With one of the wrapper tied on the chests, while men tie ankle-length wrappers. Beads and cowries are extensively used to adorn characters according to sex and social status.

The near-complete reliance on Igbo dress culture by Nollywood costume designers for inspiration continued for some time to be the practice amongst Nollywood costumiers until in recent time when the costumiers began to imbibe the art of syncretism in the art of designing Nollywood film costumes. This emerging costume culture appears to be a conglomeration of cultural motifs from diverse ethnic cultures in Nigeria. Consequently,

the emerging costume culture of Nollywood bears a national identity. Inspiration for the emerging costume culture can be found in the contemporary dress culture of Nigerians. The cultural dress of the Niger-Delta men seems to be the most popular among the Nigerian men today. This *Woko* jumper of Kalabari people popularly known as “senator” was popularized by the immediate past president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan. According to Ejiofor, “In ancient times, it was worn over a fathom of wrapper, and it sustains accessories which include a head-gear...In contemporary times, the *woko* attire is worn over long pants with shoes to cover the feet.” (63) This dress code has since then become the favourite dress code among Nigerian men-young and old, rich and poor. For the women, *iro* and *buba* of the Yoruba people of South-West Nigeria has recently been modified and appear to be the favourite among Nigerian ladies. Indian sari, embroidered chiffon and embroidered silk from India have all become the favourite fabrics among women of South-East and South-South of Nigeria. Thus Nollywood film costume has largely been influenced by society as these popular dress cultures have evidently been adopted into Nollywood film costume culture. This study thus believes that Nollywood costume designers get their inspiration from the dress culture of their immediate society.

The development of costume in Nollywood film industry can then be said to have stemmed from the use of costumes in Igbo traditional theatre and milieu. Costume culture in Nollywood film industry thus seems to be an extension of Igbo traditional theatre costume culture and Igbo dress culture. This research notes elsewhere that early Nollywood epic films started with the portrayal of costumes which are purely of Igbo origin, as in films like *Ijele*, *Igodo* and *Ojadike* among others. The Nollywood films costumes has progressively developed into costumes which are conglomeration of clothes from diverse

cultural origin. The reason for this conglomeration owing to the fact that Nigeria as a country is a conglomerate of different cultures. In order to depict the country's diversity, Nollywood film industry integrates into the already existing Igbo costume, motifs from the various parts of Nigeria thereby, giving Nollywood costume culture a new and unique identity. A lot of factors come into play in the formation of Nollywood costumes. They are: Igbo myths and legends, culture, religion and belief system and most recently the unity in diversity of the Nigeria culture. These emerging costumes culture which are still packaged as Igbo costumes have come to be identified by Nollywood film viewers as Igbo costumes.

So, while the designs of early Nollywood costumes were inspired by Igbo cultural motifs, Nollywood costume designers have been able to codify the diverse Nigerian cultural costumes into one national costume that evokes the Nigerian identity in the mind of viewers. An example is in the case of the king in Odife Iyke 's *Royal Insult* - a film set in Asaba which is an Igbo speaking part of Delta state. The king in this film is wholly dressed in Oba of Benin regalia and accessories, his wife the queen is at all times donned in Igbo cultural clothes. Yet viewers had no problem in recognizing his identity or locality.

The cultures that constitute the costumes of the present day Nollywood films are a conglomeration of motifs from the various ethnic cultures in Nigeria. Although, what is observed in Nollywood films is that Nollywood films costumes were influenced by Igbo dress pattern, the costumes continue to development alongside the industry. In the recent times, Nollywood costume designs have evolved to encompass cultural clothes of almost all the ethnic groups in Nigeria. The industry now adopts the Nigerian contemporary dress culture which is usually an epitome of the syncretism of diverse cultural embodiment of Nigeria. It is against this background that Doki argues that: "Theatrical performance, for

whatever function it is intended, is conceived within the ambience of human society and must reflect that society.” (3) Nollywood film costume culture today, is based Nigerian ideal and the motifs and symbols of these costumes are there to enhance and to bring the visual communicative thrust of Nollywood films to full fruition.

2.10 Films Semiotics

Film semiotics is the study of signs as they pertain to film on a variety of levels. The filmic codes define the meaning of uses of close-up, long, medium shots, angles (high/low), framing, cropping, among others. Rushton and Bettinson call semiotics and structuralism “the foundations of contemporary film theory”. According to them, “Many writers on cinema who were active from 1910s to the 1960s might be described as film theorists. However, a major turning point in film studies occurred in the 1960s under the influence of an intellectual movement broadly known as **structuralism.**” (1) While Barthes’ methods still play an important role in the development of film theory, Christian Metz, a French film theorist became best known for pioneering the application of Ferdinand de Saussure’s theories of semiology to film. Metz’s work had a major impact on film theory in Europe and America. In his *Film Language: A Semiotics of Cinema*, Metz argues that cinema is constructed like language. Adopting Saussure’s models, Metz argues that:

One might call language any unity defined in terms of its matter of expression. Literary language, in this sense, is the set of messages whose matter of expression consists of five tracks or channels, moving photographic image, recorded phonic sound, recorded musical sound, and writing. Thus cinema is a language in the sense that it is a technico-sensorial unity graspable in perceptual experience. (37)

Based on the above postulation, this paper chooses to analyze films via one of the channels of language which according to Metz is “moving photographic image”, which in this case

is costume. Film semiotics makes us critically aware of the language being used, and that results in an enhanced understanding of the way in which film is a representative of cultural and counter-cultural values. According to Metz:

In everyday communication, the understanding of the receiver of a message is very much dependent on the medium and the field of experience of the message sender. A word, a concept, an understanding is potentially brimming with layers of meanings, allusions, possibilities for further adaptation, and so on, depending on historical/cultural background of the decoder of such information. (689)

Metz's writings on cinematographic problems were informed by insights from structural linguistics. The film-language concept was explored more deeply in the 1960's when post-structuralist thinkers started to criticize structuralism. Metz (a post-structuralist) wrote, "The study of the cinema as an art- the study of cinematographic expressiveness- can therefore be conducted according to methods derived from linguistics...through its procedures of denotation, the cinema is a specific language." (5) Although, semiotics is closely related to the field of Linguistics which for its parts studies the structure and meaning of language more specifically, it also studies non-linguistic sign systems. Semiotics can be applied to all sorts of human endeavours, including dance, costumes, makeup and architecture. According to Berger:

Ferdinand de Saussure described his hopes for the science of semiotics in his book *Course in General Linguistics*...A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable, it would be part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology. I shall call it semiology...Semiology would show what constitute a sign, what laws govern them. (48)

Within the Saussurean tradition, the task of the semiotician is to look beyond the specific text. Unlike the written word, film's basic text, which Metz argues is the shot, is

neither symbolic nor arbitrary but iconic; therefore it is laden with meaning. Text for the purpose of this study would be referred to as colour, fabric, texture, line, shape and mass of costume). Metz suggests that film is a language in which each shot used in sequence works like a unit in a linguistic statement. In his theoretical model known as the “Grande Syntagmatique” Metz argues that individual cinematic texts construct their own meaning systems rather than share a unified grammar. Metz model goes beyond Saussure’s model “langue” which suggests a delimited structure of meaning. Saussure’s model unlike that of Metz defines structure of meaning. Eagleton posits, “Another way of putting Saussure’s point about the differential nature of meaning is to say that meaning is always the result of a division or ‘articulation’ of signs.” (110) Barthes interpreting Saussure’s linguistic system posits that:

The linguistic mechanism operates on two levels: the systematic system and the variation by speaking actors. The former is called ‘langue’ and the later ‘parole’. Langue is the systematized set of conventions necessary to communication, indifferent to the material of the signal which composed it, as opposed to it. Speech (parole) covers the purely individual part of language. (13)

But for Metz, film shots which are the filmic text, construct their own meaning system. So because we are dealing with costume in this research, we will take “text” to mean elements and principles of costume.

2.9 Semiotic Reading of Costumes

Semiotics of costume attempts to explain what kind of meaning costume colours, lines, fabrics, mass and textures produce. It can be traced back to the classical period where for instance, accessories like beaks and feathers were used to suggest birds in Aristophanes’ *The Birds*. Then during the Middle age came extensive employment of

symbols in the use of costumes. In the Medieval period, the use of religious icon became prevalent. These icons were objects, concepts or biblical figures. Symbols representing sacred significance were used to tell biblical stories. For instance, key was used to symbolize Peter. Therefore, semiotics of costume accepts the argument that the costumes film actors wear are significant and meaningful. It believes that costumes are used to pass a great deal of information in film productions. Although film productions convey information as verbal expression, film production uses other forms of media like set, sound, light, makeup and costume to pass on non-verbal but effective information on culture and characters. Costume as used in this paper encompasses everything worn by actors in film. It includes makeup, accessories, hand props and clothes used by actors in film. It is anything the actor wears or carries that aid in defining his character. According to Russel, "Costumes can and do bear a great weight of fact- suggested meaning to an audience." (27) Film costumes go to convey meanings through the elements and principles of costume design. The argument for this claim is buttressed by some specific emotions elicited by particular colours and textures of clothes worn by film actors. A white costume tends to elicit awe in the viewer, while a black costume tends to evoke horror. However, the tenets of semiotics hold that meaning is neither static, nor is it universal. According to Saussurean tradition, the creation of meaning involves the relationship between the "signifier" and the "signified". Explaining Saussure's principles of "Signifier" and "signified", Eagleton opines that, "Saussure viewed language as a system of signs...Each sign was to be seen as being made up of a 'signifier' (a sound-image, or its graphic equivalent), and a 'signified' (the concept of meaning)." (84) Eagleton goes further to explain that in Saussure's view,

the relationship between the signifier and the signified is an arbitrary one. Using the signified 'cat' as an example, he posits that:

The three black marks c –a -t are a signifier which evoke the signified 'cat' in an English mind. The relation between signifier and signified is an arbitrary one: there is an inherent reason why these three marks should mean 'cat', other than cultural and historical convention. (84)

Hence, the semiotics of costume is defined by the knowledge and understanding of cultural and social meaning of dress codes. Hence, Umukoro postulates "The effective communication of the costume designer's visual statements is however dependent on the perspicacity of the target audience." (55) Jimada also postulates that, "Culture emerged as a shared historical experience of a given society which, of course, is continuous and ever changing and developing." (1) The ability to decode signs and symbols aid us in constructing opinions about others. In other words, signs and symbols facilitate understanding and enhance effective communications. However, meanings assigned to signs and symbols are culturally based. Umukoro posits that:

The purely subjective costume designer is more likely to package his/her ideas solely from his/her own perspective...His/her choices are determined usually by a number of factors. These include his/her personal experiences, the cultural background of the play as well as its dramatic elements. (55)

Hence, semiotic theory focuses on the social and cultural meaning of signs and symbols. To this effect, Umukoro reiterates, "...the costume designer's choices are guided by the play's socio-cultural background, his personal knowledge and experience..." (55) Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols of all kinds, what they mean, and how they relate to the things or ideas they refer to. Signs consist of image, a word, an object or even a certain type of practice. Furthermore, Barthes Roland, a key figure in semiotic theory, argues that the meanings of images are cultural and ideological. For this reason Umukoro

maintains, “The need for a costume designer to have more than a vague knowledge of the history, culture and people of the ethnic background against which a particular drama is set cannot be overemphasized.” (50) So when we see a character in film costume, what we decode depends on a number of factors, including our knowledge, socialization and culture. Our belief that things exist in the real world is often tied to what we have seen; our faith in the truth about propositions usually is tied to reasoning and influence. For instance, the assertion that red clothes symbolize blood is usually tied to the conclusion that since blood is red, the use of red clothes also symbolizes blood. This is the reason why in African socio-cultural context, the chief priest or native doctors wear red especially when there is need to offer sacrifice to the gods which also involves the killing of animal and offering of its blood to the gods. Also, in Catholic Church, the priests wear red while celebrating Mass in honour of the death of Christ (Good Friday) or on the feast day of a martyr. All these instances are indications symbolizing blood. Hence, based on the African belief system, when we see a woman dressed in plain red cotton wrappers, our brain quickly tells us that she is embarking on religious rituals. However, semiotics is saying that seeing does not reveal the whole truth. Truth is therefore subjective; truth depends on context. The meaning we ascribe to the costumes we see in film is therefore influenced by personal feelings, taste or opinions (which are usually formed based on our culture and convention). In film, signification of costume depends to a large extent on context. In Catholic Church, red clothe is used in celebrating Mass in honour of the crucifixion of Christ (here red symbolizes blood), yet it is also used in celebrating Mass in honour of Holy Spirit (here red signifies the undeniable power and strength of the Holy Spirit). According to Berger, “The actual act of seeing is determined by the physical structure of the eye. What we perceive, of

course, is affected by other factors.” (19) People see in somewhat different ways. So the mechanism of seeing involves the relation between the eye and the brain. What we see in film, or perhaps what we focus our minds on when we see a film, differs from culture to culture. Hence, Arnheim posits: “Visual perception is not a passive recording of stimulus material but an active concern of the mind. The sense of sight operates selectively...perception involves problem solving.” (37)

Semiotics provides a way of playing with costumes and meaning that teases and delights. It attempts to explain what sort of meanings costume may have, how those meanings are generated and how costume communicates meanings. It is the rules for reading and interpreting costumes. There is no doubt that with a semiotics reading, film costume will be given an in-depth study and an understanding of costume in relation to the film character and the culture inherent will be reached. Semioticians are therefore called upon to excavate the implicit significations in costumes in order to fill in the suggested meaning of the film costume. This, they do by using their own experiences with cultural and social conventions, thereby creating continuous differences in interpretations. In other words, it is no longer a given in film that signification of costume’s colour, texture or fabric is static, absolute, and universal. With semiotics, meanings of costume elements are deemed to be relative, dynamic, and open. According to Dobie,

The long-held view of the world as a knowable, objective entity that could be discovered through direct experience of sense encountered serious challenges...In Philosophy, for example, thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) began to question the existence of objective truth. (151)

Nietzsche Friedrich called for a reevaluation of basic beliefs that would make it possible for human beings to develop their creative powers. Using different terminologies like

semiotics, spokespersons from other areas of study echoed Nietzsche's denial of an ultimate reality that is static, unified, and absolute, to be replaced by an understanding of the world as relativistic, dynamic, and open. Eco was one of the scholars who followed Nietzsche's school of thought, according to Brandt:

Initially inclined towards an open methodology that would give the interpreter a major role in determining the meaning of any given text, professor Eco later came around to the view that there was an inherent hard core of meaning and that interpretation had been given too much theoretical scope. (279)

The study of film costume was not immune to such probing. For many years, film costume has been viewed as a transparent medium through which significations could be set down accurately and shaped into an aesthetic form. But with semiotics, finding meaning, which was assumed to be present, required finding colours, textures, lines and fabrics that correspond to the character and context and culture observed. Thus, Umukoro insists that dress is a visual communication channel that more promptly and powerfully reinforces cultural identity than any other aspect of culture. Hence she quotes Fanon:

In the Arab world, for example, the veil worn by women is at once noticed by the tourist. One may remain for a long time unaware of the fact that a Moslem does not eat pork or that he denies himself daily sexual relations during the month of Ramadan, but the veil worn by the women appears with such constancy that it generally suffices to characterize the Arab society...(50)

Colours, textures, fabrics, and lines are therefore taken to be reflecting and presenting truths about characters and culture.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 SEMIOTIC ANALYSES OF IGBO CULTURAL MOTIFS IN NOLLYWOOD FILMS

This chapter analyses the elements in four Nollywood films. It notes the presence of Igbo cultural motifs and their significance in these films. Nollywood film costumes as a form of communication seem to be a cultural phenomenon. They appear to be important carriers of Igbo culture (culture of the predominant filmmakers). Nollywood costumes are cultural icons of their producers who are mainly of Igbo descent. As the art of costuming continuously evolve in Nollywood film industry, it appears that the art developed to integrate various cultural motifs from diverse ethnic cultures from within and outside Nigeria. This is also in tune with the Igbo dress culture of this time. The contemporary Igbo dress culture can be labeled as an amalgamation of diverse dress cultures, spanning across the globe. Costuming in Nollywood thus evolved to become a totality of Nigerian dress code. Although, what is observed today in Nollywood film costume design is a syncretism

of diverse dress-culture, they still show integration of several dress culture into the already existing Igbo dress-culture.

Because this study aims at tracing the impact of Igbo culture in Nollywood costumes, the researcher deems it necessary to discuss briefly the significance of Igbo cultural motifs. Before the advent of Nollywood, Igbo people had theatrical performances such as New Yam festival, masquerade performances, among others. Igbo cultural costumes were used for these various theatrical performances. In the traditional Igbo setting, no performance was enacted without a costume. Depending on the tone and height of the theatrical performances however, costume functioned to beautify in the case of dancers and to impersonate in the case of the chief priest or even to evoke emotions such as awe as in the case of a masquerade outing.

With the emergence of Nollywood films and based on the claim that most Nollywood films (especially the early Nollywood films) draw their stories from Igbo myth, legend, traditional festivals, cultural activities and religious worship; the Nollywood costume designs naturally evolved from traditional Igbo costumes as was used in the traditional performances and social life of the people. Thus Igbo dress culture played an influential role in creating Nollywood costumes. The influence of Igbo culture on Nollywood costumes began with the production and costuming of *Living in Bondage* (1992). During the 1990s, with the rise in popularity of Nollywood movies, Igbo dress culture became the model for Nollywood costumes. This is mainly because costumes were dictated by the filmmakers, actors and actresses who were mainly Igbo people.

