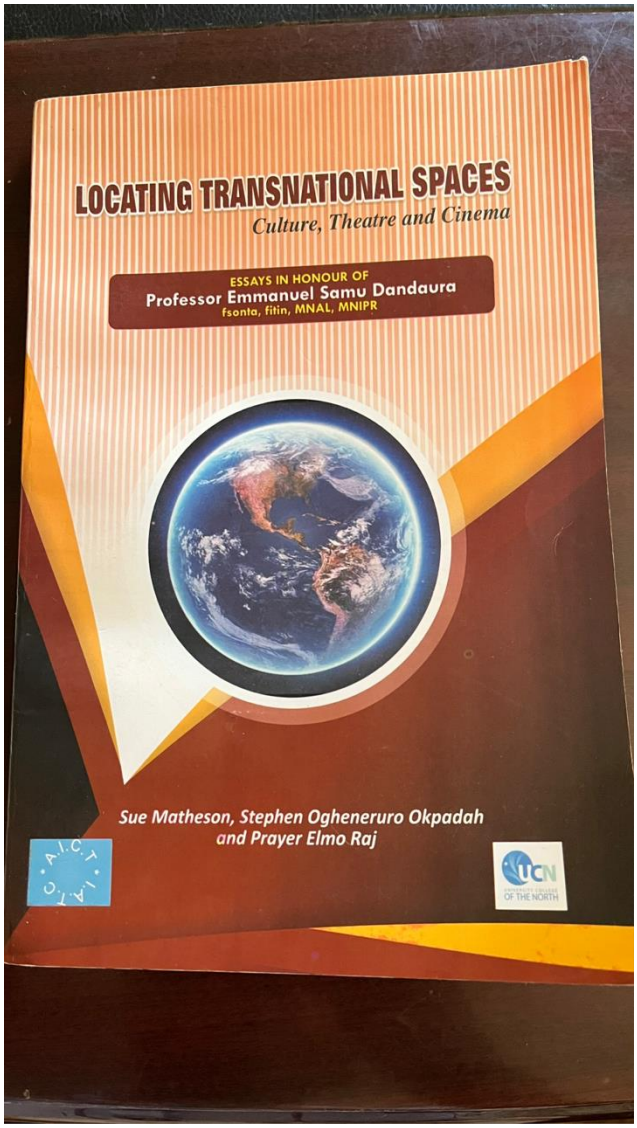

LOCATING TRANSNATIONAL SPACES
Culture, Theatre and Cinema
ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF
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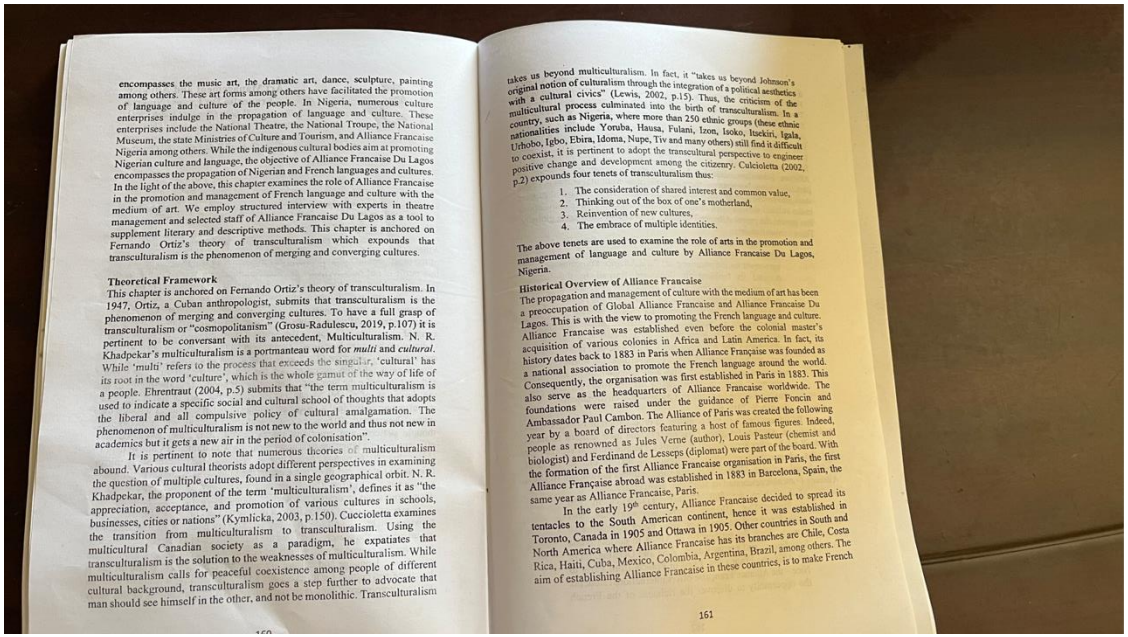
Art Management and Alliance Francaise Du Lagos, Nigeria

