

Motif and Colour Signification among the Yoruba: Contextualizing Cultural Aesthetics in Ritual and Contemporary Drama

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Abstract

Colour is a dominant medium of visual aesthetics, described in terms of Chroma known in Yoruba as "Aro." However, colour in most Nigerian dramatic performances has aimed mostly to beautify than interrogate its experiential outcome. This research sought to know the effectiveness of indigenous motifs on the audience (with emphasis on colour) based on Yoruba ritual, cultural and religious worldview. Using "aro" as a vehicle for design intentions, decoration and communication, the study draws from tables of the applicable meaning of colour to foreground the research. The paper then looks at colour applications in some Yoruba ritual and contemporary dramatic plays with a focus on indigenous ritual and religious objects. It textually analysed the colour significance of ritualistic aspects of three plays and a performance of one contemporary Yoruba play with European celebrative flavor. Post-performance interviews and Focused Group Discussions were conducted with the audience, and observations were qualitatively analysed using comparative tables. Opinion reveals two significant findings. Colour in modern English plays shows Vitality, energy and beauty, while colour in ritual plays portends gods, spirituality and groves. They perceive colour in modern Nigerian plays as aesthetic, exciting but without spiritual significance. Their audience appreciates colour from a spiritual perspective with deities and related objects or motifs thereof. Yoruba audience also exhibits fears toward ritual objects in performances as they would in real life. The mix of ritual and modern domestic play was able to draw an effective relationship between ancient Yoruba culture and the present and further illustrates the Yoruba audience penchant for figurative communication.

Keywords: Drama, Myth, Motif, Yoruba culture, Colour signification.

Introduction:

Colour is common to people all over the world. It is a universal phenomenon with profound artistic and symbolic relevance. It has also enjoyed interdisciplinary interrogation including medicine, anthropologist, visual arts and performance. Universally, colour breaks a cultural barrier and communicates differently in different cultures. Similarly, the perceptive power of individuals differs, with reference to age, exposure to education and climatic condition of regions. Anthropologists like Alexandre Surrallés, Nicola Jones argue that some colours do not exist among some tribe. Black, for example, signifies death and is worn during times of mourning in some communities; black in Egypt, however, represents rebirth, why it is celebration colour among the Idomas in Nigeria. Culture, as a social practice, is not something that individuals possess. Instead, it is a social process in which individuals participate, in the context of changing historical conditions. As a "historical reservoir", culture is an important factor in shaping identity. Critics such as Johann von Herder; Hofstede 1994, T. Schwartz 1992 argue that, the preservation of cultural identity, being based upon difference, is a divisive force in society and that cosmopolitanism gives individuals a greater sense of shared citizenship. When considering observed association in international society, states may share an inherent part of their 'make up' that gives common ground, and alternate means of relating to each other. Examples can be taken from old and contemporary world order. The main focus of this study is to examine motif and colour signification among the Yoruba by interrogating cultural aesthetics in the selected plays within the Yoruba cultural worldview. It would not be an overstatement to agree that; "Custom meets us at the cradle and leaves us only at the tomb." (Ajikobi 2007, p. 36)

Definitions of some Concepts.

Ritual cultures are tied to myth. A myth is a descriptive terminology, a [well-known](#) story which was made up in the [past](#) to [explain](#) natural events or to [justify](#) religious [beliefs](#) or social customs, or transmitted over the generations, but which are accepted by a group and surrounded with special care. Myths may refer to remote past with authentic links. They are, at the very least tales that have been passed down from generation to generation, that have become traditional. Myth, however, is never a complete replica or reflection of a people's culture, and it may contain exaggerated and inverted features of real-life. And not all myths represent a harmonious unity of social life; some, on the contrary, can be expressing and not solving social-psychological conflicts of a particular social structure or certain distributions of power within society.¹ It is a daring projection of "a culture whose reference points are taken from within the culture itself." (Soyinka, vii)

A motif is a signifier, and according to Encyclopedia Britannica (2014), a motif is "single or repeated design or a recurring salient thematic element in work of arts, especially a dominant idea or central theme". Egunlae asserts further that motif is "the general theme of a painting, or the predominant feature in architecture, sculptures of painting which recurs or holds together the composition. It is also the unit chosen for a design" (303). The

latter concept or definition is more appropriate for this study. That is, the element of an image repeated in a pattern or design, often, or may just occur in work. Indigo colour, *ilaali*, *aroko*, *aro* and *osun* are a typical example. The underlined are found in trees and are used in beatifying objects such as houses, body and cloths. It may be an element in the iconography of a seen in this study. It is common in decorative art, ornamentals, textile, and crafts generally. A motif is any recurring element that has a symbolic significance in a story. Through its repetition, it can help to produce other narratives aspect that reinforces theme or mood. John and Martins explain in *Literary Terms and Criticism*, that motif, as in the body of this research, is "the type of incident or images that frequently occur in a text" (154). "Text" in this context refers to any communicative inscription: sign, symbol or object, which can be read for meaningful and logical interpretation. It is seen as a fountain or spring of inspiration of which designers can better their arts. It has been found to contribute to the wealth of most scenic designs.