Igbo cultural motifs as described in this study are the colours, fabrics, patterns and symbols found in Igbo traditional and modern clothes which have been culturally accepted

to connote messages that are familiar to the people. These motifs have also come to be identified by Non-Igbo people to depict Igbo identity. These comprise the ancient symbols, patterns and their significance as well as new concepts integrated into the already existing Igbo dress culture.

In keeping with semiotic doctrines as taught by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, semiotics, the science of signs and symbols can be related to anything that can be seen to signify a meaning or an idea. As a linguist, Saussure argues that language consist of a series of signs which are used to communicate certain messages and meanings. He suggests that our understanding and perception of reality is contrived and affected by the signs that we use in everyday social contexts. This assertion implies that, rather than signs illustrating and reflecting an already existing reality, they in fact mould our perception of reality. There are three main parts to the structure of semiotics: the sign (which is costume in this study), what it communicates, and the people who use it. That is, the culture to which the costumes belong. There are many varieties of signs in clothes and different people from variety of cultures perceive these signs in different ways. The conveyance of messages takes place through development and use of codes, the form and existence that these codes take depend on the society and culture within which they operate. Although some signs may seem to have universal connotation, signs are culturally bound. Codes are based on signs identifiable to the people. Signs and symbols are so important in communication that we need to situate our study of Nigerian film costume in a particular culture- a culture which is identifiable to us.

Nollywood epic films seem to be largely rooted in Igbo culture. That is why we chose *Ijele*, a film with Igbo traditional setting for this analysis. In reading this film, we are

studying the Igbo culture alongside its dress code which the Nigerian film industry condenses and telescopes in most of its epic films.

Ancient Igbo traditional costumes were determined mainly by age, economic, social and marital status and gender of the wearer. However, costumes of characters like masquerades are determined by function. Costumes were used to differentiate genders, age and social status in the traditional Igbo theatre such as new yam festival. Maiden-dance-groups were usually costumed in scanty mini-skirt, *mbenu-ukwu*, *jigida*, beads and *ijile*. Young-men performing *mgba* (wrestling competition) were usually dressed in *ogodo* (loin clothe). Chief priests were costumed in white wrappers. Kings and title-holders were identified with red caps, *nza*, *ofor*, hand-fan made with hide, white feather and *akahs*. In the epic Nigerian films, we see the ancient traditions and uses of the Igbo clothes carried over to the film productions.

3.2 Costumes in *Ijele* and the Significance of Igbo Cultural Motifs

Amata Fred's *Ijele* is discussed here as an example of how signs generate meaning in Igbo costumes. As with so many other epic films, there are a number of important ideas in *Ijele*. One is that of love and destiny. The film shows Ijele, the protagonist embarking on so many dangerous journeys to save Ola whom he has been fated to marry even before her reincarnation. A second theme is that of deceit and greed. The film shows the fall of Oladinma from the place of honour to that of shame. Another theme espoused by the film is the triumph of truth over lies and deceit. Oladinma, the antagonist and the chief priest take all the necessary steps to ensure that she remains the priestess of the rain as they wrongly conceived she was. But man is limited in his power no matter how he may attempt to alter the decision of the gods. The contrast then between man seeking to manipulate the

decision of the gods and determining to submit to the instruction of the gods is clearly depicted in this film. But while the will of the gods is always the superior force in the film, it works through man. It is Ijele's refusal to marry Oladinma (the self-imposed priestess), the villagers' quests for rainfall and Oladinma's attempt to kill Ola that lead inevitably to the enthronement of Ola as the chosen priestess. It is significant that no attempt is made to explain why the community suffer drought. It is implied that man must submit to the instructions of the gods. The drought is viewed as a punishment from the gods, the smiting of the self-imposed priestess and the diviner is an attempt of the goddess to pacify herself.

Costumes in this film enhance characterization, setting and spectacle. Costumes in *Ijele* provide visual information about the Igbo traditional world, the period the film was set, as well as the film's socioeconomic, religious and political environment. With the aid of costumes *Ijele* telescoped and portray the ancient Igbo milieu. Dignified characters like the king, priestess and chief priest wear elaborate magnificent clothes and accessories. Distinction is made between married mothers and maidens, young men and father, titled-men and common men, subjects and leader, sacred and secular, wrestlers and audience, farmers and hunters.

The primary goal of this chapter is to trace the presence of Igbo cultural codes in Nollywood films costumes. Since this study claims that Igbo cultural motifs dominate Nollywood costumes, this chapter will be interpreting signs in costumes of the films being read from the view of the Igbo traditional ancient people and Igbo contemporary and urban people. This chapter will show how the meanings of costume designs keep changing. Meanings generated by costumes proving to be largely dependent on characters, era and situations. We will discern and describe these multiplicities of meanings that costumes

generate taking into account the diverse elements that make costumes meaningful. We will pick the major characters of the selected films and critically read and interpret their costumes based on the Igbo cultural and social milieu.

3.2.1 Igwe: The *igwe* in Igboland is a monarch whose monarchy is counterbalanced by political groups from among the social classes such as the council of chiefs, clergies and age-grades. The *igwe* is usually advised by a council of chiefs and elders whom he appoints based on their good standing within the community. Igwe in *Ijele* is usually referred to as *Eze Odu*. The film portrays him as a good, sensitive, calm and humble leader who has the interest of his subjects at heart.

In his first appearance, he is in his Obi (Center building for receiving visitors. It also connotes his throne). He is in a white *akwete* tied from under the right armpit and knotted at the left shoulder. Describing the traditional attire of the Igbo man, Lyndersay posits that, “The men (i.e. the elders) ... they passed their cloths under the right arm-pit ...” (406) Igwe’s accessories are long red cap elaborately designed with feathers. The length of the cap and the elaborate feathers with which it was designed give the cap an elevated look which elicits honour. He is also wearing two strings of orange colour beads, arm-band made with silver and brass on both arms. He carries a white traditional hand-fan designed with some traditional symbols on his left hand and a black horse-tail on his right hand.

The costumes of Igwe as described above convey information about the Igbo culture. Every item of costume described above adhered religiously to the traditional Igbo world view. His costumes also indicate his social status as a king. *Akwete* fabric is an Igbo cultural locally spun clothe. It is a symbol of wealth and good taste. *Nza* (horse-tail) is a

mark of authority. Red cap is symbol of chieftaincy and portrays an Igbo traditional milieu. Arm-band indicates grandeur and strength. *Akabs* are also symbols of wealth.

On the day of *Igba-mgba* (wrestling festival), Igwe is magnificently dressed in george fabric, chequered in various colours, neck beads, wrist-beads, a crown (a mantle made in the Igbo fashion) intricately decorated with feathers, beads and other fanciful items. He also carries an *nza* to complement and complete his kingly status. *Igba-Mgba* is an Igbo traditional wrestling. It is a communal game. In this game, spectators are usually present to cheer the wrestlers and encourage them. The winner usually takes home a price. In *Ijele's Igba-mgba*, Igwe is amongst the spectators, but his elaborate and richly made costume differentiates him from other spectator; marking him out as an important character.

In the next scene, farmers in the community came to Igwe agitating against the adverse effect of the drought on their farm produce. Igwe is clad in same accessories as described above, light blue *akwete* designed with red and yellow rectangles. It seems that the costume designer (Millicent Jack) just played with colours as we see Igwe usually robed in varied beautiful colours of *akwete*. *Akwete* is a unique hand woven fabric mainly spun by women in *Akwete* town of Abia state. It comes in different motifs-the patterns ranges from plain stripped to heavily pattern ones. The signification and connotation evoked by a particular *Akwete* depends largely on the motifs in the *akwete*. In *Ijele*, *akwete* are largely used to depict important characters. According to Utoh-Ezeajugh:

For the Igbo of South East Nigeria, the dress culture for men evolved from *Ikpachi* or *Aka Nwoke* which was a woven cloth tied at the side of the waist, creating a kind of slit-opening from the waist down the length of the cloth, to *Akwete* and George wrappers tied in the same fashion. (38)

3.2.2 Ijele: Ijele is the young hunter from whose name this film's title is derived. He is an epitome of the Igbo young man of the ancient traditional Igbo society- full of strength and valour. As a day old infant, he is shown swaddled in white *oja* (shawl) made of *agbo*. *Agbo* is another variant of *akwete* fabric. The film does not show anything on his growing up, but transcend into his adult age. He is then shown as a hunter dressed in white arm-band made of hide, white wrist-band also made with hide, a long stick (his hunting tool), hair band, *ogodo* (loin cloth) made with white leopard skin, spotted with black. Lyndersay posits that, "Traditionally men wore loin cloths in place of wrappers to cover their private parts." (407) On his waist is worn a pouch which bears his arrows and other hunting tools. His chest is adorned with a black and white animal skin shield embellished with three cowries. Cowries in the Igbo ancient times, served as a system of currency. Thus in this film it is used to portray Ijele as a successful hunter. The number three is symbolic in Igbo cultural milieu – three is the number of *Ikenga* (a deity found among Igbo people). Among the Igbo people, *Ikenga* comprises of someone's *chi* (guardian angel), right hand as well as spiritual activation through prayer and sacrifice. Thus the three cowries worn by Ijele are symbolic to his character and occupation as they symbolize his *Ikenga* who always comes to his aid in the form of an old man. His entire costume made with animal skin depicts his occupation as a hunter. His back shielded with a whole animal skin portrays him as a successful hunter.

On his way to the Forest of the ancestor, he is given a diviner's bag made of brown hide by his guardian angel. The diviner's bag given to Ijele foretells the tasks ahead of him, namely tasks performed mostly by diviners. Note that he is referred to as son of the masquerade; he is dedicated to the gods at birth by his dying mother. This means he also

has the nature of the gods. This bag given to him contains all he needs to ensure a safe trip through the forest. It contains spiritual items like egg, native chalk and fowl.

As the winner of the wrestling competition of that year and the defender of Obiligwe community, the king decorates Ijele with a lion's hide and a head gear made with animal skin. King's choice of lion's skin to decorate a wrestling champion here is also symbolic. This also goes along way to portray his actual occupation.

At home, he wears only his loin-cloth made with hide. He is bared of accessories. Thus the costume designer uses costume here to indicate place and situation.

3.2.3 Oma: Oma is a young maiden of marriageable age. She is homely yet brave and courageous. She is the one whom the goddess chooses to be the priestess of the rain. But circumstances lead the community diviner and the king to misinterpret the actual message of the goddess. So, the king's daughter is installed as the priestess of the rain. This is the conflict in this film. This wrong choice brings calamity to the entire community. In her first appearance, she is clad in white *akwete* tied in the Igbo maiden's fashion. That is, a mini wrapper tied from the waist through the thigh (just slightly below the buttocks). A scanty size of the same material is wrapped around the breast and knotted at the back. This breast cloth is tied over the breasts and both ends of the clothes are knotted at the back. She is wearing about five strings of *jigida*. Her costumes depict modesty and homeliness. Her character shows her as a strong young woman who is wise but also very reserved. She is shown as an introvert. We never see her with any other girl or friends except her family members.

In another scene, she is shown in her sick bed. Here she is covered with a navy blue *akwete* designed with light blue vertical lines. Her costume is virtually the same in all

the scenes except for the string of black rope which bears three white elephant teeth as pendant.

Her costumes changes from the plain white *akwete* to a milk colour *akwete* designed with brown and ox blood colour horizontal lines during the *igba-mgba* festival. Here she also wears a string of ox-blood coloured neck-beads along with the black neck rope, a keep-sake she gets from Ijele. She is not wearing any *jigida* here probably because her *akwete* fabric has some colourful lines that run horizontally just like waist beads would. She wears her costumes just in the Igbo maiden style.

In this scene she is on her way back from the farm. She is being chased by three young men from the community who accuse her of bringing calamity on the community (that is, the drought). She is wearing a plain navy blue *akwete* with strings of dark red *jigida*. Her clothe is loosely tied and her tummy is thoroughly covered. It is just one wrapper tied from the chest to the knee. It seems very casual and informal.

At home, in the scene where the elders come to tell her father of the decision of the goddess to have her as a sacrifice in atonement for Ijele's refusal to adhere to the self-assumed priestess of the rain. Although, the decree to have her sacrificed is also an invention of the priestess. She is wearing a white *akwete* designed with two tiny black horizontal lines. The lines here are not intricate –they connote her simplicity.

In the scene where she is being prepared for the sacrifice (although she is made to believe that the preparation is for her traditional marriage ceremony), she is wearing a pure white *akwete* beautifully chequered with sky blue horizontal and vertical lines. Her head is decorated with red beads, on her neck, she is wearing the token from Ijele, that is a black rope and two strings of red beads- one is shorter than the other. One of these strings of

beads is partly red while the other half is green. The green colour is symbolic as Ola was made to believe that she is going to start a new life with her husband. Although the journey is meant to lead to her death, the green colour is a sign of hope for her survival. She wears about six strings bolder beads of red *jigida* and a string of green beads of *jigida*. Describing the traditional dress culture of Igbo people, Utoh-Ezeajugh posits that, “Rows of *jigida* waist beads were common with the traditional society.” (39)The recurring green in her costume, does in essence elicit hope for the viewers and even her father who has prayed to his *Chi* (guardian angel) for the protection of his innocent child from an impending harm in the evil forest. He seems not to be really perturbed as he exercises faith that his *Chi* will bring her back safely. She is also wearing wrist-bead on her right wrist and a red one on her left wrist. Her clothe is worn in the Igbo maiden style.

3.2.4 Princess Oladinma (the Self-Imposed Priestess of Olammiri Shrine): She is the daughter of Igwe who collaborates with the community Diviner to install herself as the Priestess of the rain even when the goddess evidently rejects her. She is shown as a coward whose confidence rests solely on her social status. So she seeks to eliminate whoever will serve as a hindrance to her purpose. Although she is very pretty and the princess of the Obiligwe community and her costumes religiously depict her desires and aspirations.

In her first appearance, she is shown coming to see her father the *Igwe* in his *obi*. Her hair is aesthetically decorated with dark red and green beads. Her waist is embellished with cords of pink, green and dark red *jigida*. Her clothe is a white *akwete* designed with dark red and green motifs, two tiny brown horizontal lines running across the motifs. She is wearing two strings of neck beads. She looks hopeful and full of life.

During the “test period”, which is before her installment as the priestess of the rain, she is seen with her acolytes in the street. Indigenes are seen already revering her as the chosen priestess. She seems very elated about this new development. She is adorned with a maxi blood red chiffon wrapper seemly designed with green wool and white cowries. The beautifications of her clothe goes beyond revealing her present status and extend to digging out her aspirations and ambitions. The colour red shows her passion for her elevated status from the community secular princess to her dearly anticipated spiritual leader. Lyndersay describing the significance of colour in Igbo costumes posits that, “Red signifies beauty on the one hand and a feeling of sacredness, danger and authority on the other.” (417) White decorations on her clothe draws attention to her assumed connection to the goddess. White and red in the Igbo cultural background relate to spirituality. Authenticating this claim about the significance of white in Igbo traditional dress culture, Lyndersay accordingly quotes Dureke thus, “...white, seen as innocence and purity, was used for religious purposes, weddings, and by worshippers of the river goddess...” (417) Cowries are very significant to the Igbo sacred milieu, although they served as means of exchange in the Igbo ancient times. Her top is also red chiffon with straps for sleeves, designed with white cowries. This blouse is arrayed with a fish motif. This pattern is symbolic to her character as priestess of the rain because rain fall aids the river to yield abundance. This will in turn make the inhabitants of water to flourish. The fish motif is very symbolic to her social status. She is holding a big red hand fan to complement her social status. This hand fan is a symbol of authority within the Igbo cultural environment. She complements her look with strings of white wrist-beads, white choker neck beads and her hair is beautified with strings of beads. Lyndersay is of the opinion that in the Igbo dress culture, “Hairstyles were also

an important aesthetic addition for women. Hair was ornately tied, plaited, bound in false hair, twisted and dressed with metal hairpins...as status positions warranted, such as being a chief's wife." (421)

On the day of the final test for the approval of Ola-mmiri goddess and the final prove that she is the priestess of the rain, her costumes reflect sacredness as it is obtained in the Igbo tradition. She is garbed in white cotton knee-length wrapper tied on the chest and knotted at the back. Her hair is adorned with cowries and red beads. She is wearing white strings of waist- beads, white strings of wrists-beads and brown choker neck beads. The colour brown relates to the earth and her status as priestess of the rain is very significant to the fertility of the earth. Without rain fall the earth may cease to yield fruits in abundance.

After her installation as the priestess of the rain, she begins to carry *nza*. *Nza* is a cultural Igbo item symbolizing authority and leadership. The *nza* here imbues her with authority. She continues to wear her red chiffon but this time it is arrayed with small round mirrors. Mirror is a spiritual item in the Igbo sacred environment. She is wearing an arm band adorned with mirror. On the day of *igba-mgba* festival, she wears a wrapper variegated with white and red.

On her visit to Ijele's house, she is holding a white *nza* which is smaller than that of her father the Igwe. She is dressed in a black *agbo* designed with dark red and silver horizontal lines. Her waist is adorned with dark green *jigida*. Her neck is embellished with string of white cowries. The situation here is that she goes to remind Ijele of the decree of the goddess. Namely, unless Ijele marries her and impregnates her, the drought in Obiligwe will continue. Although, she makes the indigenes believe that this decree is from the

goddess, it is actually her personal assumption. Her actions here exhibit threat with an undertone of love.