Shadiat Olapeju Shuaib Ph.D.
Omolola Adewale Shukurat
And
Gabriel Oghenevwarho Ojakovo

Introduction

During President Jacques Chirac's visit to Nigeria on July 24th 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo promised him that Nigeria will do all it takes to propagate the French culture. The Nigerian president states further that the French language would be adopted as a second language. This transnational experience no doubt would foster peace, unity and cooperation between the two countries. This of course would be achieved with the establishment of Alliance Francaise. Alliance Francaise, a French based outfit has become one of the most popular cultural enterprises in Nigeria and Globally. The aim of this outfit is not only to make the French language a second one in non-French speaking countries, its objective is also to propagate and popularise French culture and tradition around the world. To this end, Alliance Francaise is a language and culture oriented organisation. One major characteristics of Alliance Francaise, is its utility of the arts in achieving its aim and objectives. Scholars in the Arts and Humanities, Anthropology and Cultural studies have researched extensively on the imperative of art to man and the society. Watkins (1999, p.1) submits that "Tarkovsky views his art as serving a religious function. Art has the capacity through shock and catharsis, to make the human soul receptive for good". This also brings us to the definition of art by Macaulay. He states that "art is something that stimulates an individual's thoughts, emotions, beliefs, or ideas through the senses"(Macaulay, 2016, p. 64). It is a channel through which ideologies, thought patterns and emotions are expressed. It is "the developed and efficient use of a language to convey meaning with immediacy and or depth" (Macaulay, 2016, p. 64). According to William Shakespeare art is mirror held up to nature. Art does not exist in the void. This portends that it plays significant roles in the life of man and the society. In fact, art constructs, deconstructs and reconstructs societies, thought patterns, and identities.

Every work of art has its root in a particular culture. Culture therefore provides the breath and life of every art. Society fashions art, the same way art influences the society. Art goes the same direction as the society. Society provides the language with which art communicate. For art to communicate effectively, language and culture are imperative processes. While art needs language and culture for its existence and sustainability, it is also a medium for the promotion of language and culture. Art in the context of this study



encompasses the music art, the dramatic art, dance, sculpture, painting among others. These art forms among others have facilitated the promotion of language and culture of the people. In Nigeria, numerous culture enterprises indulge in the propagation of language and culture. These enterprises include the National Theatre, the National Troupe, the National Museum, the state Ministries of Culture and Tourism, and Alliance Francaise Nigeria among others. While the indigenous cultural bodies aim at promoting Nigerian culture and language, the objective of Alliance Francaise Du Lagos encompasses the propagation of Nigerian and French languages and cultures. In the light of the above, this chapter examines the role of Alliance Francaise in the promotion and management of French language and culture with the medium of art. We employ structured interview with experts in theatre management and selected staff of Alliance Francaise Du Lagos as a tool to supplement literary and descriptive methods. This chapter is anchored on Fernando Ortiz's theory of transculturalism which expounds that transculturalism is the phenomenon of merging and converging cultures.

Theoretical Framework

This chapter is anchored on Fernando Ortiz's theory of transculturalism. In 1947, Ortiz, a Cuban anthropologist, submits that transculturalism is the phenomenon of merging and converging cultures. To have a full grasp of transculturalism or "cosmopolitanism" (Grosu-Radulescu, 2019, p.107) it is pertinent to be conversant with its antecedent, Multiculturalism. N. R. Khadpekar's multiculturalism is a portmanteau word for *multi* and *cultural*. While 'multi' refers to the process that exceeds the singular, 'cultural' has its root in the word 'culture', which is the whole gamut of the way of life of a people. Ehrentraut (2004, p.5) submits that "the term multiculturalism is used to indicate a specific social and cultural school of thoughts that adopts the liberal and all compulsive policy of cultural amalgamation. The phenomenon of multiculturalism is not new to the world and thus not new in academics but it gets a new air in the period of colonisation".