Colour could be defined from two points of view, light or paint. It is explicitly associated with electromagnetic radiation of a specific range of wavelengths visible to the human eye. Radiation of such wavelengths constitutes that portion of the electromagnetic spectrum known as the visible spectrum, that is light. Light is an aspect of any object that may be described in terms of hue, lightness, and saturation while colour easily adorns the visible existence of things. It goes beyond artistic and aesthetic interpretation, drawing knowledge from physics, physiology, and psychology disciplines for deeper appreciation.

On the other hand, paint is the physical manifestation of colour. Colour is a property of light and light only. In fact, what is described as the colour of an object is a light reflection on the object. Colour in this paper is seen from colour physical property and psychology. It abounds in human race, tribes and traditions.

One definition of culture is not sound enough for a scholarship. Little wonder Edward Tylor (1871) defines it as: "an umbrella term which encompasses the social behaviour and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities and habits of the individuals in these groups." (warwick.ac.uk, web) Human acquires culture through a form of a learning process called enculturation and socialisation guided by norms and conducts. This distinguishes them from other group or race, It defines the way the group or race sees themselves through their repeated experiences. Culture is considered a central concept in anthropology, encompassing the range of phenomena that are transmitted through social learning in human societies. Helen Spencer-Oatey while citing Tylor, sees culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." (warwick.ac.uk, web) Different scholars have different perspectives on culture, and this has dominated dramatic discourse for centuries.

The use of motifs in dramatic contexts, either in cinema and film or theatre, dates back many years. In 1981, the British-American heroic fantasy film, *Clash of the Titans*, was released to critical global acclaim. The film tells the story of Perseus, son of the Greek hero-god, Zeus, who grows up on a deserted island. Perseus is destined to marry Andromeda whose soul is stolen every night by a giant vulture sent by the satyr, Calibos. Perseus must defeat Calibos in order to marry his lover Andromeda, the future queen of the city of Joppa. The film is laden with powerful motifs that are relevant to its theme of heroism and sacrifice. In *Clash of the Titans*, the vulture, as well as the owl and the unicorn, which help Perseus, are prominent "characters" and symbolic entities; they are motifs with political and cultural significance as codifier. The Greeks are very superstitious and believe a lot in religion but also a supernatural or paranormal phenomenon. The vulture signifies femininity and rebirth among the Greeks. Similarly, owl codifies higher wisdom, strategy and guardian of Acropolis, why unicorn denotes fantasy, rarity, purity and grace in Athens. More than a decade after, Asians and Africans are known to adopt socio-cultural, religious, and political motifs in their theatre and film productions – these manifest as a cross, crescent and star, a staff of office and coat of arm.

Cultural Motifs in *Ajagunla*, *Kurunmi*, and *Death and the King's Horseman*

Colours to the Yoruba connote more than visualised in ordinary life; it could be ritualistic, ceremonial, psychological or spiritual. Playwrights from the region expressed this in many forms. Wole Soyinka in *The Jeros plays* distinguishes Brother Jero, the protagonist through his cape or costume. Similarly, colour as a ritual or symbolic motif dominates the following plays; Duro Ladipo's *Obakoso* 1977 and *Ajagun-Nla* 2015, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* 2018, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame* 1975 and *Kurunmi* 1971, Wale Ogunyemi's *Ijaye* 1997 and *Langbodo* 1977, Ben Tomolaju's *Jankariwo* 2014. *Iphigenia Finds Ayelala* 1999, Ahmed Yerima's *Ade Ire* 2004, Lekan Oduntan's *Odun Ifa* 1996. and Lekan Balogun's *Olofin Ajaye* 2010 and *Moremi* 2003 and many more. In *Ajagun-Nla*, for instance, Duro Ladipo presents a ritual of oath-taking as a challenge (scene 3). It stands as a strong motif against unforeseen circumstance that may lead to betrayal or desertion, but most importantly, as a commitment to the unity of purpose to defend the land with their blood. "The three war generals with *Ajagun-Nla*, the war generalissimo meets at the centre stage. As *Ajagun-Nla* raises a song, oath-taking rites begin. All of them stoop to shed their blood into a small calabash. They dip their fingers and lick. Thereafter Aresa sprinkles concoction water in a pot with a palm frond on all the "esos" and thereafter..." a declaration:

Ajagun-Nla: Today is the day we all await,
 Today is the day we all anticipate
 It is a revenge mission.
 It is a retaliation commission
 We are fully prepared. Ladipo, 2015, p. 21 -22.