She visited Ijele a second time at night with the aim of seducing him. She is in dazzling white *akwete* designed with silver and purple horizontal lines. Here her *akwete* is a micro mini wrapper. Contrary to ankle-length wrapper she usually wears, this time her wrapper is tied in the Igbo maiden style. Her waist is beautified with dark red *jigida*. Her neck beads are bright red in colour, tiny in size but fuller than the previous ones she wears. Her hair is attractively beautified with white cowries, pink and red beads. Her legs are painted in *nzu*. *Nzu* in Igbo cosmology, along with kola nut and palm wine is an item of prayer and could be used in invoking the ancestors. *Nzu* also has healing properties. It is usually mixed with water to form paste which is then applied on the skin as detoxifier. It is also used for beautification especially by those who have relations with deities. This analysis of Costumes culture in the film *Ijele* has so far shown that the Igbo dress culture has largely contributed to the formation of the dress culture of the film. The film clearly draws its costume culture from the Igbo traditional dress culture.

3.3 Reading of Motifs in *Adaeze*

Adaeze, an Igbo Language Film Initiative Productions is a film done in Igbo language and subtitled in English. The film is directed by Stanley Amadi, produced by Sele D. Sele and the costumes were designed by Jennifer Ogbonna.

Treating clothes more or less in same way Saussure treated words, one discovers that costumes as coverings for the body have no intrinsic meaning in themselves, but can only be understood in relation to the culture, situation and context. Roland Barthes argues that cultural artifacts (clothes), presupposed systems of deep structures through which

social meanings could be classified. For Barthes, clothes sought to make benign on a surface level the deeper structuring presuppositions of a culture. Costumes in this film create look and mood for actors/actresses in the film. Costume designs reflect the story being told and portray the characters' personalities, culture, age, social status and relationships. The exposition of the story and characters by particular fabrics, colours, textures and lines is the function of costume. Costume in *Adaeze* does tell a story.

The film is based on *Adaeze*, the princess of Naze community, and costumes in this film defines the attitude and feelings of the characters which change with every new scene, setting and development. Costumes establish the genre of the film which is epic: apart from the set design, costumes are the only clue to the genre of the film- no other element of film production establishes this.

The film begins with *Adaeze* garbed in orange colour headgear made with beads, neck-beads, orange colour *jigida* (waist beads), royal blue george wrapper with black and golden diamond-shape designs. Aniakor postulates that, "Of importance is the 19th century Owoko style of george tied in two tiers, a long and a short one...very common among Igbo groups west of the Cross River." (339) The wrapper is worn in the traditional Igbo maiden style- with one wrapper wrapped around the breasts and the second wrapper tied around the waist, from waist through the thighs. In her costumes we see the grammar of lines, colours, style and fabrics. Firstly, the style she wears her clothes provide a great deal of information about her age and marital status in the Igbo traditional society. The clothing of the traditional Igbo era has its own characteristics that differentiate between youth and aged. Young people tend to reveal more of their bodies than do their elders. To this effect, Gillette submits that:

Two theories suggest the reasons: Young people generally are more interested in attracting romantic partners than their elders, and exposed skin attracts notice; young bodies with smooth skin...are generally more attractive to look at than the skin...of their elders, on whom time and gravity have taken their toll. For example, miniskirts, short-shorts, halter tops, and muscle shirts are all clothes of youth. (390)

Adaeze's mini-wrapper thus expresses her age. The second wrapper tied around the breasts also talks about her gender. However, it is true that the idealists seem to have provided a method of arriving at meaning through analysis of the elements of costume design, what a costume means and how it generates meanings cannot be determined because it is not possible to systematically find the signs of a costume. Thus, semioticians argue that meaning is essentially indefinite, thereby denying the idealists' belief in the possibility of establishing objective knowledge, systematic observation and logical deduction. For instance, the semioticians suggest that in a single costume one can find many meanings, all of them possible and all of them replaceable by others. Instead of looking for detail, then, the researcher looks for those places where the elements of costumes of characters contradict, and thereby define the characters due to oppositions in elements of costume design which equally define oppositions in characters' personalities, social status, gender, age, socio-economic status, and marital status. Hence, the meaning we ascribe to a costume in a film is based on collective behaviour, convention or culture. Quoting Saussure, Berger states that, "Concepts are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms in the system." (51) For instance, a black costume is defined by its relationship with a white costume (which is its opposite). Consequently, we define black as connoting gloom and evil, since white has culturally been attributed with purity and grace. Meaning of costume therefore, is determined not by content but by relationship. Thus, Enahoro analyzing the film *Xala* by Sembene states that,

“The colour BLACK which signifies leaving the marriage is the opposite of WHITE, which signifies entering into marriage. The two costumes are logically related but are normally widely separated in time” (56). Here the meaning Enahoro ascribes to a black costume is derived from its relationship with a white costume. Black is the opposite of white, so if white is worn during a wedding, signifying that one is entering a marriage, black worn by a married woman should therefore be seen to portray widowhood- exit from the marriage. It should be noted however that this definition of black and white is still based on the context of the film. In some other films depending on the story being told, they could mean some other things. In the film *Adaeze* this research is able to define Adaeze’s gender as female because from the researcher’s view, she uses another wrapper as covering for her breasts, while the males in the film use the second wrapper in form of a muffler. The men’s wrappers are merely folded and run through the nape to waists. We are able to define the gender of the character based on the differences in the styles of their costumes. This definition is still based on the context of the film. The film is set in traditional Igbo society, if the film is to be set in a community where people still go nude, then defining the genders of characters by saying that those who have covering for their breasts are females would not have held any water. For instance, in Jamie Uys’ *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980), a South African film produced by Jamie Uys, both male and female go bare-chested. So one cannot define a covering for the breasts as indicating gender rather it can be said to indicate tribe and civilization. So instead of showing how the conventions of costume work, semiotics shows how they falter. The result is that film costume can no longer have one unifying meaning that an authority or critic can enunciate. Instead, meaning is accepted to be the outgrowth of various signifying systems within the costume

that may even produce contradictory meanings. For instance, in the film, *African Bride* by Okoroji, we see Leo, a fraudster dressed in well tailored suits. Generally we regard men in suits as gentlemen, but in the socio-cultural context of this film, suit is used to signify deceit and greed. It symbolizes an imposter appropriating a decent profession.

The language of lines and fabric of Adaeze's cloth described above express her emotion and action. The diagonal lines that form diamond shape convey restless and uncontrolled energy. The lines appear to be rising and falling at the same time conveying her emotion of tension and excitement. In accordance with her costume design, her actions also convey these same emotions that are expressed by her clothes. She is seen to be very excited when her beauty is praised, but once no one notices or acknowledges her beauty, we see her very tensed with angry. More so, the lines on her george material do not only express her emotion but also her personality. Motifs and colour have great value in Igbo clothing. Igbo people do not just randomly pick their clothes - colours have lots of symbolism among Igbo people. The most common being black colour which symbolizes grief and death among the ancient Igbo people. According to Aniako, "For the women also there are a variety of cloths and costumes types; some for everyday use and others for special occasions." (337) A distinctive feature of traditional Igbo dress is its use of festive colours, intricate patterns and figurative symbols to communicate meaning. Adaeze's royal blue george and the diamond shape pattern of the embroideries are much more than mere adornment, they are used as forms of rhetoric- a silent projection of argument. The argument projected by her costume is the same as that expressed by her dialogue, namely that she is the most beautiful maiden in Naze community and that her beauty will last forever just like diamond. The colour and fabric of her costume also convey her social

status: a princess. The embroidered george goes to express her economic status as well as her desire to be the most fashionable maiden. Craig while explaining the history of embroidery states that, “Man’s early desire for ornamentation inspired him to improve upon plain woven cloth by sewing designs on the surface.” (263) The beautifully embroidered golden diamond-shape patterns symbolically convey Adaeze’s personality, the black thread which runs in between the golden colour woven-patterns symbolizes her authority over the entire maiden in the palace. Her jewelries all of which are orange colour go to relate her place in the film- she is the protagonist in the film and the most important character in the film. Accessories are one of her dominant forms of expression; they give her the choice and tools to assert individuality. In this light, her jewelries are seen as being highly charged with meaning, a language in its own right, being very much a statement about Adaeze.

Her costumes in other scenes include: crimson george embroidered with golden thread, orange colour bead-anklet, *jigida*, blue *Ankara* with white flowers, cream colour neck-beads, head-gear made with orange colour beads. The head-gear and neck-beads have some beads dangling towards her forehead and forming a V-shape - diagonal lines coming together as they descend, green george with horizontal and vertical lines forming squares. To the semiotician, costume is a symbol that is equal to the character it represents. Literary critics who subscribe to the tenets of semiotics work most often with culture and conventions. Usually they seek to connect a costume with a larger structure such as a culture or some universal convention. They often establish connections between a character’s costume and other characters’ costume. On the broader scale, they sometimes find parallels between a film-costume and culture of the character wearing it. Adaeze’s costumes help us

figure out the historical period this film is set as well as the locale it occurs. The film reveals Igbo ancient times' silhouette of clothing for young girls. According to Craig, "The silhouette not only reveals or conceals the figure, but dates the costume by the shape of the sleeve, the shape and length of the skirt." (229) The vertical and horizontal lines of her costume which run across each other express her state of mind. She does not really have an explicit opposition in the film, but she keeps battling with her own mind frightened that they may be some other characters more beautiful than she is. And the lines in her clothes rightly convey this inner turmoil which she suffers. Craig posits that, "Contrasting sounds in music and contrasting lines in a costume suggest rhythm by opposition. The principle is observed when vertical lines in a costume are interrupted by horizontal lines..." (237) Adaeze's costumes are example of clothes that appear on the surface to portray elegance explicitly, they could not easily be distinguished from those of Ugogbeoyibo. Yet on closer inspection, they reveal the problems and struggles that loom and surround her life. In the first sense, the costume designer approaches her from the perspective of myth: on the surface Adaeze's clothes present a myth of the upper class and convention (that richly made george material portrays elegance, wealth and fulfillment), but on a deeper level, her costumes reveal the constitutive fault which that myth attempt to cover. The lines in her costumes thus emphasize the opposition between relation by blood and relation by marriage in the ways that the plots do not. In other words, she does not see her younger sister as a threat but she sees her brother's fiancé as a big threat, and consequently an enemy. Semiotics aims to uncover a deeper level of understanding of costume elements. Such findings are in accordance with the semioticians belief that true, scientific nature of sign systems and systems of meaning are ones which lie beneath the surface of things, for it

is only by delving beneath the surface that we can find the definitive ways in which things come to be structured. Based on Saussure's theory, costumes refer not to objective reality but to mental concepts. The meaning of any given costume will be derived from its interrelatedness with other costumes in an ongoing process that gives it a series of possible meaning and readings.

Ugogbeoyibo, a princess from another community who is betrothed to Adaeze's brother Prince Obinna, seems apparently to be the most beautiful maiden in Naze community. She has a very fair skin which this research considers a costume. Her cloths are not really different from those of Adaeze since they also comprise bright colour georges scantily but beautifully embroidered with feminine colour like pink, royal colours like purple and beautiful anklet, hand fan made with zebra skin and wrist and neck beads. Her skin colour, the thin lines in her clothes and the bright pink george convey her fragility and gender. Her blue george expresses her inner peace thereby conveying her as the character directly opposite to Adaeze (the protagonist). In accordance with semiotic principles, each character's costume gains its meaning by virtue of its difference from other characters' costumes. In the context of the Igbo culture, Ugogbeoyibo's overall look symbolizes classic elegance- the clean lines of her ensemble, beads, and black lipstick (*uli*), represent elegance regardless of the period. By understanding her character, the audience will most likely have a deeper reading into the costume design and overall image typical of her character.

3.4 Semiotic Analyses of Costumes in *African Bride*

According to semiotic theory, visual images, fabrics, colours, lines and textures of costumes can be read in an identical manner to a text. Costumes therefore have their own idiolect and can be interpreted as a justification of personality and character. Semiotic reading of *African Bride* involves an effort to make explicit what usually seems implicit.

African Bride was produced by Kaycee Oguejiofor , directed by Chima Okoroji and its costumes were designed by Ayode Alabi for Filmark Production Limited in 2014. The film is based on the chaotic marriage of Aداugo and Paschal. Although the couple lives in the same house, they live in disharmony and isolation. They live under the same roof but in a different world. The bone of contention is the wedding gifts Aداugo got from her wealthy parents. The house, car and other household items offered to the couple by Aداugo's parents create great barrier and chaos between the couple as Aداugo constantly reminds Paschal (her husband) that she owns the house they both live in. While Aداugo continues to live in her rich luxurious world, her husband Paschal lives in fear as she will not allow him free access to anything that belongs to her or that came from her parents no matter how insignificant the item may seem. Aداugo sees Paschal and members of his family as threat to her inheritance. Thus, she develops violent dispositions and attitude in order to guard her possessions. The film shows her as a violent and aggressive woman.

Semiotic theory assumes that a film character's costume is directly related to aspects of his/her personality. Society acknowledges certain dress codes and attributes them to particular qualities in individuals' traits. For instance, we would expect a doctor in a film to hang a stethoscope on his neck. Hence, we conclude that costume is communication and has a crucial role in constructing and maintaining cultural ideals and responsibilities. It is a stereotype, a conversation and a reflection of personality. It is not

necessary for a character to tell the audience his/her personality; his/her costume will do the talking for him/her. However, Berger notes that:

Because the relationship that exists between signs and what they mean (from Saussure's perspective) is arbitrary, we have to find ways of making sense of signs; we do so via codes. Codes can be looked at...as systems of conventions that we are taught or pick up from our culture. (54)

So study will be analyzing this film based on the notion which Igbo culture and convention hold on colour, texture, line and style in addition to our knowledge of the meanings and significance of colour, fabrics, lines, and style of clothes and accessories. However, reference will be made to literatures on costume.

Adaugo in the context of this film is portrayed as an extrovert: her attitude borders on violent disposition. She exhibits boundless energy, a convincing debater; what she lacks in fact or arguments, she makes up in bluffing and bravado. She has a quick explosive temper and a long burning resentment. Adaugo is impatient with those who do not share her motivation; she is brutally and sarcastically frank about her material possessions. Her tongue seems to be razor-sharp and active all the time. She is apt to be autocratic. However with her costumes, she inspires admiration and hate simultaneously. Her sarcasm can devastate other characters. She is a strict disciplinarian.

In her first Appearance, Adaugo is seen in yellow bubu and pink trousers, high-heeled black shoes, a bogus necklace. Analyzing Adaugo's costumes as described above in terms of colours, we know that colours hold different meanings amongst different cultures. However, the meanings of colours change over time, yet there could be a general meaning that is accurate to each colour. In a semiotic analysis, colour is seen as a carrier of meaning and as such there is an assumption of fixity which is often equated to a powerful effect.

This film draws a clear line between a poor husband and his rich wife. At the beginning, it presents the active female/passive male phenomenon. In the scene where Adaugo hits Paschal with a cooking spoon, he bends down sobbing, while she stands straight watching him without any sign of remorse or fear. At the instance, Paschal stands his ground, but immediately she reminds him of her sole ownership of the house, car (jeep), and the entire household items, he becomes docile and incapable of earning respect from Adaugo. Another example of showing how passive he could be, is when he gives in to her seductive advances when Adaugo needs to satisfy herself sexually (before now she speaks and treats him like a houseboy). He desires to fulfill his fantasy of marrying her and having a peaceful home.

At the beginning of the film, Paschal is presented as an object. His manner and appearance in almost oversized, cheap looking brocade (caftan) set him up as an object that Adaugo maltreats and threatens all the time. In the scene where Adaugo needs to satisfy her sexual urge, she wears a flashy, sexy sleeveless sky blue mini chiffon gown richly ornamented with sequins on the neckline. This costume only serves to draw Paschal to her apparent sexual availability. With this costume, she lures Paschal to the bedroom from the living room where he is watching television. In order for audience and other characters in the movie (such as Adaugo's mother) to view the milieu of the film in Adaugo's perspective and appreciate her motives, Adaugo works extremely hard and fights fiercely to preserve her properties including the duplex and car which are amongst the wedding gifts she got from her parents.

Towards the middle of the film, Paschal begins to assert his position as the man of the house. He then begins the process of transiting from being an object to the subject. He

is no longer passive to what Adaugo wants of him, he becomes active, and in accordance, his richly made golden blazer reflects this transformation. He finally realizes that Adaugo and her mother will never take him seriously if he continues to live the way he has been living. After being humiliated before his friend and security guard, he comes to this realization. Dressed in indigo jeans, he goes to his father-in-law requesting that he takes back the house he gave to him and Adaugo, so that they can leave in peace. This bold request shocks Adaugo and her mother who had been collaborators in frustrating Paschal. At first, the camera positions and points of view were presenting Paschal to the audience as women would see him. By the end, it shifts from the female gaze to where the audience could identify with him and see what he sees. He is now the subject of the film and challenges the notion of him being passive, emotionally weak, a pauper and a sexual object. He takes on the role of what society may see as masculine. He takes control over his own life and how others perceive him. One stereotype about certain young-men is that they get married to rich men's daughters in order to become comfortable and rich through their wife's possessions.