It is pertinent to note that numerous theories of multiculturalism abound. Various cultural theorists adopt different perspectives in examining the question of multiple cultures, found in a single geographical orbit. N. R. Khadpekar, the proponent of the term 'multiculturalism', defines it as "the appreciation, acceptance, and promotion of various cultures in schools, businesses, cities or nations" (Kymlicka, 2003, p.150). Cuccioletta examines the transition from multiculturalism to transculturalism. Using the multicultural Canadian society as a paradigm, he expatiates that transculturalism is the solution to the weaknesses of multiculturalism. While multiculturalism calls for peaceful coexistence among people of different cultural background, transculturalism goes a step further to advocate that man should see himself in the other, and not be monolithic. Transculturalism takes us beyond multiculturalism. In fact, it "takes us beyond Johnson's original notion of culturalism through the integration of a political aesthetics with a cultural civics" (Lewis, 2002, p.15). Thus, the criticism of the multicultural process culminated into the birth of transculturalism. In a country, such as Nigeria, where more than 250 ethnic groups (these ethnic nationalities include Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Izon, Isoko, Itsekiri, Igala, Urhobo, Igbo, Ebira, Idoma, Nupe, Tiv and many others) still find it difficult to coexist, it is pertinent to adopt the transcultural perspective to engineer positive change and development among the citizenry. Cuicioletta (2002, p.2) expounds four tenets of transculturalism thus:

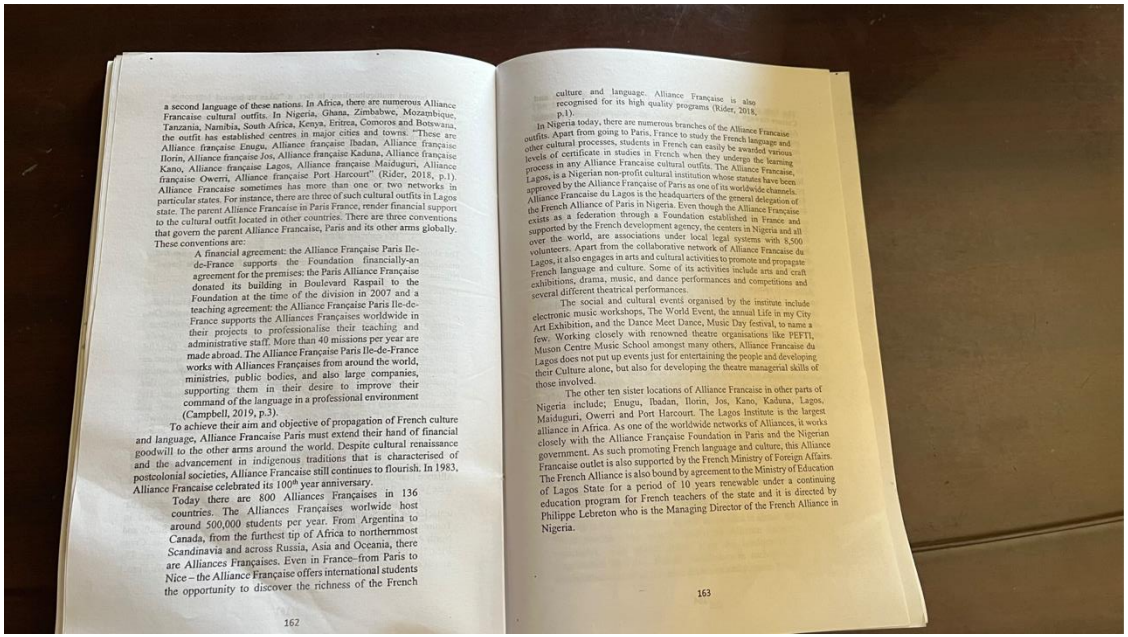
1. The consideration of shared interest and common value,
2. Thinking out of the box of one's motherland,
3. Reinvention of new cultures,
4. The embrace of multiple identities.