Rituals reflect strongly in Yoruba dramas of war, royalty and transitions to emphasise the mythical link with the forebears whose guide would guarantee victory. Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi* is typical of traditional ritual contest of royal supremacy where props stand as motif of communication for "superiority", "choice", "peace" or "war" in the contest of the calabashes:

KUTENLO AND OBAGBORE: Your Greatness, may you live
 Long to protect the land of our father against vandals
 [No answer.]

KUTENLO: [after a while]: My lord, may we rise up?
 [No answer]

OBAGBORI: My lord, may we now rise-
 KURUNMI: Your stomachs glued to the dust forever. You
 may transform into snake if you wish.

KUTENLO: We... do not understand you, my lord.

KURUNMI: [*with sudden interest*]: What are in those calabash-
 Bowls?

OBAGBORI: My lord, Alafin Adelu, Supreme Lord of the
 kingdom, said we should ask you why you did not
 come to his crowning.
 [Silence.]

KUTENLO: My lord, we are talking to you.

KURUNMI: Supreme lord of the kingdom? The supreme
 Lord is dead. How can a dead king expect me to come
 to his crowning?

OBAGBORI: We meant the new king, Alafin Adelu, son of
 The dead Alafin Atiba.

KURUNMI: Oh, I see. It is well. I shall explain. Mosadinwin!
 [Mosadiwin appears with the stew and ladle. Kurunmi
 receives the bowl of stew and ladle, then turns to the
 messengers]:

Take this message to your new king, Adelu.
 [*He leans back relaxedly in his chair, dips the ladle into
 the bowl of stew, scoops the contents: Okro stew, He
 lifts the spoonful towards his mouth, repeatedly, letting
 much of the sauce slaver sloppily from his mouth down
 on to the white cloth, smirching it. The messengers are
 shocked*]

KUTENLO: Contempt!

[*Kurunmi ends the act by wiping his mouth clean with
 the unsoiled parts of the cloth, then casually he undoes*

the knot behind his neck folds up the cloth in a crude bundle, and holds it out to the messengers.]

KURUNMI: Salute your king for me.

OBAGBORI: [*pulling back*]: The gods forbid!

KURUNMI: Take it.

OBAGBORI: [*frightened, takes the cloth*]: It is well.

KUTENLO: You should not have gone to all that trouble, my lord. Alafin Adelu himself knew you would stain his honour, hence he too has sent you... [*holds out a bowl*] this bowl. In here is gunpowder.

OBAGBORI: [*holds out his bowl*] In here are bullets.

KUTENLO: [*proffers the second bowl he is carrying*]: And here

Are the sacred twins of the Ogboni cult- the symbol of peace.

OBAGBORI: The Alafin asks you to choose between peace and war.

KURUNMI: [*Grabs the bowls containing gunpowder and bullets.*] (Rotimi 1977, p.

25 - 27)

Worthy of note in the above quotation are the colours of the objects used as a telepathic attack; white cloth stained with oil symbolises stain of honour. Sacred twins of "Ogboni" symbolises peace while bullet and gunpowder suggest war represented by rusty metals.

Soyinka's characteristically uses a mental reading of colour to signify "honour" in *Death and the King's Horseman*. Ritual underpins the play in many ways but visualised significantly through colour of blood; signifying death as well as new life, which gives the act ritual outlook, even as it connotes the future existence of the Elesin's family.

Elesin: Oh you mother of beautiful brides! (The dancing stops. They turn and see him, and the object in his hands. IYALOJA approaches and gently takes the cloth from him.) Take it. It is no mere virgin stain, but the union of life and the seeds of passage. My vital flow, the last from this flesh is intermingled with the promise of the future. All is prepared. Listen! (A steady drum-beat from the distance) yes. It is nearly time. The King's dog has been killed. The King's favourite horse is about to follow his master. My brother Chiefs know their task and platform it well (He listen again.) (The BRIDE emerges, stands shyly by the door. He turns to her.) Our marriage is not yet wholly fulfilled. When earth and passage wed, the consummation is complete only when there are grains of earth on the eyelids of passage (Soyinka 2018, p. 40)

The search for peace in Wale Ogunyemi's *Langbodo* crystallised in white elephant tusk (a highly-priced object) occupies a high thematic significance such as peace. These cultural views also transited to modern plays set within the Yoruba cultural milieu. Colour signification on motifs and scenic environment would be read symbolically to interrogate stage performance of Osofisan's *One Legend many Seasons* as a modern ceremonial, social culture different from the ritual callings of the three plays earlier discussed.

The use of motifs is not a new invention in African theatre. Traditional performances in most cultures in Africa, and Nigeria in particular, is replete with motifs ranging from animal to cultural and ritual artifacts. Masks are the most prominent examples of the objects, which convey significant messages. The images embody concepts with specific meanings drawn from their roots and existence. Like some other arts of the theatre, motifs are achieved through scenic design. While these various arts are independently fused in a theatrical production, motifs often stand out as part of a carefully-designed scenic component of the set and stage arrangement. Essential to these various arts are Yoruba indigenous motifs with peculiar communicative colour signals to deepen meaning.