African Bride in this study epitomizes the contemporary genre of Nollywood films. The film's costumes exemplify the clothes of Igbo urban dwellers of the contemporary times. Clothes in *African Bride* function symbolically to represent the character's situations in life as Gillette posits, "Social status has always been indicated with clothes. Someone dressed in shabby, ill-kempt clothes of rough homespun materials would rarely be mistaken for a member of the upper class." (392) Colours often have different meanings in various cultures. According to Craig,

Black was associated with life by the Greeks because out of the black night day was born. During the sixteen Century Anne of Brittany used black for mourning, and henceforth black has been associated with mystery, tragedy, and silence. (209)

Black in films can be overpowering and make the wearer seem evil and autocratic. Villains such as Aduro often wear black. In all the scenes where Aduro is seen at home in her aggressive mood, she wears black. Gillette submits, “Clothes can also be visible clues to the wearer’s emotional state.” (388) Black symbolizes death and it is the traditional colour of mourning in Igbo culture. Therefore, her use of black dresses when she is not mourning anyone is symbolic. Black is associated with evil and evokes fear and horror. Colour has symbolic meaning in Igbo culture and each colour conveys peculiar information when worn. Black colour is a symbolic colour for funerals in traditional Igbo society. It was the official mourning colour at funerals. Lyndersay opines that for the Igbo people, “Black was adopted as a sign and colour used for mourning...” (417) Varying colours such as white have however become the mourner’s choice in recent times. What then is Aduro telling the audience and other characters in the film with her frequently worn black dress? This can be said to signify her lack of respect for the life of her husband. Traditionally, Igbo people believed that a wife who wears plain black clothes wishes her husband death. It can also be said to symbolize her feelings towards her marital life. These black clothes are clues to her state of mind towards her husband. She does not care whether Paschal is dead or alive, all that matters to her is that her wedding gifts are kept intact for her. Her use of black, invokes Enahoro analyses of the film *Xala*, where he opines that:

The use of colour in this film is very symbolic. N’Gone is veiled and dressed in white entering into marriage and leaving the unmarried world. If El haji Abdou Kader Beye were to have died in the film, N’Gone would have dressed in black, as a widow leaving marriage. (56)

Colour hence becomes a coded iconography in *African Bride*. The message conveyed by the black dresses Adaugo wears is filled with visual connotations. As Brockett opines:

Colour is one of the most powerful means available to the costumer for expressing mood and character. Although it is difficult to specify connotations, different colours clearly can arouse different responses. Hues that are grayed in saturation and black in value aid in establishing a somber mood... (559)

Adaugo's frequently worn black costume also signifies her disdain for tradition and custom as the Igbo culture does not encourage a wife who is not widowed to wear plain black clothes. Although this can also serve as a clue to the period in which the film is set. As it appears that the contemporary Igbo woman's adherence to trend, now accepts plain black clothe as being fashionable. Black is fashionable in the contemporary fashion world, so the costume designer might not have taken note of the message these black dresses pass onto to the audience and the psychological effects they have on the other characters in the film. Black dress in this film hence becomes the signifier signifying Adaugo's goal. One cannot also help but find comparison between Adaugo's costumes and those of Paschal. Paschal's costumes signal degrees of restriction and freedom. At the beginning of the film, Paschal wears lighter hue. For instance, in the first scene, he wears brocade with light crisp, somewhat glossy surface which according to Brockett connote brittleness and femaleness. However, he ended the film wearing dark hue jeans trousers most of the time. According to, Brockett, "Materials with heavy threads...have a homespun quality associated with the working class." (560) Moreover, jeans are the most worn type of trousers with almost no competition from various other fabrics. It seems everyone from almost any economic class wear jeans because they are durable and cheap. Although, there are jeans that are of the

designers' range which are costly. But these classes of designers' jeans usually carry insignia to symbolize the designer who made them. Pascal's jeans does not carry emblem, so one may quickly conclude that they are probably cheap. Besides, one meaning of blue holds that apart from signifying serenity, blue brings sadness and depression. According to Craig, blue "...is associated with...sadness." (209) So the often worn denim by Paschal symbolizes his character, economic class, temperament and personality. The indigo colour of the denim symbolizes his fidelity, loyalty and faithfulness to his wife. While Adaugo is already tending towards falling prey to the fraudster's sexual advances, Paschal remains loyal to his marriage. Taking note of his temperament, we also have discovered that blue elicits calmness psychologically. According to Enahoro, "...blue...suggest calmness and quietness." (56) So the frequently worn blue denim of Paschal becomes a colour code symbolizing his calm nature. We never see Paschal lose his temper no matter the situation. Severally we see his wife exhibiting aggressive and violent behaviour towards him publicly and privately, yet Paschal continues to remain calm. Also, Paschal is not the very-social kind of person. He is calm, and mostly focused on his business, immediate and extended family. Unlike his wife who is quick to make friends. According to semiotic theory, costumes have their own idiolect which can be interpreted as justification of personality and character. Hence, Gillette submits:

Clothes can also be visible clue to the wearer's emotional state. An introvert would probably wear something that would make him blend into the crowd...similarly, someone who is gloomy might wear something dark and dreary to reinforce and visually announce their mood... (388)

Furthermore, Leo the fraudster, as projected by the costume designer, is a rich young man with good taste of fashion. Through his costumes, he endeavours to appear in the dignity of a gentleman despite his real social status. However, while he showcases

himself as a rich businessman, he also uses his cunning to get what he needs to survive. The costume designer used colours, fabric and style to give him the look which is what he intends to communicate to other characters in the film. This in essence is symbolic to his character as he lives in deceit; hence his costumes also become deceptive. In this wise, Berger submits: “In addition to these more-less conventionally understood signs of identity, there are some people who try to mislead others about who they are and what they are like by the signs they use.” (23) We see Leo dressed in well tailored suits. Most times we regard men in suits as gentlemen, but in the socio-cultural context of this film, suit is used to signify deceit and greed. It symbolizes an imposter appropriating a decent profession or pretending to have a different profession. His costumes also include muscle shirts, earring, and a bowler hat. He lives like an “actor” living in a rich man’s world via his costumes. However, events in the film show that he is always utterly broke. But he maintains the attitude and demeanour of a high-class individual; and as long as he acts like this, other characters in the film believe he is one, and he is able to keep them believing his appearance until he traps them into his net. His costumes include: hat, three-quarter shorts, designers’ wrist watches, bold dark sun shade glasses, richly embroidered caftan and beautiful designers’ pairs of shoes. As the film progresses, his physicality shifts from the classy Western fashion to Arab dressing, and all his costumes are bundles of contradictions symbolizing his character.

Costume design in *Adaeze* epitomizes Igbo contemporary dress culture. Igbo contemporary dress costume is a syncretism of diverse dress culture integrated into the already existing Igbo dress culture. Although, costumes in this film are embodiments of various dress cultures from diverse ethnicity, the costumes still imbue the characters with

Igbo identity. The Igbo dress culture thus appear to have contributed significantly to the formulation of the film's costume culture.

3.5 The Significance of Costumes in *Cry of a Widow*

Costumes use signs and symbols in the form of colour, patterns, lines, textures and fabrics to communicate; therefore their visual impact can better be understood contextually. Elements of costumes carry with them not only beauty but also messages. Hence elements of costumes are the language with which costumes communicate. Costumes in *Cry of a Widow* do not only carry meaning but evoke the definitions of the characters wearing them. The semiotics conventions are endowed with cultural reflexes, and going by Barthes' ideal, words are supplemented with semiotic signs which are: colour, lines, textures and mass of costumes.

Semiotics and the language of costumes in *Cry of a Widow* defines the elements of costume which operate together to produce meaning. Semiotics is used here as the science of signs, that is, how the elements of costume design operate and the ways in which they are used in the film *Cry of a Widow*. This research is concerned with colours, fabrics, lines, textures and mass of costume employed by the costume designer to portray the film characters on their journey through the film's life.

Cry of a Widow was produced by Chibuzor Sunday Eriobu, directed by Ikechukwu Onyeka and its costumes were designed by Uche Nancy for Softel Productions Limited in 2011.

The film is based on Suzy also known as Madam Gold and her adopted daughter, Chidinma also known as Dinma. In order to aid an objective and multiple readings and interpretations of this film, this paper gives a summary of the film. Suzy is a very wealthy

widow who came across a young beautiful girl whom she fell in love with and adopts as her daughter. She initiates Chidinma into lesbianism and other vices like kidnapping. To the world, Chidinma fondly called Dinma is her daughter, but in reality; Suzy and Dinma are partners in crime.

The film begins with Chidinma in a faded purple synthetic blouse, and a faded navy blue skirt with a kissing pleat in front. In this scene, she is shown in a mechanic workshop serving food to the workmen. It is important here to note again that in addition to dialogue, the formal aspects of visual composition of a costume are like the grammar of a language. In writing, a story is written with words, in producing a film, costume like dialogue and action presents better aesthetic and communicative pictures. The colour, the fabric and the line can make or break a good story. In film, the way the elements of costume design are employed can make or break a good costume idea.

Chidinma at the beginning of this film is portrayed as an orphan working for a canteen owner. She goes to distribute food to mechanics working in a nearby workshop. The lines in her faded navy blue skirt speak volume about her emotional state. According to Brockett, “Two lines that move farther apart as they rise vertically can generate a feeling of openness, while those that come closer together may create a sense of oppression because they seem to be falling inward.” (518) Chidinma’s skirt with kissing pleat in front reflects her emotional state. Following Brockett’s submission that two lines that come closer together may create a sense of oppression, the lines in Chidinma’s skirt come closer together forming a kissing pleat; are thus telling the audience that she is emotionally oppressed. Actions of the characters in this scene towards her, justify these lines in her skirt. In addition to the language of the lines, the colour navy blue also speaks further about

her emotions. One connotation of blue holds that apart from signifying serenity, blue brings sadness and depression. According to Craig, blue "...is associated with...sadness." (209) Just like her actions in this scene, where she is mocked and pursued around by the mechanics, (she remains calm explaining why they need to pay for the food they ate); her blue clothes speaks of her calm temperament as well. Hence, Enahoro submits that, "...blue...suggest calmness and quietness." (56) So the blue costume becomes a colour code symbolizing and speaking about her calm nature. She never lost her temper even when the mechanics continually hurled abuses at her, violently and aggressively pushing her away from the workshop; yet she remains calm. Theatrically, the colour purple is regarded as a colour that symbolizes royalty and wealth, but Chidinma's purple silk blouse is on the verge of fading out entirely; thereby telling us that the colour purple acquire this faded look due to many years of usage and washing. So the faded purple blouse talks about her social and economic status. If she is financially buoyant, she should not be wearing a faded blouse at her age - she is a young girl, and at this age girls tend to be very conscious of their general physical appearance.

As the film progresses, chidinma undergoes a dramatic change and her costume reflects this change. As her employer fires her, and she eventually moves into her boyfriend's house; her dress code here changes also. She is shown in the salon where she now works as an apprentice, and her clothes are: a sky blue lycra maxi gown with high neck, scanty frill, and short sleeves. Her costumes here signal degree of restriction and freedom. In the beginning of the film, she wears a cotton kissing pleat skirt and a silk blouse of large mass (the blouse has no dart to make it cling to the body and reveal her contour), but here she is wearing a lycra gown which clings to her body thereby revealing

her curves, and symbolizing freedom and desire for attraction and attention from the opposite sex. The colour of the gown which is blue also portrays her as being a calm person. In Brockett's opinion "...green and blue may suggest coolness and restraint." (520)

In another scene in the salon where she works, she wears a synthetic silk blouse with coffee brown and yellow zebra vertical stripes with collar, v-neck and a cream calve-length pleated skirt. Although, zebra stripes are black and white, the costume designer uses yellow and dark brown stripes to make a statement about Chidinma's personality. Bright colours such as yellow represent warmth not only with emotions but with temperament. However, it also reveals Chidinma's lust for money. As Craig posits, "Yellow has varying associations in different cultures. And held in disdain by early Christians because of its association with gold (money)...it is also a color associated with warmth and gaiety." (209)

Her costume here reveals the transformation she will undergo in the life of this film. It is in this scene that Lady Gold spotted her and volunteers to take up her financial needs. So this research sees it that her costume here speaks to the audience as well as to the other characters in the film. Chidinma does not have any conversation with Lady Gold here, but her yellow costume does, thereby attracting her to Lady Gold. It is like the yellow costume tells Madam Gold that she is a gold-digger. Furthermore, zebra stripes are thick curved lines, and thick lines are bold and make a statement. Thick lines appear difficult to break, they suggest strength. We see costumes in this film speaking more than words and preceding actions. In this scene, Chidinma is yet to show her inner strength, but her costumes already reveal to us her strong personality. Talking about the curved lines of her zebra stripes blouse, they also reveal a lot about Chidinma's personality. Curved lines are softer than straight lines. They sweep and turn gracefully between end points. Craig opines

that they "...are associated with youth and gaiety...Curved lines are especially becoming to ...feminine figure..." (230) Curved lines are less definite and predictable than straight lines. They bend and change direction. In this film, they express the fluidity of Chidinma. She can be calm, yet dynamic. Her blouse as described above is v-neck. V-neck line is diagonal lines rising up to the shoulders. Brockett posits that "Two lines that move farther apart as they rise vertically can generate a feeling of openness, while those that come closer together may create a sense of oppression because they are falling inward." (518) It is important to remember that at the beginning of the film when Chidinma is working in a local restaurant, the costume designer symbolizes her emotional state with a kissing pleat skirt. That is, diagonal lines coming close together as they rise; and this research interpret these lines as signifiers of oppression. Now, Chidinma is enjoying some degree of freedom as she now lives with her boyfriend, and her v-neck blouse expresses this freedom and openness. The vertical lines of the pleats in her skirt give the impression of dignity. Craig posits that, "Vertical lines are associated with stability and dignity." (230)

From the time Chidinma begins to live with her boyfriend till the end of the film, the necklines of her costumes become more of v-neck revealing her cleavage, yellow clothes, micro mini gowns and skirts, and her ornaments becomes bolder and more colourful. This change in the colours, lines and mass of her costumes relates the tremendous transition which she undergoes as she gradually changes from a local waitress, to a girlfriend, from a girlfriend to a daughter, from a daughter to a partner in lesbianism, and from a lesbian to a "business partner". Costumes and accessories do not only have language of their own, but can be read as an explanation and text of a character's personality and character.

Suzy also known as Lady Gold in the context of this film is portrayed as a very wealthy woman who inspires admiration and hate simultaneously with her costumes. Her costumes are richly made yet there are subtleties in the grammars of her costumes which relate her personality before she acts it out or even speaks about herself.

In her first appearance, she is seen in bold pyramid-shape gold earrings, bold gold bangle, jean trousers, and a free-flowing cotton, thigh-length, tie and dye (African hand-made print) blouse, embroidered around the neckline. The shape of her earrings which is pyramid conveys sophistication. Pyramid is made up of diagonal and horizontal lines. According to Craig, “Diagonal lines convey height and sophistication whether used bisymmetrically...or asymmetrically...” (231) Diagonal lines appear solid and unmoving if they are resting on a horizontal line. So Suzy’s earrings speak about her socio-economic status and character. Craig posits that “Horizontal lines give the illusion of breath and repose.” (231) However, semiotics studies reject the idea that costume is simply a tool to be used to represent a preexistent reality. That is, it does not accept the idea that it is mimetic or transparent. Instead, it argues that costume is a tool that has its own rules of operation. So Brockett while defining lines in costume design posits that, “...emotional value depends in part upon the context...” (518) Hence, what the shape of Suzy’s earrings communicates is perceived from the perspective of the film’s context. Based on the film’s revelation of Suzy’s character, and in part on Craig’s submission that diagonal lines appears solid and unmoving, we deduced that apart from expressing her socio-economic status, the earrings also tell us that although Suzy is a kidnapper and murderer; she is so heartless and unmoving as to not feel remorse for the lives she wastes.

In interpreting the motifs of costumes, line is an important device for perceiving character, mood and atmosphere. The atmosphere of the movie is that of a dishonest living. The mass of her blouse expresses more about her personality to the viewer - this interpretation is based on the film's context since a large mass clothe can also mean that a character is decent. Semioticians argue that a character's costumes are fluid, dynamic entities that are given new life with repeated readings and through interactions with other characters' costumes - hence providing ongoing plurality of meanings. The mass of her blouse which is loose, when compared to the tight-fitting clothes of Chidinma can be said to indicate her age, and may also be interpreted semiotically to mean that she is a loose woman. This can be justified as the film progresses and she gradually reveals herself as a chronic lesbian. Semioticians are not so much interested in operations of meaning of a single entity as they are in trying to describe the underlying (and not necessarily visible) principles by which the costume exists. Assuming that individual characteristics that can be noted on the surface are rooted in some general interpretation, semioticians will collect observable information about the costume or culture in order to discover the laws that govern it. For instance, a semiotician studying an Igbo costume of the ancient times will be interested in the characteristics of a single costume only insofar as it provides elements of design that help define the culture to which that costume belongs.