The above tenets are used to examine the role of arts in the promotion and management of language and culture by Alliance Francaise Du Lagos, Nigeria.

Historical Overview of Alliance Francaise

The propagation and management of culture with the medium of art has been a preoccupation of Global Alliance Francaise and Alliance Francaise Du Lagos. This is with the view to promoting the French language and culture. Alliance Francaise was established even before the colonial master's acquisition of various colonies in Africa and Latin America. In fact, its history dates back to 1883 in Paris when Alliance Française was founded as a national association to promote the French language around the world. Consequently, the organisation was first established in Paris in 1883. This also serve as the headquarters of Alliance Francaise worldwide. The foundations were raised under the guidance of Pierre Foncin and Ambassador Paul Cambon. The Alliance of Paris was created the following year by a board of directors featuring a host of famous figures. Indeed, people as renowned as Jules Verne (author), Louis Pasteur (chemist and biologist) and Ferdinand de Lesseps (diplomat) were part of the board. With the formation of the first Alliance Francaise organisation in Paris, the first Alliance Française abroad was established in 1883 in Barcelona, Spain, the same year as Alliance Francaise, Paris.

In the early 19th century, Alliance Francaise decided to spread its tentacles to the South American continent, hence it was established in Toronto, Canada in 1905 and Ottawa in 1905. Other countries in South and North America where Alliance Francaise has its branches are Chile, Costa Rica, Haiti, Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, among others. The aim of establishing Alliance Francaise in these countries, is to make French



a second language of these nations. In Africa, there are numerous Alliance Francaise cultural outfits. In Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Tanzania, Namibia, South Africa, Kenya, Eritrea, Comoros and Botswana, the outfit has established centres in major cities and towns. "These are Alliance française Enugu, Alliance française Ibadan, Alliance française Ilorin, Alliance française Jos, Alliance française Kaduna, Alliance française Kano, Alliance française Lagos, Alliance française Maiduguri, Alliance française Owerri, Alliance française Port Harcourt" (Rider, 2018, p.1). Alliance Francaise sometimes has more than one or two networks in particular states. For instance, there are three of such cultural outfits in Lagos state. The parent Alliance Francaise in Paris France, render financial support to the cultural outfit located in other countries. There are three conventions that govern the parent Alliance Francaise, Paris and its other arms globally. These conventions are:

> A financial agreement: the Alliance Française Paris Ile-de-France supports the Foundation financially-an agreement for the premises: the Paris Alliance Française donated its building in Boulevard Raspail to the Foundation at the time of the division in 2007 and a teaching agreement: the Alliance Française Paris Ile-de-France supports the Alliances Françaises worldwide in their projects to professionalise their teaching and administrative staff. More than 40 missions per year are made abroad. The Alliance Française Paris Ile-de-France works with Alliances Françaises from around the world, ministries, public bodies, and also large companies, supporting them in their desire to improve their command of the language in a professional environment (Campbell, 2019, p.3).

To achieve their aim and objective of propagation of French culture and language, Alliance Francaise Paris must extend their hand of financial goodwill to the other arms around the world. Despite cultural renaissance and the advancement in indigenous traditions that is characterised of postcolonial societies, Alliance Francaise still continues to flourish. In 1983, Alliance Francaise celebrated its 100th year anniversary.

> Today there are 800 Alliances Françaises in 136 countries. The Alliances Françaises worlwide host around 500,000 students per year. From Argentina to Canada, from the furthest tip of Africa to northernmost Scandinavia and across Russia, Asia and Oceania, there are Alliances Françaises. Even in France- from Paris to Nice – the Alliance Française offers international students the opportunity to discover the richness of the French

culture and language. Alliance Française is also recognised for its high quality programs (Rider, 2018, p.1).