The Yoruba addresses colour as "Awo" ordinarily. At other times, "Awo" could have other meaning known to certain groups or age-grade different from its general meaning. It may have a series of myth surrounding it and its usage. Late traditional musician Isola Adepoju sings: "Ijoka ni mei se, meba hun' sere oja pupa": "I am Ijoka, I don't play with red shawls". It may sound like an ordinary musical lyric, but it touches on his belief of the effect of red on him, ability and destiny as a Yoruba man; thus he would not play with shawls (red).

The Yoruba are found mostly in the Southwestern parts of Nigeria, although some of the population is dispersed across the globe. According to Benedict Ibitokun, the Yoruba universe is multidimensional and unrestrained to the tangible and physical plane of existence (21). As Drewal et al. also argue, the Yoruba world embraces a duality, namely *aye* (the physical world) and *orun* (the world of spirits and ancestors) (14), which informs their conception of every aspect of life including the visual arts. In the opinion of Margaret Thompson Drewal, the Yoruba "view all organic matter as possessing a vital force (*ase*) that can be manipulated to regulate the quality of man's life" (43). For instance, *Opón Ifá*, the divination tray and its accessory, *Ìróké*, are two of the important objects that reflect the essentiality of motifs to the Yoruba. Both are strong links to the people's spiritual, religious and mundane relationships. From this perspective, motifs refer to objects, materials and art forms that convey a visual representation of the people's conception of the material and non-material realities of their environment.

Yoruba understanding of the intimacy between art and spirituality is also underlined by the *Opón Ifá* and *Ìróké*, including the motifs associated with them. According to Babatunde Lawal, this idea informs the way people view their arts, although these arts are often constructed to appeal to the eyes and allude to its subject. They also convey messages that

have aesthetic, social, and spiritual significance in the society (Lawal p. 498–501). Some situation involves offering the audience a more robust understanding of how Yorubas view their arts. It is a creative process and includes *imo* (mastery of time-honoured conventions), *imoose* (technical proficiency) and *oju-imo* ("artistic eye"). The foregoing entails *oju-ona* (design consciousness) or visual cognition, which allows for selection and processing of images and thought from daily experiences into schema or templates. All of these, Lawal maintains, is determined by the Yoruba style of creativity, the impulse of which drives art-making among the people (Lawal p. 2005:161–74). The "schema" stands as a "template", and parallels design tenets in Western concept, in simple terms, the design blueprint. The process and product that Lawal articulates eloquently are central to how Nigerian scenic designers select, develop, and produce their works for the theatre, even though this aspect has received little attention.

Scholars have argued that the name "Yoruba" was an original designate of the people of Oyo by their northern neighbours and that it became an ethnic identity for people sharing the same boundaries and tracing similar myth and historical sources from around the 1843–1856 (Fadipe p. 29–30). Similarly, intermingling both through trade, the socio-political exchange collapsed the Yoruba universe into a global village concept. They accommodate all but with liberal equanimity. They accept diversity of culture, but equally do not undermine theirs as shown in this Ekiti celebrative song:

The citizen of Ekiti, happy celebration, People clad themselves white to a celebration. When the drums rolls, both the natives and slaves are filled with joy, the host of heaven celebrates, they denied us from going to farming. White to the people means purity.

Thus, those who dressed in white attires are not expected to participate in or do evil. The songs established the unity that comes with natives celebrating with none natives, with emphasis that no religion forbids. The importance of colour exemplified in white cloths attests to the purity of intentions in Yoruba culture.



Plate1. Egun Layewu in Oyo State. The masquerade costume displays several colours essential to this paper. The colour of the masquerade is synonymous with its attributes. Picture: courtesy, lagosphotofestival.com

A typical masquerade would indicate thought plan for colours among the Yoruba. There is hardly any colour that a masquerade does not display. But not all the colours have names among the native. Yoruba capture colour scheme in three categories, namely, whitish "fun fun", blackish "du du", and reddish "pupa" or "pipan". Folorunso et al. attest that: "The Yoruba chromatic system is traditionally grouped into three chromatic categories. White connotes peaceful feeling; these categories include turquoise, blue, silver, chrome, and other icy colours. The primary influence and purpose of White are seen as a replica of purity." (80)

"Pupa" which translates to red "encompasses any colour relating to hot, fiery characteristics, such as orange, dark yellow, gold. The colour of fire seen as red connotes danger, applies to fearful individuals or creatures (80) "Du Du" (black) is the last group of colours, and it includes any colour that is dark aligns with the earth. These include brown, leafy greens, and moss greens (Folorunso et al. 2013).