In another scene, she is clad in a sleeveless blouse with diagonal white lines which interchange with black lines, some of the lines are thick, and some are thin forming a design like rainbow, silver tiny bangles, a silver wedding ring, silver necklace, and wrist-watch with purple belt indicating her financial status. All the accessories used here portray her as a rich woman. Purple is usually associated with royalty, pomp and power. But, apart

from signifying her as a woman of power and authority, the purple colour of her wrist-watch can be said to express her association with occultism. According to Craig, “The Hebrews dressed their high priests in purple robes. Purple was rejected by early Christians because of its association with the crown and paganism.” (209) Suzy is a widow who was accused of killing her husband, but we see her wearing a wedding ring on her wedding finger. This can also be said to express her false life, a deceitful life. Furthermore, Suzy, as projected by the costume designer, is a rich woman. Through her costumes, she endeavours to appear in the dignity of a good mother and wife despite her real social status. However, while she showcases herself as a rich businesswoman, she also uses her cunning behaviours to lure her victims into her car, hypnotizes them and delivers them to the evil kingdom she belongs where they are finally sacrificed to the spirits. The costume designer used colours, fabric and style to give her the appearance she intends to communicate to other characters in the film: that is a dishonest appearance. This in essence is symbolic to her character as she lives in deceit; hence her costumes also become deceptive. In this wise, Berger makes this submission, “In addition to these more-less conventionally understood signs of identity, there are some people who try to mislead others about who they are and what they are like by the signs they use.” (23) We see Suzy in white chiffon maxi-gown gathered at the neckline with black ribbon, long-sleeve, and gathered at the waist too. Generally we regard ladies in maxi dress as decent and responsible women, but in the socio-cultural context of this film, maxi dress is used to signify deceit. It symbolizes an imposter appropriating a decent profession or pretending to have a different profession. Her costumes also include purple gabardine, v-neck, sleeveless blouse, a black hand-bag, gold necklace, jean three-quarter trousers and round bold earrings. She lives like an “actor”

living in a good and decent mother's world via her costumes. At least that is what she makes most characters in the film believe she is. However, events in the film show that she is a murderer and lesbian who uses her wealth to lure a girl young enough to be her daughter into lesbianism. But with her costumes and accessories she maintains the attitude and demeanour of a high-class individual; and as long as she acts like this, other characters in the film believe she is one; then she is able to keep them believing her appearance until she traps them into her evil net. Her costumes include: yellow blouse, duvet (while in bed with Chidinma), here duvet becomes a costume signifying that they are lesbians as they play under the duvet, three-quarter shorts, designers' wrist watches, bold dark sun shade glasses, richly embroidered caftan and beautiful designers' pairs of shoes. All her costumes are bundles of contradictions symbolizing her character.

Cry of a Widow is another Nollywood film that exemplifies Nollywood film set in an urban area. Although major scenes in the film are set in the city, the characters are mostly dressed in costumes that evoke Igbo modern dress culture. A flash-back scene in the film also shows Suzy mourning her late husband in black two wrappers and a black puffy sleeves blouse. Lyndersay asserts that the Igbo, "Married women or older women wore two pieces...or sometimes an 'up and down' (*enu n n*), which was a blouse and wrapper, made of the same material." (417) She reiterates that:

When blouse were introduced to women's clothing, the blouse was worn over the first, longer wrapper, and the shorter second wrapper tied securely at the waist over the ends of the blouse. Both wrappers hung elegantly with the hems lying fairly straight. (418)

Hence costumes in this film portray both the Igbo traditional dress culture and Igbo modern dress culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 SEMIOTIC INTERPRETATIONS OF MOTIFS IN NOLLYWOOD COSTUMES

4.1 Noting Igbo Cultural Motifs in the Nollywood Costumes

Nollywood costumes appear to be archetypes of Igbo dress culture. The costumes of Nollywood heroic and historic films seem to comprise mainly of Igbo ancient dress culture. The concern of this chapter is to discover those elements which make Nollywood costumes identifiable as Igbo costumes and how they have been used in creating characters. Some of these costumes may have been typical of Igbo traditional periods, which have been modified with motifs and codes from other ethnic traditions. Symbolic features of the ancient Igbo clothes are outlined below and shown in the accompanying illustrations from the Nollywood films analyzed in this chapter. This chapter thus critically reads and interprets elements of costumes in the films analyzed here. The chapter notes the presence of Igbo cultural motifs and their significance in the film.

4.2 Accentuating Igbo cultural Patterns in the Costumes of *The Priestess*

The Priestess is a Nollywood film produced by O. Godwin Innovation Limited, costumed by Andy Offia and directed by Ilochi Olisaemeka in 2016.

The film shows the greedy, selfish and ungodly desires of one of the king's cabinet member (Urenma's father). The basic theme of *The Priestess* is the corrupting influence of this man on the community's suppliant (*Ezemmou*). Urenma's father is interested in his daughter's emergence as the Prince's choice of wife during the maidens' dance. His desperation for this desire leads him into pledging portion of his inherited land to *Ezemmou* if he bewitches the Prince into picking Urenma as his chosen wife and consequently the next queen of the kingdom. *Ezemmou* fulfills this ungodly request of Urenma's father. The Prince thus falls in love with Urenma. But Ugbana, the Priestess is prompted by the gods to rescue the Prince from the evil manipulation of *Ezemmou* and Urenma's father.

This research observes that frequently, Nollywood epic and historic character seem to be wearing Igbo traditional attires. These attires comprise of one ankle-length wrapper for older men. The wrapper is loosely tied round the body and folded at the navel. For younger male characters, the common costumes are narrow wrappers worn around the waist. Nollywood epic films appear to habitually depict older and married women as wearing traditional Igbo clothes. That is two wrappers worn with blouse made with same material or lace. Maidens are usually shown in Igbo ancient clothes. They are depicted in slight garment worn round the waist and another tied round the chest and knotted behind.

All the male adult characters in *The Priestess* wear ankle-length wrappers made either of george, *ankra* or *akwete* fabrics. A variety of Igbo traditional costume was employed for the costuming of this film. Two ankle-length wrappers, headdress, *jigida*,

wrist-beads, *uli* makeup, bow and arrow, neck-beads, george, walking stick, hand-fan, cap, red and white clothes are worn by the actors depending on the gender, social and economic status of the characters they are playing. These costumes seem to have followed quite closely the clothes normally worn by Igbo people of the traditional Igbo period.

Since the film contains references to chieftaincy, Igbo traditional religious system, and to distinctions in clothing between the young and the old, the film depicts that costumes varied considerably. The film shows that plain white or red cotton fabrics are reserved for suppliants and diviners. While formal and informal traditional Igbo attires are used for other characters. An ankle or knee-length/thigh-length wrapper was the usual casual clothe for Igbo-men and young-men respectively. The selection of the costume was probably determined at least in part by their appropriateness to the characters.

4.2.1 Igwe's Cabinet Members: Igwe's cabinet members are usually shown in plain white and black chequered george attire worn in the Igbo men fashion. The chequered george fabrics are passed under the right arm-pit and then tied over the left shoulder. During each meeting with Igwe at his palace, his cabinet members are shown wearing a woolen cap. One eagle feather is attached to the woolen red, black and white striped cap with pompom on the top of the hat. Each of them holds a fashionable walking stick. Their arms are designed with *uli* patterns. The individual members are shown outside the palace wearing different sorts of traditional attires ranging from the Igbo form of jumpers, laces and other synthetic materials. Their heads are constantly graced with red hats.

4.2.2 Diviners (Ugbana and Ezemou): Ugbana is the Priestess from whom this film derives its title. While Ezemou is the community's diviner with the gods. Each of these characters portrays the religious system of the traditional Igbo people. Their costumes are

most of the time shown as red and white cotton costumes. The use of red in art often reflects themes of lust, war, and blood, this film also uses this colour to appropriately depict Ezemmu's lust for wealth. Semiotically, costuming Ezemmu in red costumes as his signature colour suits his personality perfectly. But above all, the colour red here is a symbol of power, and wearing red attire shows everyone around the Diviners that they are leaders. It is synonymous with a queen wearing a crown. Describing the significance of colour in Igbo traditional costumes, Lyndersay posits that, "...red called *mme* (bloody) was traditionally used by chief priests..." (417) Ugbana on her way to the stream to take her bath wears one-piece short white wrapper tied from the waist, reaching to the knees and another white wrapper tied on the chest and knotted at the back. She also wears an exclusive white headgear decorated with white feathers. Her costumes reflect the supernatural world of the film. This film shows the Antagonist struggling against the curse laid on her as things keep turning against her. Hence the film is portrayed as one controlled by the supernatural. By almost always wearing the colour white and other sacred elements of her costumes, Ugbana reinforces her power, leaving other colours for her acolytes. Her earrings, neck-beads and *jigida* are all white colours. Her staff is also white variegated with yellow lining. She is also shown at home (that is in the shrine) wearing pink silk wrapper in the Igbo maiden fashion. Her accessories here are white anklets, with a red net lined with white cloth as her face mask. Still at home in different scene, she is wearing a silk navy blue wrapper worn in the Igbo maiden style. Her accessories here are navy blue colour. Ezemmu is mostly shown in red *kpiteli* (loosely gathered skirt) and a red *danshiki* evenly designed with white cowries. He is carrying *oji*

(traditional spiritual staff carried by Igbo diviners). Ezemmou goes bare-footed and wears the Igbo traditional woven red and white cap with pompom.

4.2.3 Costume Assessment of *The Priestess*

Costumes in *The Priestess* add to set since most of the characters, including the Priestess are dignified *personalities* in the Igbo traditional milieu. They wear long wrappers made of george fabrics and *akwete*. But there are also many distinctions among characters. Supplicants carry staffs variegated with cowries and other spiritual accessories like tiny bells as symbols. The Igwe cabinet members and the Priestess's acolytes wear beads, caps and white garments indicative of their occupations respectively. The rich costumes of the Chiefs, Prince and Princess contrast effectively with the simpler costumes of the villagers. Each character wears long or short wrapper according to his/her age, gender, marital and social status.

Costumes in *The Princess* serve as visual language. As system of communication, they use visual elements of lines, colours space, and textures to convey messages about the characters. These visual units are constructed into meaningful symbols identifiable as Igbo traditional dress culture. Dialogue and costume communication are parallel and often interdependent means by which characters exchange information in the film.

4.3 Igbo Traditional Motifs and their Significance in *My Rising Sun*

Igbo cultural motifs are the signs and symbols found in Igbo traditional clothes which have culturally been accepted to be identified as connoting message that is familiar to the people. These motifs have also come to be accepted by Non-Igbo people to depict Igbo origin. These comprise ancient Igbo symbols and their significance as well as new

symbols added into the Igbo cultural costumes by cultural evolution and outside influences. In analyzing *My Rising Sun*, the study shall be interpreting the motifs in the costumes of the characters via the Igbo traditional perspective. The research will show how the meanings of costumes keep changing. The dynamic meanings generated proving to be largely dependent on characters and situation. So the researcher discerns and describes these multiplicities of meanings that costumes invoke taking into account the diverse forces that make them meaningful.

My Rising Sun is a Nigerian film produced by Stonegold Productions Limited. The film was costumed by Ogoo Okechi and directed by Iyke Odife in the year 2016. The film portrays the reward of evil deeds and good character. The story revolves around Mmadinobi, a beautiful young huntress with good repute and Adaobi who is equally a beautiful maiden but with bad habit. Adaobi has a curse placed on her by another maiden, Akudo whom she set up with a stolen goat. Out of the shame of the bad repute incurred to the maiden by Adaobi's setup, Akudo committed suicide by drowning herself. But not before she has placed a curse on her detractor, Adaobi. So unknowingly to Adaobi and her family, her hidden sins continued to haunt her in all aspects of her life. She continued to reject marriage proposals in the hope that she will eventually marry her long time boyfriend, Ikem. But luck fell against her as the gods rejected her marriage with the silver-spoon born Ikem. Mmadinobi becomes the lucky maiden chosen by the gods for Ikem.

George material is mainly used in the film. Maidens are costumed mostly in plane stripe and chequered george worn in the Igbo maiden fashion. That is, mini wrapper and a piece of the same material used in covering the breasts. All the girls wear at least a string of *jigida* each, neck bead, *uli* makeup design, earrings made with cowries and black lipstick

to simulate *uli* makeup. The silhouette of their costumes provide clear indications of the film's historical period which Igbo traditional era.

Young men wear wrapper mostly made with plane chequered george costumes. The young men's clothes are folded into two and made to form a *peteli* (loosely gathered skirts). The style and length of the *peteli* provide a great deal of information about the ages of the characters, namely that they are youth. They are also wearing *uli* makeup designs. *Uli* worn by these young men visually portrays them as having sprung from Igbo traditional society. Most of the young men have their hairs designed with cowries.

Older married women wear varying motifs of *uli* makeup design, earrings, neck-beads, two wrappers – a shorter wrapper is tied on the chest with a longer one tied on the waist on top of the shorter one through the ankle.

4.4 The Presence of Igbo Traditional Motifs in *Festival of War*

Festival of War is an Apex Global Link Productions Limited film costumed by Jacob Okwe. The make-up was designed by Grace Okorie, Nwobodo Obiorah Henry produced the film, while Michael Jaja directed the film in 2015.

4.4.1 Synopsis of *Festival of War*

Festival of War revolves around a family of two young girls and their mothers. The film begins by showing the family concluding the mourning rites of the head of the family who was the father and husband of the two young girls and their mothers respectively. The film reveals from the dialogue of the characters that the two widows and their children had been living in peace until the death of the head of the family. The conflict begins when the only son of the family (Achebe) born to the first wife (Mama-Nnukwu) becomes mentally

deranged after eating food offered him by the second wife (Mama-Obele). Consequently, Mama-Nnukwu takes to constantly accusing Mama-Obele and calling her names. This development in turn sows seeds of discord amongst their two daughters. The family which was formerly known for peace and unity therefore becomes a battle field.

The conflict is heightened when preparation for the *Owoh* dance festival competition was announced. The two half-sisters who before now collaborate in organizing and heading a dance group to participate in the dance festival, begin to organize separate dance groups. The two half-sisters thus begin to embark on an unhealthy competition. The quarrel in the family extends to the two windows as they begin to embark on diabolical means in order to outdo each other. The film eventually ends with the daughter of the second wife winning the dance competition while the first wife goes mad and begins to confess her past deeds which unknown to her and other characters are the causes of her son's madness.

4.4.2 Costume Reading of *Festival of War*:

4.4.3 Elders: Elders are the older men in the community who have been bestowed with various titles. They are the decision makers of the community. In *Festival of War*, the elders are uniformly costumed apparently because they are mostly shown during an official gathering. Their costumes include red cap, *akah*, *ankara* caftan and *isi agu* jumper (although the motifs on the *isi agu* suede are variously patterned with different floral, lion heads and lions in motion. The jumpers are worn over plain black trousers. Visual emphasis is apparently placed on their walking-sticks which complement their chieftaincy costumes.

In their second appearance when the fake Americana (Ejike) transformed them into assumed-Americans, their costumes changed into Negro dress codes. They are all costumed in Timberland boots, various colours of denims and calf-length chinos, various T-shirts, long bold necklaces, various caps including the Igbo traditional red cap.

In their next appearance, at the village square during the *Owoh* dance competition, the master of the ceremony who is also an elder is dressed in African print jumper and a maxi gathered skirt, walking-stick, red, black and white wool cap with pompom, *akah* and a pair of black shoes. The rest of the elders are costumed in white sleeveless vests worn under African print wrappers tied from the underarm and thrown over the other shoulders, red caps, *akah*, various designs of flat black shoes and walking sticks.

4.4.4 Married Women: Married women in *Festival of War*, when shown at home are casually costumed in one calve-length or ankle-length wrappers and casual Western styled blouses, or t-shirts. Some of them wear *boubou* (flowing wide-sleeved ankle-length large mass gown).

4.4.5 Mama-Ukwu: Mama-Ukwu is the first wife of the man we are told that the conclusion of his burial rites began the film. She is the one whose son Achebe goes mad. She also goes mad at the end of the film. In her sane days, she is costumed *boubou* made with blue floral *Ankara* (African print) and a head scarf. In her second appearance, she is in a pink t-shirt and a floral wrapper. At the shrine, she is wearing a black scarf on her head, pink gown under purple *Ankara* variegated with blue floral. The wrapper is casually tied on the chest on top of the gown through the knee.

4.4.6 Young-men: Young men in the film are shown in t-shirts with plane trousers or jeans.

4.4.7 Dancers: The male dancers are costumed with black, red and white wool cap with pompom, colourful green short-skirts and blouses flamboyantly variegated with other colours, *jigida*. They are also wearing magnificently designed costume made with different colours of clothes on their legs. The clothes run from below the knees through the ankles.

The female dancers of different groups have their legs designed with anklets, *nzu*, *ijele*, *ajalidu*. *Ijele* or *ajalidu* are costumes worn on the ankles during dance. These items of costume issue out rhythmic sound that complement the sounds of other musical instruments used for the dance.

4.4.8 Achebe: He is the only son of the family who later becomes mentally ill. In his first appearance, before he took ill, he is wearing an orange colour tee-shirt and jean trousers. In his second appearance, he has already taken ill here, he is shown in a red t-shirt, different colours of green and black slippers worn on his palms. On his feet are worn a pair of slippers dilapidated by long usage. He carries a calabash on his left hand and an old pot-cover with which he plays incoherent music. In another appearance, he is wearing a red tee-shirt, a pair of black trousers which is folded up to the shins, a pair of slippers worn on the elbows. He is carrying a dusty cellophane bag. His costumes match the transformation and change that he experiences during the course of the film. They reflect the state of his mental ill-health. They did not just suit his character, but helps to define his character and trace his transformation.

4.4.9 Ezemou: He is a native doctor. He is shown in the shrine divining for Mama-Ukwu. His bare torso and face are designed with red and white paint simulating *nzu* and *ufie*. Two big snails' shells are passed through a cord and worn on his neck. He is dressed in a plain red cotton ankle wrapper.