In Nigeria today, there are numerous branches of the Alliance Francaise outfits. Apart from going to Paris, France to study the French language and other cultural processes, students in French can easily be awarded various levels of certificate in studies in French when they undergo the learning process in any Alliance Francaise cultural outfit. The Alliance Francaise, Lagos, is a Nigerian non-profit cultural institution whose statutes have been approved by the Alliance Française of Paris as one of its worldwide channels. Alliance Francaise du Lagos is the headquarters of the general delegation of the French Alliance of Paris in Nigeria. Even though the Alliance Française exists as a federation through a Foundation established in France and supported by the French development agency, the centers in Nigeria and all over the world, are associations under local legal systems with 8,500 volunteers. Apart from the collaborative network of Alliance Francaise du Lagos, it also engages in arts and cultural activities to promote and propagate French language and culture. Some of its activities include arts and craft exhibitions, drama, music, and dance performances and competitions and several different theatrical performances.

The social and cultural events organised by the institute include electronic music workshops, The World Event, the annual Life in my City Art Exhibition, and the Dance Meet Dance, Music Day festival, to name a few. Working closely with renowned theatre organisations like PEFTI, Muson Centre Music School amongst many others, Alliance Francaise du Lagos does not put up events just for entertaining the people and developing their Culture alone, but also for developing the theatre managerial skills of those involved.

The other ten sister locations of Alliance Francaise in other parts of Nigeria include; Enugu, Ibadan, Ilorin, Jos, Kano, Kaduna, Lagos, Maiduguri, Owerri and Port Harcourt. The Lagos Institute is the largest alliance in Africa. As one of the worldwide networks of Alliances, it works closely with the Alliance Française Foundation in Paris and the Nigerian government. As such promoting French language and culture, this Alliance Francaise outlet is also supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The French Alliance is also bound by agreement to the Ministry of Education of Lagos State for a period of 10 years renewable under a continuing education program for French teachers of the state and it is directed by Philippe Lebreton who is the Managing Director of the French Alliance in Nigeria.

The Role of Alliance Francaise in the Promotion of Language and Culture through Art

As a French global network, the Nigeria branch of Alliance Francaise promotes French culture and language. The primary concern of this organisation is to teach French as a second language. Without doubt, this initiative has been instrumental to the popularisation of the French language in Nigeria and all over the globe. In other words, French is becoming a global language. As a cultural enterprise, its establishment is geared towards propagating French tradition. Although in Nigerian tertiary institutions, French language is one of the courses offered, the French government felt it imperative to promote every facet of French culture.

A significant initiative instituted by Alliance Francaise in promoting French culture, is the teaching of the French language. In fact, Alliance Francaise offers training to French language teachers in Nigeria. Teachers in foundation schools in French, secondary schools and tertiary institutions attend more classes to develop their human capacity in French culture. While some of the classes are subsidised by Alliance Francaise Paris or the Nigerian federal government, a few other French language classes are held for free. Alliance Francaise donates French language textbooks, art materials to academic libraries and institutions across the globe. This is an initiative that is geared towards accelerating the growth and popularity of French tradition in Nigeria. They endeavour to bridge the gap between the norms of host communities and of France. Furthermore, while trained personnel in French language and culture act as teachers and facilitators in the teaching and learning process, examination questions are constructed directly from Alliance Francaise Paris, France. The examination questions are distributed to various outfits in different countries and at the end of such examinations, the scripts are sent back to Paris for marking, assessment and award of certificates. This tradition therefore, upholds the educational standard of the cultural outfit.

Another strategy in promoting culture in Nigeria is the award of scholarship and grants for deserving students to study French language and culture in Paris, France. This is to "offer international students the opportunity to discover the richness of the French culture whilst living right in the midst of it" (www. Alliance Francaise de Sydney - Alliance Francaise History.htm). In other to achieve their goals of being a second language, Alliance Francaise in Nigeria and other host countries indulge in competitions in French language, literature, music, dance and other arts.

The Role of Alliance Francaise Du Lagos in the Promotion and Management of Language and Culture

Alliance Francaise Du Lagos has contributed significantly to the promotion of language and culture with the medium of the music art, the dramatic art, the plastic art, art exhibition, painting, sculpture and others.

Art Exhibition in Alliance Francaise Du Lagos

Art exhibition in Alliance Francaise Lagos is an annual event. It is an annual festival of art display in which paintings made by Fine Artists, and sculptural works (excluding performance arts) are brought by artists all over the country and exhibited. Art works made by popular artists such as Bruce Onobrakpeya, are even exhibited. Artists are not compelled to pay monies for their works to be showcased. This is to enable a huge turnout of artists in this event.