Treatments of colours among the Yoruba are symbolically tied to emotional and psychological feelings. Yoruba tribes attribute the texture of the three colour chromas to objects and deities. Thus the colour of a deity is tied to his temperament. A deity that is considered evil is accorded black or red to indicate the aura of fear and danger. Objects, deities, gods or human in this category are usually worshipped at night and behind closed doors. The foregoing indicates that colour symbols were common in the ancient Yoruba

Empire, particularly for gods and goddesses, to capture their physical attributes in accordance with their temperaments and social relevance.

Some Gods among the Yoruba and Their Symbolic Colours

NO	Gods/ Orisa	COLOUR	DOMAIN	INDICATIVE ELEMENTS
1	Obatala	White	Creation	The sky
2	Iyemoja	White and Silver	Motherhood	The Ocean
3	Iroko	White and Grey	Time	Tree
4	Obaluaye	White and Black	Pain and Suffering	Illness
5	Ibeji	Many Colours	Game	Children
6	Oba	Yellow and Red	Cookery	Water Fall
7	Osun	Yellow	Beauty	Fresh Water
8	Oya	Brown and Red	The dead	Storm
9	Sango	Red and White	Thunder and Lightning	Hills and Rocks
10	Osanyin	Blue and Red	Healing and liturgy	Leafs
11	Ogun	Dark Blue	Paths and War	Iron
12	Esu	Black and Red	Door and Crossroads	Fire
13	Logunde	Yellow and Light Blue	Hunting and Fishing	River and Forest

Table 1 shows some colour found in the Yoruba scheme: White, grey, silver, yellow, red, blue, dark black, black, green, brown, light blue, and purple. The colours are adduced from the gods they represent but named as "dudu", "funfun" or "pupa." Scenery for Yoruba ritual drama adopts this colour coding.



Plate 2. Typical Yoruba Worshippers in supplication. The colours on the worshippers are identical with the deity worshipped. Picture: courtesy, www.yoruba.com

Evident in the plate are some colours in Yoruba scheme. White (wrapper, white spots and cap outlines) blue (necklace), brown (cap and wallet), yellow (horse wipe handle), red (wallet) and black.

Colour in Osofisan's One Legend Many Seasons

Figure 1 captures some of the Yoruba gods; others not captured includes "Ile" land, "Osetura" spirit of the festive past and "Orekelewa" beauty, "Ela" and so on. Each of these gods has different days in the year dedicated to their worship. Similarly, each of the gods has a specific colour associated with it. For instance, red is synonymous with Sango, white with Obatala and so on. At such time it is assumed that the god being worshipped come alive. Of all the gods captured, Osofisan deploys three in *One Legend*, Osetura (past), Orekelewa (present), and Orisaunla (future) on the eve of Christmas.

Osofisan capitalises on the Yoruba celebrative consciousness and colourful displays to re-enact flamboyancy and communal spirit in *One Legend many Seasons*. The play is an adaptation of Charles Dickson's *Christmas Carol* to celebrate good tidings, which Christmas symbolises. The season is known for charitable air and spirit, generosity, good tidings and joy of sharing. In the hero's words, "There's total beauty in life when the rich shares what he has with the poor around him." (61) The rich often chose the festive period to show this act.

The performance centres on Awolodun, rich but miserly and hostile to humanity. He abhors festivals and similar celebrations to avoid spending and to share his wealth.

Christmas is known for four colours all over the world (red, green, gold and silver).

Similarly, white (silver) colour is synonymous with celebration among the Yoruba as reflected in the Ekiti song above. This colour consciousness prompted Osofisan to clad most of his ancestral spirits' in white, Osetura, Orekelewa. Although in *One Legend many Seasons*, Osofisan uses Christmas motif to weave together the complex plots and themes between two extremes, rationality to isolation. Change is also evident as a reasonable choice, where transformation, benevolence, compassion and goodwill to humanity are the new outcome of Amuludun's repentance. As the Narrator informs:

He became a good friend and master. He became the best old Man that the city knew, Some people laughed at him, but he didn't care, because he was happy in his own heart. People said he knew how to enjoy Christmas and other festivals better than any other man that lived. (62)

A crucial moment in Alowolodu's life in the play is the transformation, which occurred when he saw a gravestone with his name inscribed on it. He is moved to cry for mercy,

damned by the spirit, felt worse than the poor, and forced to battle with his inner man. Facing the gravestone was his memorial, which reads: EBENEZER ALOWODODUN.

Alowolodu- What! It's me! No! No! No! Spirit, please
Listen, I am no longer the man I was. I
Swear to you; I've changed, I can change! Spirit! (54.)

The story dictated the mood and colour ambience for scenery. The choice of colours is deliberate, cast in a light hue to allow gelled light to change the set colours from time to time as the drama unfolds.

The theme of love, benevolence, and greed informs the motif used in the play. These motifs opened the performance to a bath of colours that could provoke emotions and evoke celebrative feelings of oneness and renewal. Thorough awareness of motif as images that could be generated through geometry, nature or abstract style forms was deeply explored using gobo materials and laser images and was adequately deployed. These merely served as aesthetic allure to a celebrative modern Nigerian drama as Table 4, no.1 shows.