4.4.10 Ejike: He is the fake American who defrauded so many people in the city, then came back to the village with his victims' possessions; also lied to the villagers that he lives in America. He came to the village with a borrowed car and clothing and other fashion items which he got from a boutique he defrauded in Lagos. On his arrival to the village, he is wearing a white vest under a black tracksuit with the trousers sagged, a fez cap designed with a caption written with golden colour, two oversized long neck chain and a big cross pendant like the ones seen on hip hop musicians. The zipper of his jacket is fastened halfway to reveal the white vest worn under the matching jacket. He is also wearing black wrist-bands on his two wrists. His white pair of trousers is sagged to reveal the brown boxers worn under the trousers. His shoes are a pair of black boots. He is carrying a bottle whisky. In his next appearance, he is at home (still in the village). Here he is wearing Timberland boots on white socks, white shin-length pinafore, purple chequered short-sleeve shirt, a black and white cap, same necklaces and wrist-bands as described earlier and an ear-piece attached to his ears. In another appearance, he is wearing a navy blue vest (muscle shirt) and a muffler, white three-quarter chinos, white canvas shoes designed with pink lines. Ejike does not work so his costumes were designed to reflect and enforce his live of leisure.

4.4.11 Costume Assessment of *Festival of War*

Although *Festival of War* is set in the village, its period is contemporary. Therefore, all the characters are costumed in modern Western clothes just as it usually found with the Igbo people of the modern time. But during the *Owoh* dance festival competition, the maidens are dressed in ancient Igbo maiden's fashion. Thus portraying an Igbo village setting of recent times where during traditional festivals, characters are conventionally

found wearing traditional Igbo clothes. Costumes of “Elders” in the film follow the rich Igbo dress culture of *isi agu* (suede patterned with lions’ heads). While those of the women follow the dress culture of the Igbo women of contemporary times. This is more or less a combination of the Igbo contemporary dress culture. Igbo contemporary dress culture comprises of traditional Igbo dress culture integrated with dress cultures from various different cultures including Western dress culture. The same dress culture goes for the maidens and young men. The dress code of the Igbo people of modern times has been hugely influenced by the dress code of Western people. Record has it that in order to encourage modesty; the white colonizers gave out clothes as gifts to the Igbo people of the time. This development therefore, inculcated Western dress code to the already existing Igbo cultural dress. This dress culture has since then be identified as the dress culture of the Igbo people.

Festival of War therefore showcases the dress culture of the Igbo contemporary people in its use of costume and makeup. One may argue that the use of *uli* makeup for the maidens does not correspond to the dress code of the contemporary Igbo maiden. But, the use of this traditional Igbo makeup is justifiable as the film used it during a dance festival. This is very much agreeable to the contemporary trend of designing a dance group in the modern era. Thus, Igbo dress culture has contributed significantly to the designing of the costume and makeup of this film.

4.5 Dynamism of the Significance of Nollywood Costumes: An Analysis of *Better Tomorrow*

Better Tomorrow is a Nollywood film produced by Priced Penny Production Limited, costumed by Glory Kalu, directed by Ilochi Olisaemeka and the make-up was designed by Big Brother Concept in 2016.

The film centers on a young man, Nonso. Events and dialogue in the film reveal that Nonso who is about thirty years of age was driven back to Eastern Nigeria, his native home by crises in Maiduguri in the Northern part of Nigeria. For this reason he begins to suffer financial set back as his business and shop is said to have been temporarily closed down. Coupled with this devastation is the fact that he cannot at the time raise money for his forthcoming traditional marriage ceremony. He opts for a low key ceremony but his fiancé, Nkechi refused as she said that she wants their love celebrated in a grand style. His mother-in-law-to-be is also on the same side with her daughter. According her, her friends and *asoebi* group must not be let down for any reason whatsoever.

As Nonso awaits and hopes that peace returns to the city of Maiduguri, he gets news that his shop and business has been burnt down. This turn of event gets him more frustrated as his fiancé worsens the situation by leaving him for a wealthy young man, Buchi. Both his father in-law to be, Ichie Dike and his wife vehemently reject and disown him since he can no longer foot their bills and those of their daughter. After so much hopeless experiences, he bounced back and becomes wealthier than he was at the beginning while Nkechi who jilts him initially suffer terribly in the hands of her husband; Buchi who keeps treating her with contempt.

4.5.1 Costumes in *Better Tomorrow*

Throughout the history of Nollywood costumes there appears to be nowhere found a break in continuity of development. Between the early practices of almost total reliance

on Igbo cultural motifs and the seeming rise of eclectic adaptation of several other cultural motifs, are some connection – some current flowing between the earliest costume culture and the trending costume culture. Motifs in the new costume culture although diverse, appear to still be apparently rooted in the Igbo cultural dress culture.

4.5.2 Nonso: He is a young man of about thirty years of age who suffers financial set back because of crises in the city where he resided. His first appearance is in his would be in-law's house. He visits his in-law to announce his return from the city. Here he is wearing a navy blue long sleeve shirt, a sky blue jean trousers, a flat black pair of shoes and a simple tiny gold necklace with a small circle pendant.

In his next appearance, he is shown in the church premises discussing with a Reverend Father. He is wearing a lemon green African print (*Ankara*) caftan variegated with blue and white motifs a pair of black sandals. In another appearance, he wears a blue tee-shirt and black trousers. In his next appearance, he is wearing a tee-shirt variously variegated with orange, blue and white horizontal lines and a pair of navy blue jean trousers.

Nonso's costumes portray a young Nigerian man living in the modern times. However, his costume designs tilt more towards South-East dress code for younger men in this era. One can argue that his costumes portray more of the Western dress culture because jean and tee-shirts are Western dress culture. This claim is as true as it is with Igbo dress culture of the modern times. This is because colonial Igbo people integrated Western culture brought in by their colonial master into the already existing Igbo dress culture. Although, the same colonial masters colonized both Northern and Western Nigerians, it is the South-East people who seem to have embraced the dress culture of the colonial masters

more than other parts of Nigeria did. This same dress culture appears also to have been identified as Igbo dress culture by other ethnicities in Nigeria. Besides, the traditional costumes worn by Nonso portray more of the modern Igbo traditional attires.

4.5.3 Ichie Dike: He is the would-be father in-law of Nonso. Here is with his Nonso. He is wearing a white lace caftan yarned with strands of lemon green thread. The fabric used for lace is usually thin and light and normally designed with patterns of holes. Semiotically, this can be interpreted to depict inconsistency and unreliability of his character. Thus pointing to him as someone who is not loyal as the film later revealed when he insists that his daughter must marry the wealthier young man since Nonso can no longer help them financially.

In another appearance he is shown at home reading Newspaper. He is wearing a blue African print caftan designed with yellow motifs. He is again shown with his wife as they work in the garden. He is wearing a white vest and a pair of navy blue trousers folded up to the calf. Here, his costumes depict a modern Nigerian man working in his garden. His next appearance is when he meets with Buchi the wealthy young man who eventually married his daughter Nkechi who is earlier betrothed to Nonso. Ichie Dike is here wearing an ash *senator*, the type worn by Aribra people of Imo state of Eastern Nigeria. On his way to the Igwe's palace for a meeting of the Igwe's cabinet members with the Igwe, he wears a red cap (the one popular with Igbo titled men), a string of white bold beads on the neck, brown velvet *senator* patterned with lion-skin motifs, a walking stick and a pair of white trousers, white wrist beads and a pair of white trousers.

Ichie Dike's costumes appear to be a clear example of the contribution of Igbo traditional dress culture to designing of Nollywood costumes. Although some of his costumes appear to be Western, his costumes generally portray Igbo identity.

4.5.4 Nkechi: She is a young girl of about twenty years of age and the daughter of Ichie Dike who is initially engaged to Nonso. In her first appearance with her fiancée, Nonso at her father's house, she is wearing a purple head-tie, red, round-neck tee-shirt designed with white and blue horizontal bold strips, a black knee-length skirt and a pair of silvery slippers. In another appearance, she is wearing a sleeveless African print blouse and trousers. In her next appearance, she is with her friend lamenting and sobbing about her fiancée's financial set back and how it is deterring the celebration of her traditional marriage which is close at hand. Here, she is a dark ash blouse variegated with black and thin white horizontal lines, a black knee-length skirt, braided *Bob Marley* hair style and tiny gold earrings.

As the wealthy Buchi's wife, she is wearing a red flamboyantly designed maxi gown, an over-size round earrings, blond afro wig and a pair of red high-heeled sandals patterned with white lines.

4.5.5 Nkechi's Mother: She is coming from the market here and she is wearing a sky blue *buba* lace yarned with red horizontal motifs. The *buba* is casually tied with a head tie, flat slippers and a pair of tiny earrings. In her next appearance, she is wearing a yellow *buba* and scarf lace, flat slippers and tiny silver earrings. Her yellow costume here symbolically reveals coming events and her character trait. Namely, that she is money conscious. Initially her costumes are mainly colourful *buba*. In the moment of her transition to a wealthy woman, she is shown in the garden working with her husband. She

is costumed in a lemon green head scarf, one wrapper African print tied down to the ankle and a navy blue shirt patterned with white floral. In another scene when Buchi the rich young man brought the car he presented to her husband, Ichie Dike. She is shown at home wearing a purple sweet heart blouse with puffed sleeves, yellow scarf and African print two wrappers tied in the Igbo traditional women fashion. Her costumes draw our attention to the change of economic status gradually proceeding from the family. Her costumes appear to depict a modern Nigerian woman identity more that they do any particular ethnicity. Although, most of them apparently seem to be portray Igbo traditional motifs than they do other ethnicities in Nigeria. Her costumes as the mother in-law of the rich Buchi tilts specifically to the Igbo traditional dress code. She is shown at Nonso's house warning the young man to keep away from her daughter. She wears red george two wrapper embroidered with golden threads, a light pink V-neck lace blouse with puffy sleeves, a black false hair and slivery slippers with medium heels. George seemed to have been accepted to depict Igbo identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

From the inception of Nigerian film industry, Igbo cultural motifs have continued to play significant roles in the creation and definition of Nollywood characters. It would therefore be virtually impossible to recount the complete history and development of Nollywood costume without mentioning the immense contributions of Igbo dress culture to the evolution of the industry's costumes and consequently accentuating how these motifs have been used to create characters. In seeking to recount the origin of costumes in Nollywood, this research relies on speculations on the origin of Nigerian film industry; since there is little or no work on which to draw from than works on the emergence of Nollywood. Although there are plethoras of researches available on various aspects of Nollywood films, no significant work seems to have been done to record the history of Nollywood costumes. This research therefore traces the evolution of Nollywood costume

from scholarly accounts on the emergence of Nigerian film industry. It clings to the most widely followed speculation which has been championed by theatre and film scholars. This speculation envisions Nollywood as having emerged from the commercial desire of an Igbo businessman, Kenneth Nnebue. Thus this research traced the evolution of Nollywood costume to the costuming of *Living in Bondage* in 1992, a film produced by NEK Video Links owned by Kenneth Nnebue an Igbo salesman. Due to the mass appeal and commercial success of *Living in Bondage*, other Igbo salespersons were motivated to join the lucrative business of film production. Consequently, Nigerian film industry (Nollywood) was born. As a result of the influence of Igbo filmmakers on the development of the industry and their attendant dominance in the making of Nollywood films; Igbo cultural motifs were naturally adopted by the pioneer Nollywood costumiers in creating Nollywood costumes.

So costuming of *Living in Bondage* and its contemporaries seem to have had great influence on the costuming of subsequent Nollywood films. Hence, the costumes of Nollywood film character appear to be adaptations of Igbo dress culture. Succinctly put, the socio-cultural background of the pioneer producers, marketers, and technicians of Nollywood films seems to be a big factor in determining the films' narratives, background and costumes used. In other words, Nollywood costume designers who are mainly of Igbo origin played a crucial role in determining Nollywood costume culture. Outfits worn by Igbo people of the contemporary times were quickly copied by costume designers for the costuming of contemporary films. While those worn by the Igbo ancient people were adopted for historic and heroic films.

5.1 Summary of Findings

An abundance of Nollywood films serve as valid evidence on the predominant presence of Igbo dress culture in Nollywood costumes. Observation gathered from this research shows that Igbo cultural motifs are usually used to create and define Nollywood characters. Outfits worn by Igbo people of the contemporary times appear to be copied by costume designers for the costuming of films set in the contemporary times. While those worn by the Igbo ancient people were adopted for epic and historic films. Hence, a variety of Igbo traditional cloths were found to be employed by Nollywood in costuming. Two ankle-length wrapper, knee-length or mini wrapper made with george, *Ankara* or *akwete* fabrics, *jigida*, *nza*, and *akah* are worn by the actors/actresses depending on the gender, age, socio-economic and marital status of the character they are playing.

Married women are most times shown in costume in Igbo traditional two wrappers. George and *akwete* fabrics with which Igbo people are identified are observed to be commonly used to costume female characters. Young unmarried girls are delineated with mini wrapper, while longer wrappers are used to indicate that a woman is a wife and mother. Depending on the period the film is set in, married women embody puffed-sleeve blouse, two wrappers and headdress. These costumes may have been typical of Igbo traditional eras, which have been modified with motifs from other traditions. It is common to also see Nollywood films set in a traditional milieu to show characters wearing the *uli* makeup of traditional Igbo people. *Jigida*, which is generally conceived as an Igbo item of beautification, seems to have evolved into a notable costume culture for costumiers.

It is also uncommon to see a maiden in historic or epic films appearing without *jigida*. Maidens are mostly costumed in printed wax, *akwete*, plain, stripe and chequered

george worn in the Igbo maiden fashion. That is, mini wrapper and a piece of the same fabric worn around the breasts. In almost all epic films, girls appear to be wearing at least a string of *jigida*, neck-beads, *uli* makeup design, earrings made either with cowries or beads.

My Rising Sun extensively employed the famous george material of the Igbo people. *Akah* which also portrays wealth and office in the Igbo traditional world are extensively employed to create characters. Heavily embroidered george were used to indicate wealth while plain chequered george were used to portray average characters.

Male characters often appear to be shown in Igbo traditional cloths. Young men were observed to be costumed mostly in the traditional Igbo fashion of loin cloth that wrapped around their waists and between their legs then fastened at their backs. They are also seen in *peteli*. *Peteli* is a short gathered skirt or wrapper worn by young people in the Igbo ancient period.

Older male characters usually appear in red cap, *akah*, printed wax or the famous *isi agu* fabric worn over trousers. For instance the *isi agu* fabric of the Igbo people, traditional title-holder hat and knitted hat with pompom were extensively used in costuming the king's cabinet members in *Festival of War*. Costumes in the Nollywood epic films usually seem to be pointing the Igbo traditional milieu.

It was also observed most Nollywood films set in the city or contemporary times more often follow the Igbo contemporary dress culture. That is, dress culture showing the integration of dress cultures from diverse cultures into the Igbo dress culture. The most obvious of the diverse dress culture being Western dress culture. This is exemplified in *Festival of War* and *Better Tomorrow*. These films show young girls dressed in Western

style of skirt and blouse, tee-shirts and gowns, while mothers are dressed in *boubou*, tee-shirts, wrappers, *buba* of the Yoruba people.

Nollywood costume designers also appeared to have been following costume design based on the ritual concerned as it is obtained in the Igbo traditional religious observances. For instance, Ubgana in *The Priestess* is shown in white attire worn in the Igbo maiden fashion, while Ezemou in the same film is costumed in red *peteli*. White in the film defines purity and points to the Ubgana's (priestess) connection to the water goddess. So just as in the Igbo traditional milieu, Nollywood seems to show that white and red cotton fabrics are reserved for supernatural characters (diviners). The research thus reveals that Igbo culture has played an important role in the evolution of Nollywood costumes.

5.2 Conclusion

Igbo culture has played an important role in the evolution of Nollywood costumes. Nollywood films seem to often depict traditional married women costumed in two wrappers; maidens costumed in short wrappers and *jigida*. Same goes for older men and youthful men. So Igbo dress culture appears to be at the pivot of the development of Nollywood costumes and had continued to play significant roles in costuming Nollywood characters. So from the inception of Nollywood through the recent times, Igbo cultural motifs have been functioning effectively as the canvas upon which Nollywood characters are created. Nollywood costumes thus appear to be essentially carriers of Igbo cultural patterns.

It therefore seems that Nollywood costumes cannot be sufficiently discussed without reiterating Igbo cultural patterns. Relying on their socio-cultural background, the pioneer filmmakers coined stories to represent a world familiar to them. Content of most

early Nollywood films thus appear to represent traditional and contemporary world of the Igbo people. In the same vein, the pioneer costume designers were also found to have frequently employed Igbo cultural motifs in costuming. Thus Igbo dress culture appears to have contributed immensely to the evolution of Nollywood costume. They have so far been serving as major source of inspiration for the pioneer costume designers and even till date, there can still be found in large number traces of Igbo cultural motifs in the costumes of Nollywood characters. The industry has most often transmitted and portrayed Igbo culture, myths, legends, religion, dress belief system and values as motifs and symbols in Nollywood costumes. Simply put, Igbo cultural motifs more than dress culture of any other culture has largely influence costuming of Nollywood characters. Therefore, Nollywood costumes appear to bear communal meanings of Igbo cultural costumes.

5.2 Recommendations

This research recommends that Nollywood costumiers should focus more on the communicative elements of costumes. They should start deemphasizing aesthetics. Significance of motifs should be of essence to costumiers. This calls for in-depth research into cultural motifs and their significance. Film producers in the Nigerian film industry should also take cognizance of the time available for research before selecting a script to for production. If the time available before the actual shooting of the film is limited, epic or historic stories should be avoided. Since historic stories usually require longer research time. So to employ motifs aptly, costume designers will need to be given ample time to carry out an ethnographic research in order to employ motifs appropriately.