Most times, Alliance Francaise Du Lagos, partner with the Lagos State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, individuals and corporate bodies to organise this annual event. Apart from the exhibition of art works by well known fine artists, this event organised by Alliance Francaise also serve as a platform for upcoming artists to showcase their works of art. In other words, works made by University students also find their place into the platform of such art exhibition. Art works that are exhibited are multicultural. Indigenous Nigerian art works, which come from the Urhobo, Yoruba, Isoko, Ijaw, Hausa, Igbo and others as well as contemporary Nigerian art works, French and works of other cultures are exhibited. Some of the art works are multidimensional and also break cultural barriers. At the end of the event, the artists are patronised by lovers of art and the best of these works are taken by the government to the museum. Alliance Francaise Paris sometimes, sends delegates to witness and assess art exhibitions in Alliance Francaise Lagos Du Lagos. With the artistic exhibition, Alliance Francaise has become a reference point to scholars, researchers and students in cultural policy, art management discourse and so on.

Seminars, Workshops and Conferences in Alliance Francaise

The organisation of seminars, conferences and workshops are numerous ways in which Alliance Francaise promotes language and culture. It sometimes organise seminars to sensitise people on the importance of being educated in the French language. In seminars organised by Alliance Francaise Du Lagos, there are numerous sensitisations on the need to promote indigenous cultures as well as the need to absorb foreign traditions. These seminars are usually funded by Alliance Francaise Lagos, and sometimes, with grants gotten from the headquarter of the cultural organisation in Paris, France. Facilitators in such seminars are the top administrative staff of Alliance Francaise and personnel in the academia that

include Professors in French language and culture. In addition, before the exhibition of art works, intending art exhibitors attend a workshop to be educated on the *modus operandi* of art exhibition, the need for their works of arts to be promoted and how they can be given international attention.

These workshops also create a platform for students, academic scholars and the populace to be enlightened on the scope, aim and objectives of Alliance Francaise. According to Michael, the public relations officer of Alliance Francaise Lagos, in an interview conducted by the researchers in September 2016, "a lot of people think Alliance Francaise is basically a French language speaking school. The activities of Alliance Francaise transcend language. Hence, it is imperative that workshops are organised to enable us erode the notion of language as a basis for the formation of the organisation" (Personal Interview, 2016). The workshops organised therefore function as a ground for enlightenment and education.

Dance, Music and Drama as Promoters of Culture in Alliance Francaise

Alliance Francaise Du Lagos has been popularised within and outside Lagos state with its engagement in dance, musical and dramatic activities. These theatrical events are organised to strengthen cultural ties as well as promote cultural identity. In 2016, an interview with Mr. Yemi Ajayi a staff of Alliance Francaise Lagos, who also serves as the Public Relations Officer of the cultural outfit indicates that:

> In 2014, Alliance Francaise Du Lagos organised a festival of arts and culture, in which various secondary schools in Lagos participated in. French musical displays and dance competitions were done and winners awarded prizes. The high point of the event was the competition in French language (Personal Interview, 2016).