The colour motif is informed by the directorial approach and intention. Colour is a subjective aspect of design. There are, however, general rules that ensure a set of colours that adequately expresses a "defined theme" In costume, props, makeup, light, set and visual effects. Christmas has its natural colours of red, gold, green for Christmas. This coincidentally applies to some Yoruba festivals. For instance, any colour with green palm frond alludes to Ogun festival, white for Obatala, Osun and some other gods, particularly Osetura and Orekelewa. Through these colours, the designs are arranged to create an atmosphere of celebration. According to Barranger (2015), the set designer is a storyteller, who alongside other collaborative teams, "assembles an imaginative world out of words, images, notes, sketches, photographs, prints chips, three-dimensional models, computer renderings and so on." (p. 249)

The colour motif relates to three mediums within the hero's sensibilities suggesting the past, present and the aftermath of his future. Osofisan's interest in colours in this story is an attempt to gloss over the iniquities of the world but believes that it is still a place to glamourise after all. However, chosen colours change appearances of objects in the play, rhythm of thought, and tempo of the play to reflect the many unexplored options for a peaceful society. This change is, however, superficial as it does not significantly alter or improve whatever has been romanticised by the medium (Figure 1).

Comparative Tables of Colour Tracking in Modern and Ritual Plays

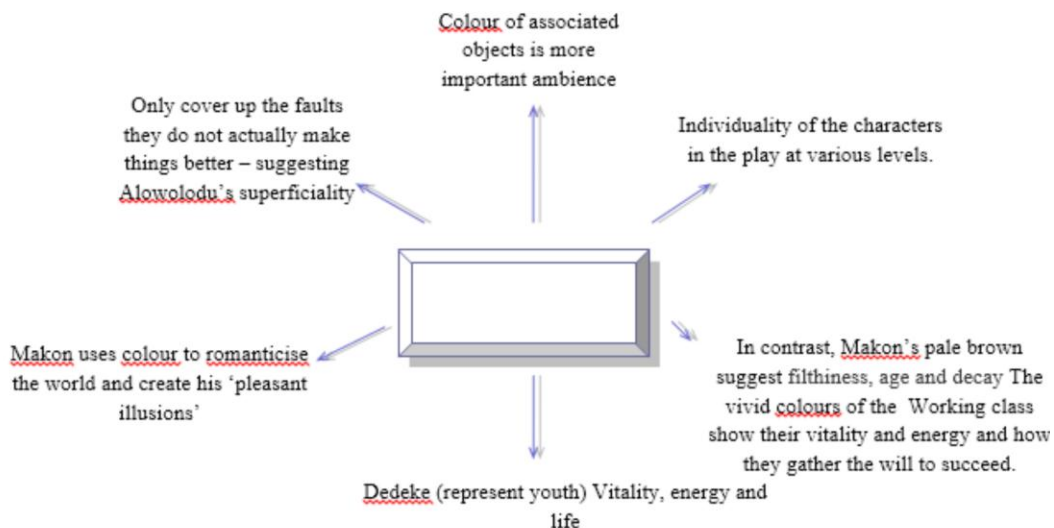


Figure 1. Colour Tracking in One Legend many Seasons. Courtesy, Eventsynthensy (2018)

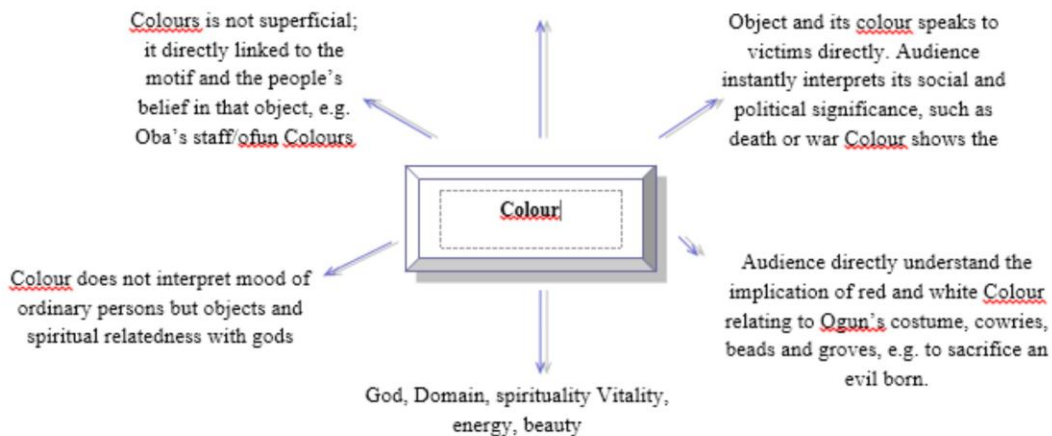


Figure 2. Colour tracking in selected ritual plays (2020)

Analysis: Tables 1 and 2 above reveal the following:

In Nigeria, colours have meaning in nearly every aspect of everyday life. As a national identity, the colour of the Nigerian flag is premised on three achievable free agents of nature for survival and cohesiveness; green (agriculture), white (peace and unity). On the other hand, some countries in Africa associate red with death, but in Nigeria, it represents aggression and Vitality (see Table 2). Light "is concerned with luminous object" (Nelkon 1977, p. 257). That is, interpretation of light depends on how it reflects on different objects; fabrics and other objects so scenery. Depending on usage and ambience, colour may be used to utter people's sensibility, because the way different cultures see and describe the meaning of colour varies around the world (see Table 2). The Yoruba, like people of other cultures, see colour culturally different and this highly influenced by their spiritual inclination (Table 1).

Opinion reveals two significant findings. Yoruba There is different interpretive standards for colour between modern Nigerian plays and indigenous ritual drama. Yoruba audience perceives colour in modern Nigerian plays as aesthetic, exciting, but they do not attach any spiritual significance to them. Even though One Legend Many Season is based on Christmas, the effect cannot be compared to an indigenous Sango play performance. Yoruba audience appreciates colour from a spiritual perspective with deities and related objects or motifs thereof. Yoruba audience exhibits fears toward ritual objects in performances and colours thereof as they would in real life.



Plate 3. A typical King in Yoruba land is known as second to the gods; thus the community dressed them in similar elegance: Common colours in the plate are: white, yellow, black, brown, silver, red and cream. Picture: courtesy www.gabriellawella accessed 219.

Colour among Cultures

Colour	Nigeria (Africa)	Asian culture	Middle East	Western cultures
Red	Aggression Vitality, danger. Ritual and Prosperity.	Good luck, joy, prosperity, celebration, happiness, long life	Warm, life, purity, sensuality, and spirituality	Excitement, energy, passion, action, love, danger.
White	Elegance, purity, peace, unity	Death, mourning, and bad luck		Purity, elegance, peace, and cleanliness
Black	Evil, secrecy, maturity, fear.		Maturity and masculinity.	Rebirth and mourning
Green	Freshness, agriculture, life.	fertility, taboo and new life	fertility, luck, wealth	luck, nature, freshness, spring, environmental awareness, wealth, inexperience, and jealousy.
Blue Purple Brown Pink	Trust, authority, and peaceful	Regal, love, evil and supernatural	Immortality, good health. love and divine joy. , loneliness, and sadness	Trust, security, authority, soothing and peaceful
Yellow	Elegance	Joy, radiance, warm and envy		Happiness, cheeriness, optimism, warmth, joy, hope, caution and cowardice.
Orange	Nil	Auspicious and sacred	Love, happiness, humility, and good health	Autumn, harvest, warmth, and visibility
Purple	Newness, royal and secrecy.	Royal, Piety faith, and penitence, and honour.	Royal, honour and mourning.	Royalty, wealth, spirituality, and nobility

Table 2. Selected Colour Comparative Chart among Different Cultures Filtered from Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012). The comparison shows that colour interpretation differs between Nigeria and western and oriental countries where "red" have opposite meanings among countries. By western concept, the colour worked for One Legend Many Seasons while Table 2 worked for ritual plays.

Despite Christmas, colour as motif relates to the various themes of *One Legend Many Seasons*. The obvious one is to emphasize the theme of greed, love and charity, as the people (character) around Alowolodu and settings are described as bright, colourful and lively, which contrast with Makon's appearance. Initially, he is dressed in shabby costume and chain. There is drabness to depict his mental disposition and decline in wayward living, loss of Vitality and energy, while the opposite is the case for the character with charitable life.

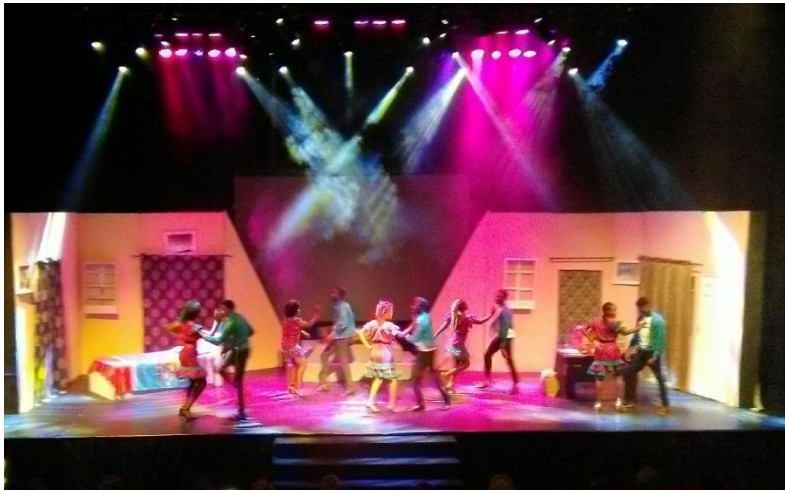


Plate 4. Enchanting ambience of a colourful celebration in the performance of *One Legend Many Seasons* as directed by Sola Fosudo 2018. The colours in plates 4 and 5 are purely aesthetic by the Yoruba because it holds no fear or spiritual relevance.