Again, costume and makeup designers in the industry should endeavour to give the actual depiction of cloths worn in the era. For instance, the practice of depicting traditional

Igbo traditional characters uniformly with sack is wrong. They should take time to research into history and places before executing their designs. If the film is set in Igbo community, the costume designer should find out what Igbo people of that period wore. While the makeup artist, on his/her part; should try to find out the kind of makeup with which that period was identified. For instance, simulations of *Ichi*, which the traditional Igbo society used in depicting strength and valour could be used in heroic films to depict warriors and courageous men.

More costume scholars should engage in the research and documentation of cultural motifs and their significance. These can become reference point for the Nollywood costume designers.

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APPENDIX A

PLATES 1 & 2: PICTURES ADOPTED FROM STANLEY KINGSLEY'S *ADAEZE*, 2013:



Pic 1 shows elderly men in Igbo cultural costumes comprising: *akah*, george woven cap, native hand fan and walking stick.



Picture 2 showing maidens costumed in *jigida* and two mini wrappers worn in the traditional Igbo maiden style.
PLATE TWO



Picture 3 showing maidens and a young man lion cloth in the Igbo traditional fashion



Picture 4 shows a mother dressed in two ankle-wrappers. Note two young men wearing wrappers in the Igbo traditional style.

APPENDIX B

PLATES 3 & 4: PICTURES ADOPTED FROM OKOROJI CHIMA'S *AFRICAN BRIDE*



Pictures 1 shows a mother and wife dressed a maxi large mass gown gathered below the breasts. This is a modern version of the traditional ankle length wrapper worn by the traditional Igbo women.



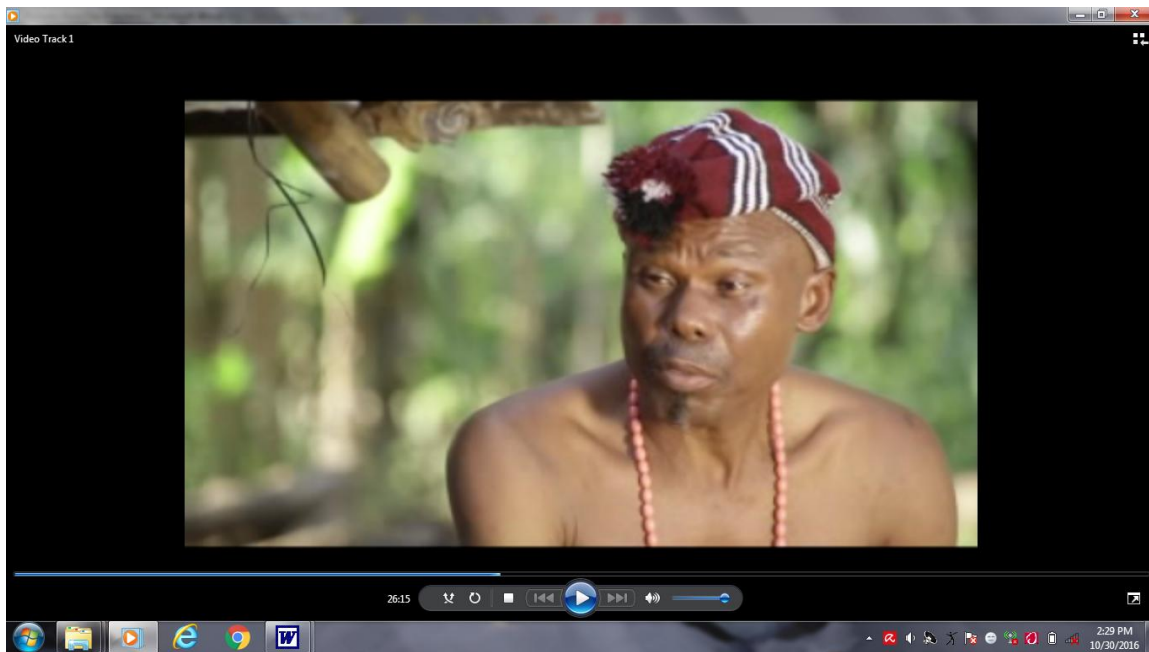
Picture 2 shows a man dressed in the popular Igbo chieftain cap and akak beads.

APPENDIX C

PLATE 3 -6: PICTURES ADOPTED FROM ILOCHI OLISAEMEKA'S *THE PRIESTESS*



Picture 1: Showing a priestess and her acolyte dressed in white wrappers tied in the Igbo maiden and mother's styles respectively.

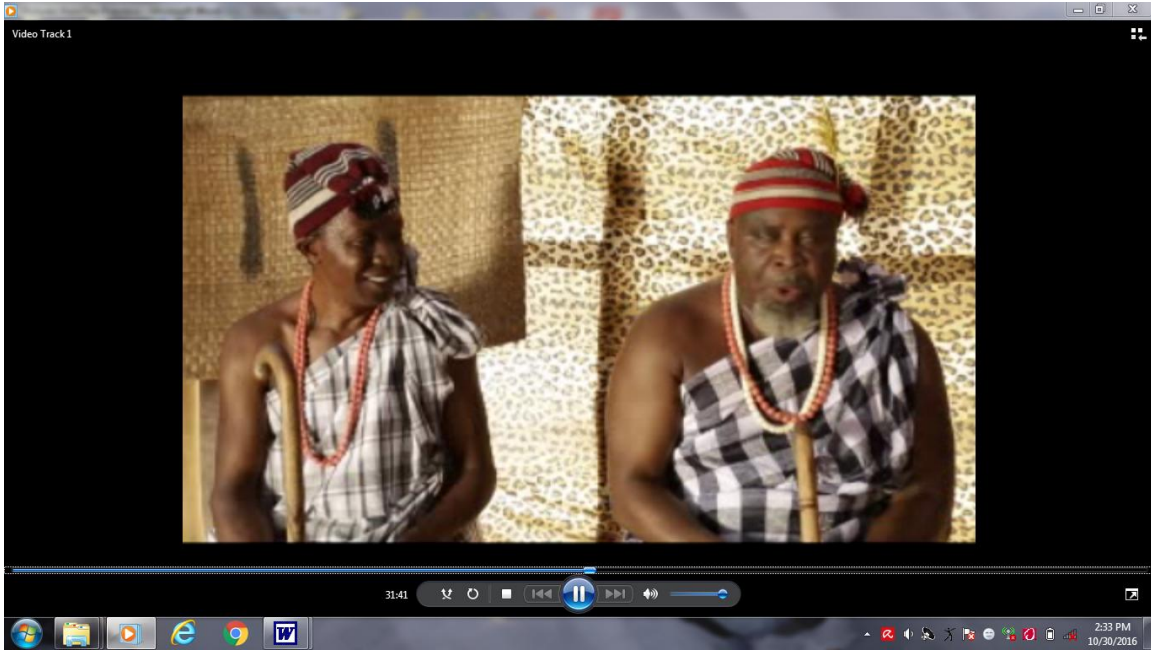


Picture 2 shows a character wearing the popular Igbo woven cap with pompom.

PLATE 4

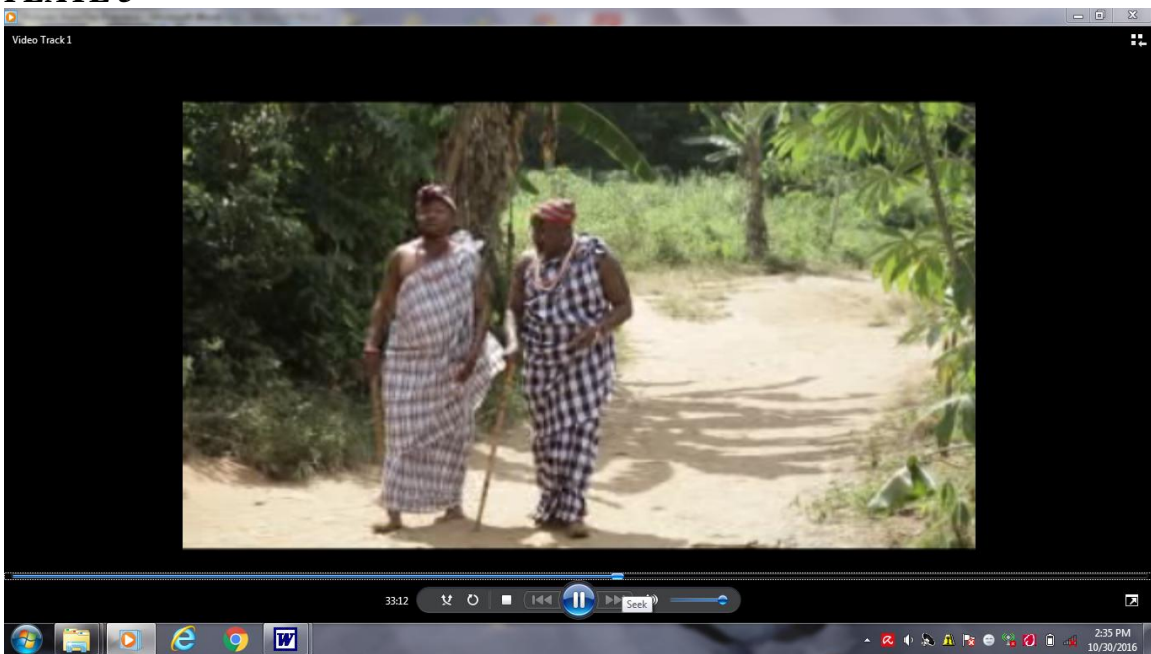


Pictures 3 shows characters wearing Igbo cultural costumes.



Picture 4 showing Elderly men wearing Igbo cultural costumes.

PLATE 5



Picture 5 showing characters wearing ankle-length wrappers signifying fatherhood in the Igbo traditional world.



Picture 6 shows Note the mini-wrappers portraying the characters as maidens.

PLATE 6



Picture 7 shows a maiden wearing *uli* which is a traditional Igbo makeup used for beautification.



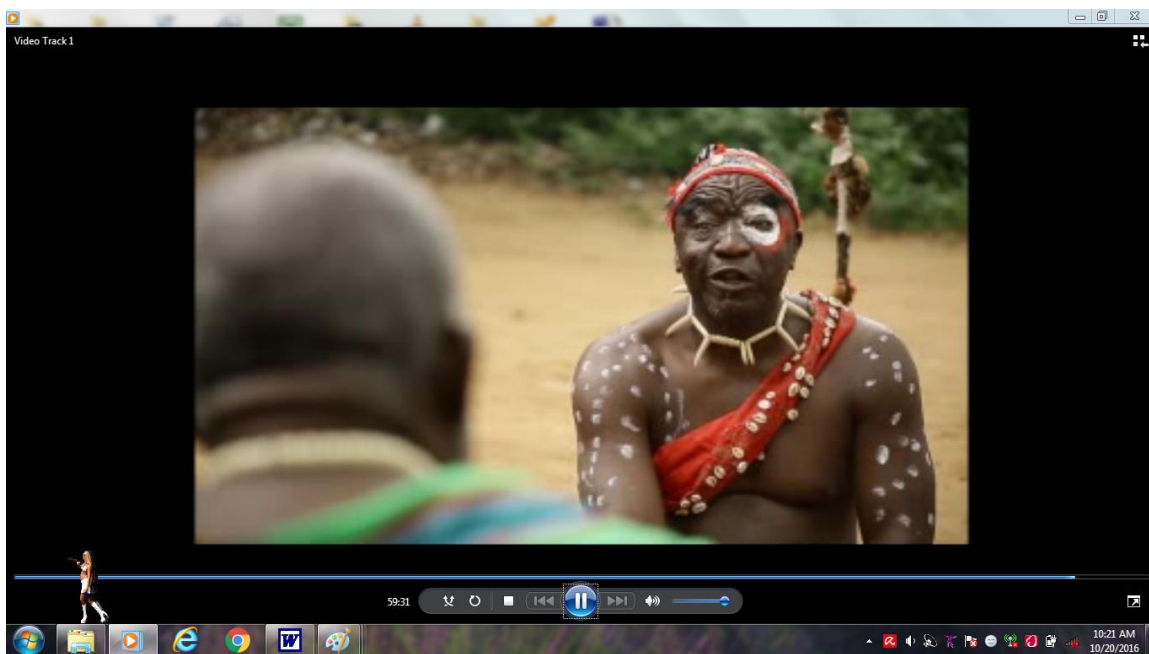
Picture 8 shows characters wearing costumes of young men in the Igbo traditional era.

APPENDIX D

PLATE 7 & 12: PICTURES ADOPTED FROM IYKE ODIFE'S *My Rising Sun*, 2016.

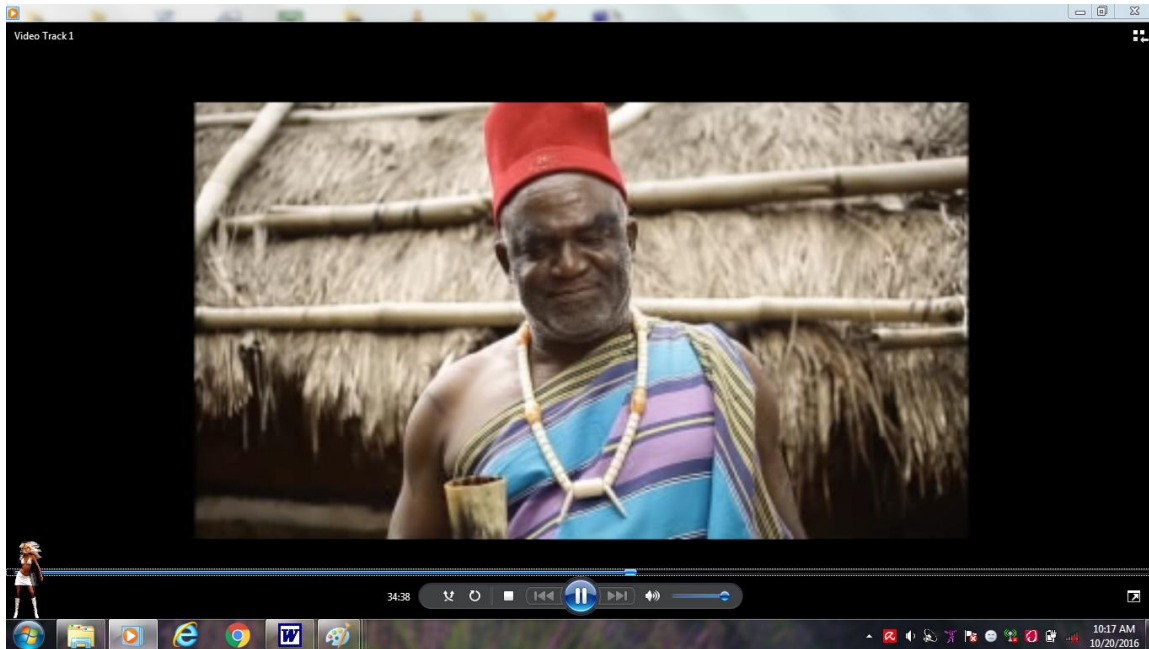


Picture 9 shows a diviner wearing a red *kpeteli* (gathered skirt).

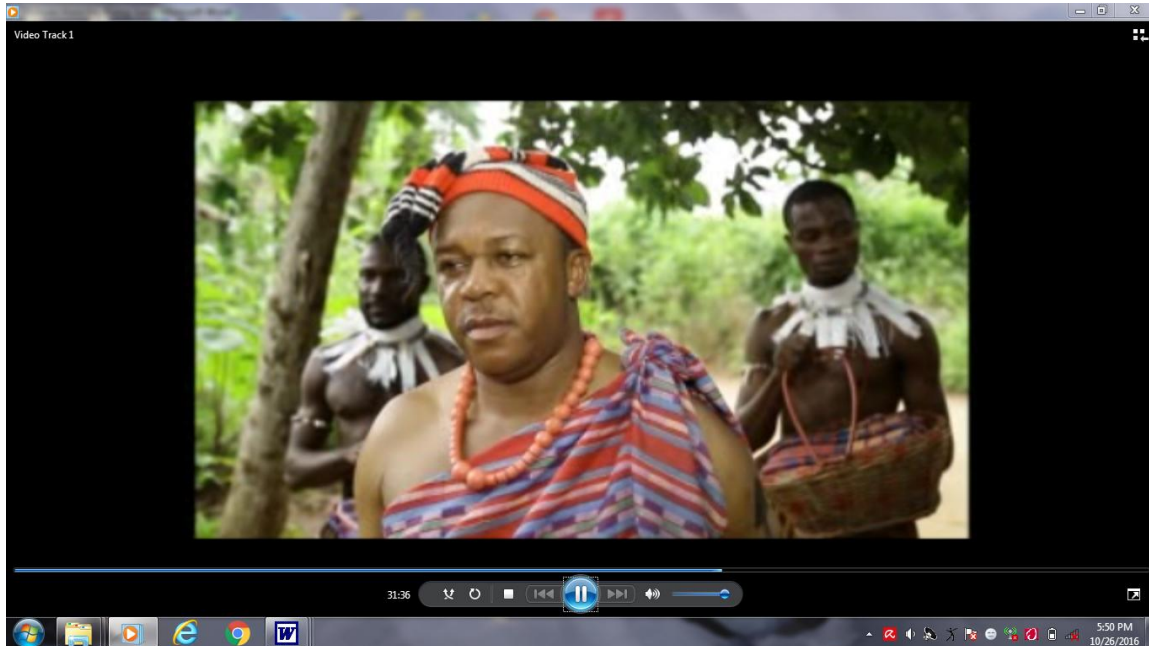


Picture 10: Suppliant costumed in cultural Igbo motifs comprising *nzu* (native kaolin chalk), red cloth, red, black and white cap with pompom, and cowries.

PLATE 8



Picture 11 shows a character wearing Igbo cultural cloth made with *akwete* an Igbo home-spun fabric. Also note the Igbo chieftain red cap.



Picture 12 shows characters costumed in Igbo cultural fabrics tied in the Igbo traditional fashion.

PLATE 9



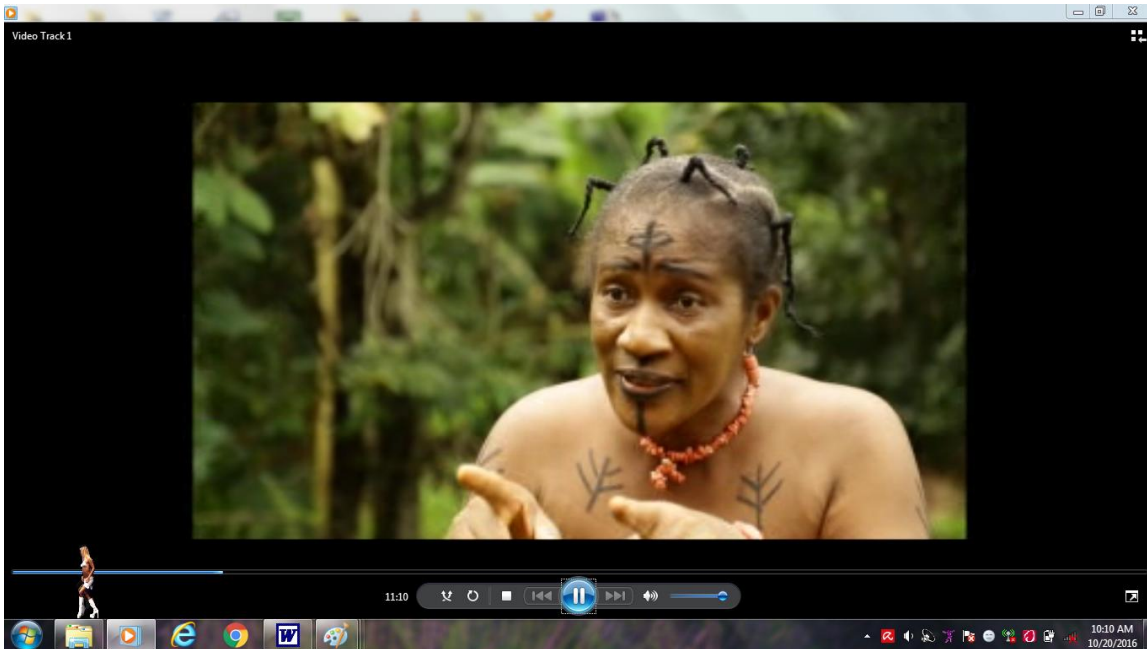
Picture 13



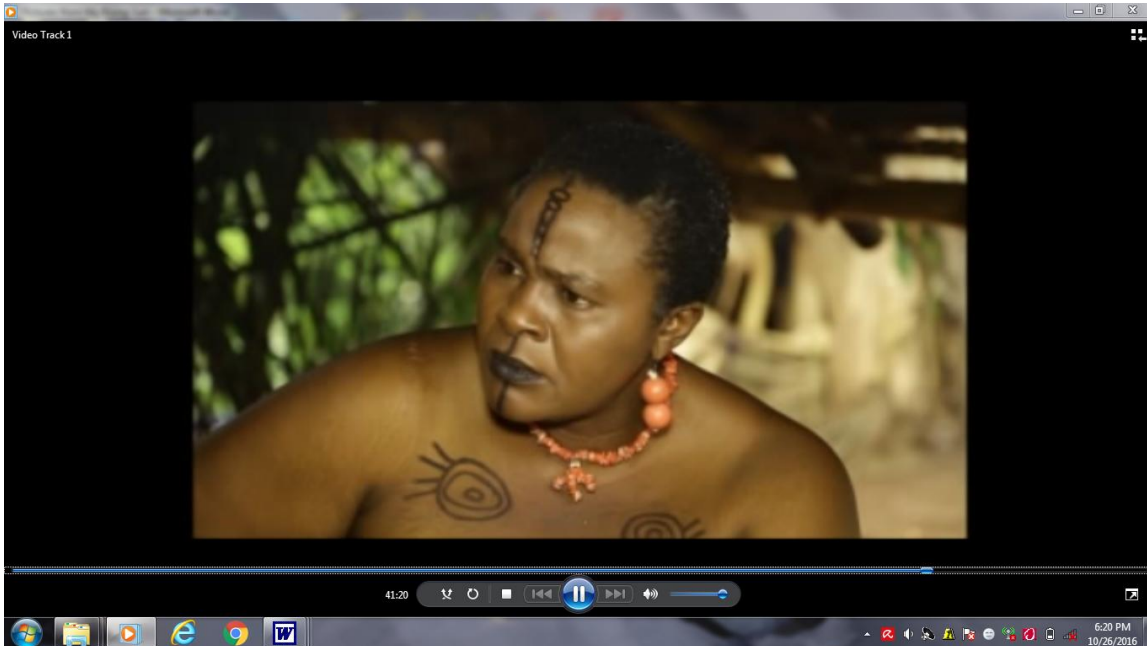
Picture 14.

Picture 13 and 14 are showing female characters wearing traditional Igbo *uli* makeup.

PLATE 10

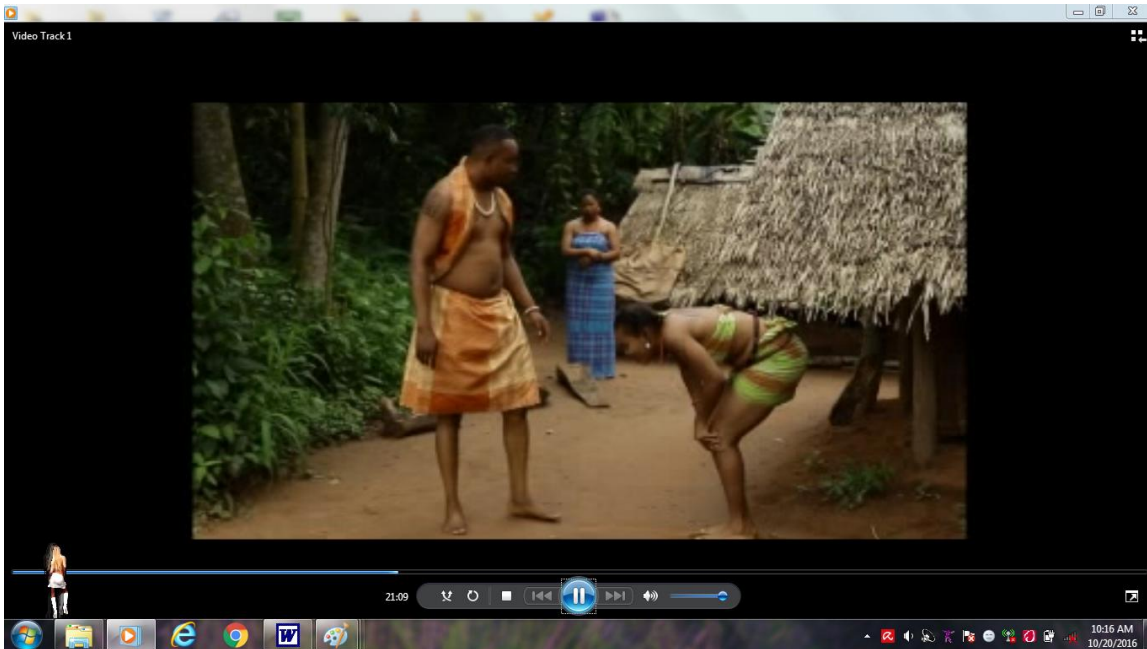


Picture 15



Picture 16

Pictures 15 and 16 show characters wearing various patterns of Igbo traditional *uli* makeup.
PLATE 11



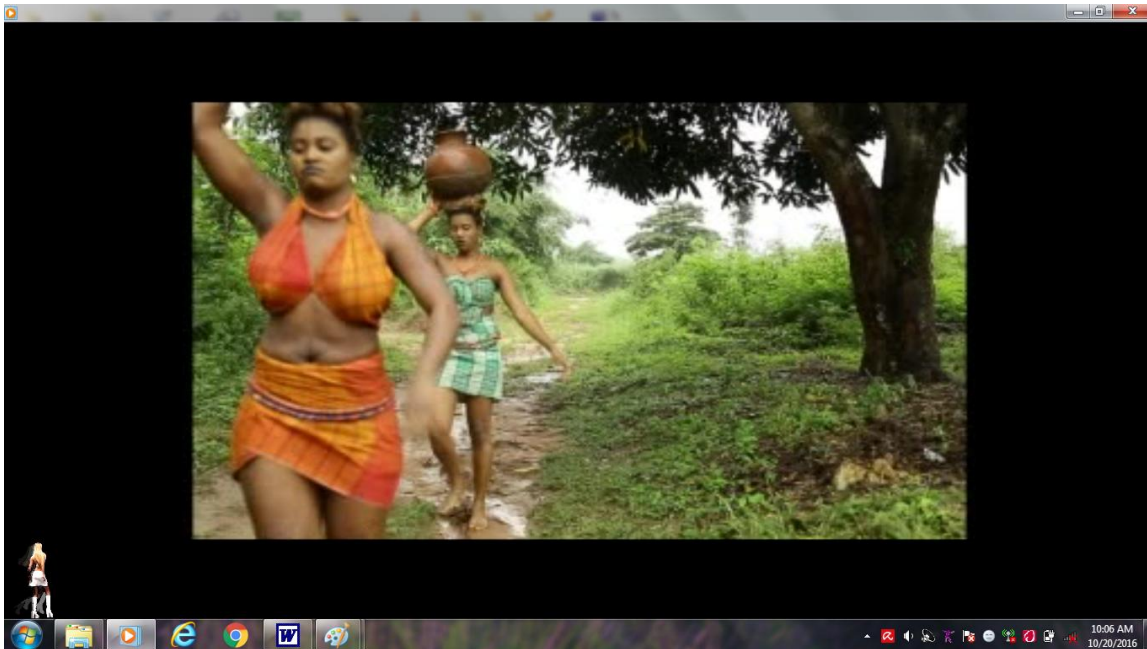
Picture 17



Picture 18

Pictures 17 and 18 show characters wearing Igbo cultural attires depicting their various genders, age and marital status.

PLATE 12



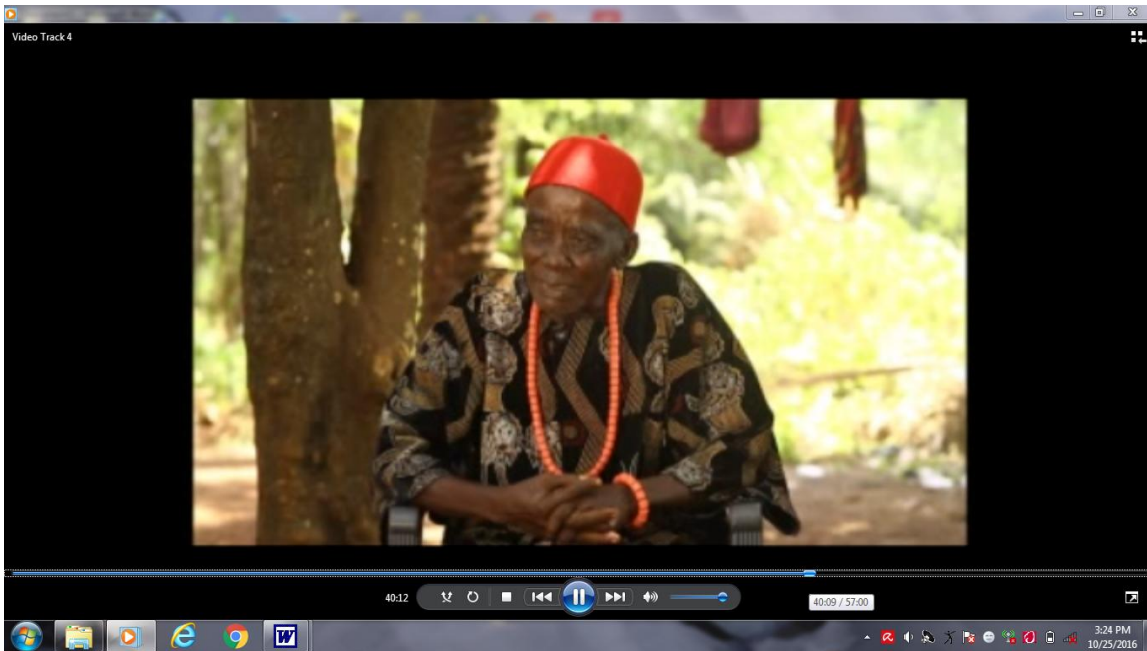
Picture 19 shows characters costumed in plane george fabric worn in the Igbo maiden style.



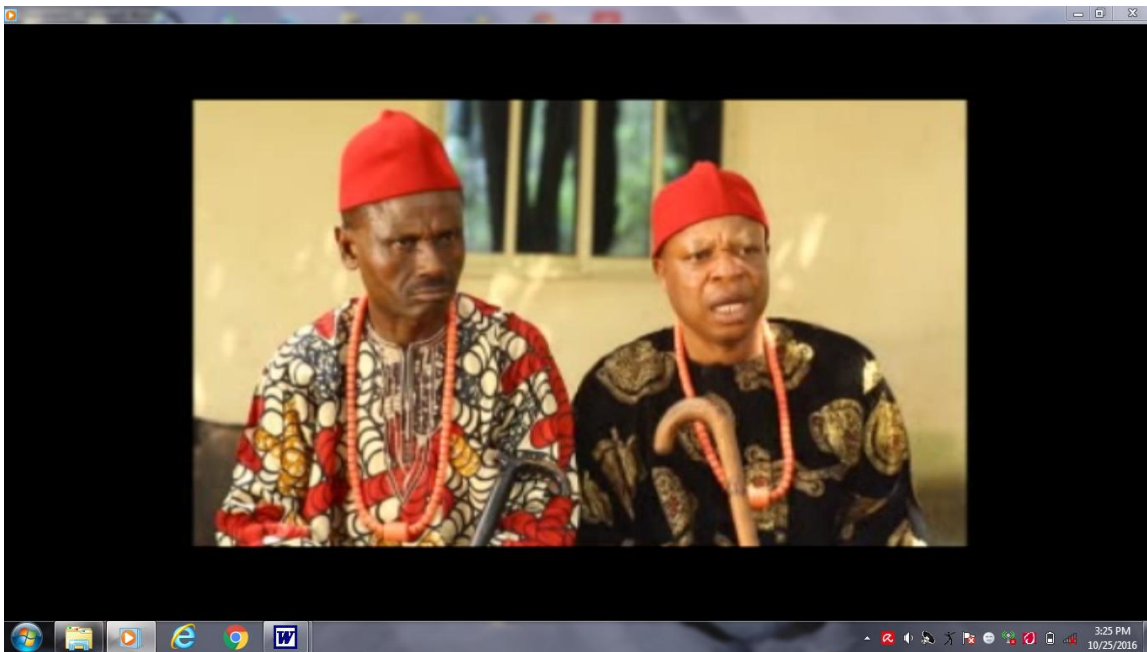
Picture 20 shows characters costumes with *akwete* and george fabrics worn in the Igbo traditional styles.

APPENDIX E

PLATE 13 &14: PICTURES ADOPTED FROM MICHEAL JAJA'S *FESTIVAL OF WAR*, 2015.



Picture 1 shows a character dressed in the popular *isi agu* fabric, red cap and beads.



Pictures 2 shows characters costumed in Igbo cultural cloths, caps and beads. Costumes here signify wealth and chieftain.

PLATE 14



Picture 3: Characters wearing Igbo traditional costumes comprising red cap, *akah*, *nza*, traditional hand fan, wrist-beads. Note that the cloth is worn in the Igbo cultural style: two wrappers with one thrown over the shoulder.



Picture 4: Dancers attired in *mbenukwu*, *nza*, *akah* and Igbo traditional cap.

APPENDIX F

PLATE 15: PICTURES ADOPTED FROM ILOCH OLISAEMEKA'S *BETTER TOMORROW*, 2016



Picture 1 shows a woman and a man dressed in traditional Igbo costumes while the young man and maiden are costumed in modern Igbo cloths. The styles of their costumes signify their different marital status.



Picture 2: Characters costumed in modern Igbo cloths. Note that Igbo contemporary cloths are integration of motifs from different cultures. Although the *buba* worn by the woman is of Yoruba origin, it has been adopted by contemporary Igbo women.

PLATE 16



Picture 3 shows a character wearing Igbo chieftain red cap, wrist-beads and neck-beads.



Picture 4 shows a character wearing *senator*. Although *senator* seems to be the most popular fashion among Nigerian males, it has exclusively been used by most Igbo bridegrooms during traditional marriage celebrations.

PLATE 17



Picture 5 shows a character costumed the traditional Igbo velvet caftan, neck and wrist-beads and red cap.



Picture 6: Characters wearing Igbo chieftain costumes comprising: walking-sticks, red caps, *isi-agu* and beads.

PLATE 18



Picture 7: A character wearing george wrappers and lace blouse. The costumes connote motherhood, good taste and wealth among the Igbo people.



Picture 8: Character dressed in traditional Igbo costumes. Note the traditional Igbo cap.