Plate 5. A scene from the performance: Osetura, "the spirit of celebration past" and Alowolodu, viewing Alowolodu's past on a mega screen.

Dialogue and Colour Analysis in *One Legend Many Seasons*.

Page	Dialogue	Analysis
4	"That afternoon was the day before Christmas, the best day of the year. [Carol begins]."	Christmas is personified and given 'breath', with colours for Vitality.
6	God bless Christmas; "This 'blue piano' expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here."	The colours of Christmas: red, green etc. for excitement, intensity, purity and innocence.
11	The protagonist is about to return to his money, an explosion, followed by the noise of a door crashing down. A sign of earth tremor.	Energetic light and colour with hideous shapes, tensed to agitate the spirit of the protagonist.
12	Protagonist's body is covered with paper-sheaves of bank receipts, ledger sheets, cheque books, contract papers and financial report. On his arms and ankles are rusted keys, padlocks and iron bars.	Colourful impressions to accentuate both energy and lifelessness: protagonist as a mere living corpse.
18	The spirit of Christmas and renewal. A song celebrates his passage. The protagonist transforms visually through costume and props.	Flamboyance dominates this scene to convey the idea that healthy living starts from being generous for personal peace.
62	Redemption: He begins to sing. Makon's ghost joins in and begins to dance. As both men dance, the burden of Makon begins to fall off one by one. See plate 5.	Initially, Makon avoids bright light (as change, redemption) to differentiate between filth and renewal. But beautiful colours persisted. Strobe light remained persistent until he is spiritually cleansed. There is change from anguish to victory.

Table 3. Shows the use of colour in the play with related quote analysis.

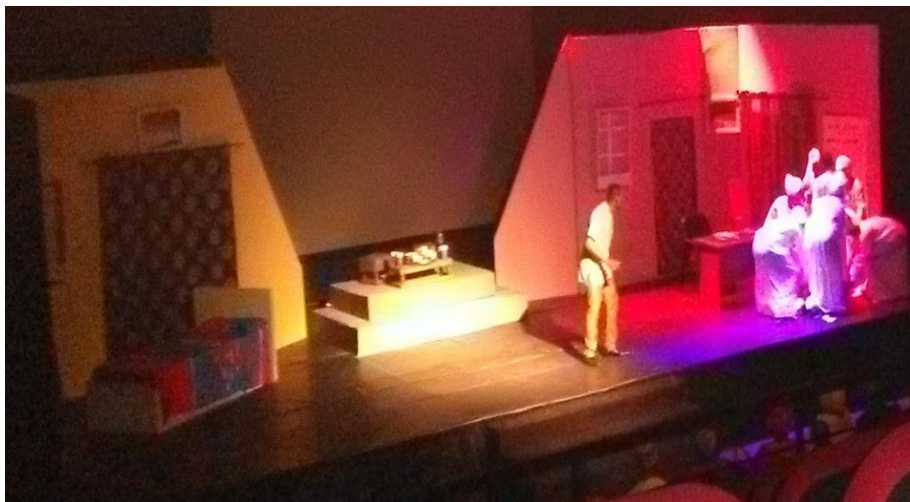


Plate 6. Makon's penance is accepted in Femi Osofisan's *One Legend Many Season*, Terra Kulture, 2018.

Summary of Findings

With reference to Table 3, Yoruba audience does not agree that colour in ritual plays have an equal impact with colour in modern Nigerian plays (figures 1 and 2). This is due to preconceived knowledge of the psychological impression, which the audience associates with images such as "Edan Ogboni" and the gods (Table 1).

The study reveals that among the Yoruba audience, colour in modern English language plays is primarily aesthetic (figure 1) while colour in ritual plays convey stronger motif of repercussion (figure 2). However, respondents agree that the ritual images and artifacts used in modern Nigerian plays will have the same impact on the fate of dramatic characters in modern Nigerian plays.

Conclusion:

Applying motif as design only expands communication, beautifies locale and can also spring or spark other ideas, aside keeping the old form. Motif keeps the audience informed through simple colours but with highly codified meanings in ritual and dramatic performances. This explains the choice of colour in various ritual sacrifices and royal message transmissions, including "aroko", which was imported from ritual tradition and adopted into modern drama. There is lack of proper identification of all colours in the Yoruba lexicon. But the tribes have a rich culture of colour, which dominates every aspect of Yoruba existence noticeable in their decorations, messages transmission (aroko) and clothing. There is colour attribution in nature, domestic and domestic lives; trees, animals, food, blood, etc. but all are bounded within "funfun, dudu and pipan" nomenclature.

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