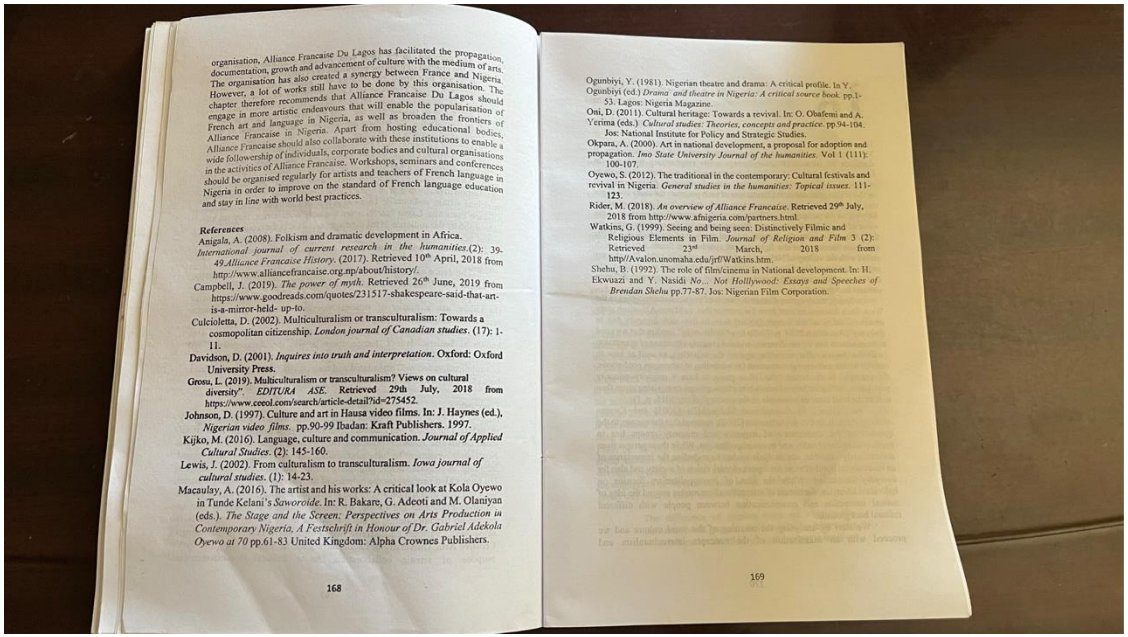
Of significance, in the activities of Alliance Francaise, is the promotion of the cultures of the host country. In the process of bringing French tradition to the fore, and promoting cultures, Nigerian traditions have also been explored by Alliance Francaise with the medium of art. According to the Public Relations Officer of the cultural outfit in an interview with the researchers in 2016, he posits that "many years ago, the students of the department of Creative Arts, University of Lagos mounted a drama performance of some Nigerian plays at Alliance Francaise Lagos" (Personal Interview, 2016). The gown was brought to the town by Alliance Francaise. Plays such as *Queen Ghasengen* were performed by the students, to the glee of the audience. The audience comprised of people in the academia, workers of Alliance Francaise Du Lagos, and the general populace. Consequently, artistic works of the host countries of Alliance Francaise are also been enacted and depicted. In the same vein, Alliance Francaise Lagos also indulge in the enacted of dramatic performances of Nigerian plays. Some of these plays are performed by students of Theatre Arts, Lagos State University. In Alliance Francaise Du Lagos, whenever such performances take place, gate fees are excluded for the audience. In other words, spectators are not subjected to paying gate fee. This initiative is meant to promote popular participation in the cultural activities of Alliance Francaise as well as to facilitate inclusivity of the people.

Alliance Francaise Du Lagos also uses musical art in the promotion of culture. In 2015, the Idoma born popular musician, Bongos Ikwue was invited to perform in a Music Fiesta organised by Alliance Francaise Du Lagos. Other popular musicians were also invited by the cultural organisation to perform in such musical concerts. In the same vein, upcoming musicians within and outside Lagos also featured in these music concerts. Alliance Francaise Lagos activities are not only culture rich, they are also understood by the audience. If the message contained in the music is not fully passed acrossed, there would be a failure in the communication process. Hence, such art work becomes art for art's sake as it ceases to promote culture.

The dance art is another medium through which Alliance Francaise Du Lagos actualises its aim and objectives of cultural propagation. The dances performed in various dance shows organised by Alliance Francaise Du Lagos, are a mirror of various Nigerian cultures. While Alliance Francaise indulges in a display of indigenous Nigerian dances, it sometimes presents dances that are in the Classical tradition. These dances are also known as balletic dances. Hence, there is also the documentation and promotion of Western dances. The movements and non-verbal language of communication are well articulated and understood by the audience. This is because of the tradition it defines.

Conclusion

Nigeria has numerous platforms through which her arts are promoted and managed. The Abuja and Calabar carnivals are good paradigms. Apart from these carnivals, Alliance Francaise Du Lagos has also partnered with the Nigerian government to fully advance her aim of making French a second language in Nigeria. While promoting French language, Alliance Francaise Du Lagos also propagates the cultures of the host country. The organisation uses musical and dance arts in the promotion and management of culture. Alliance Francaise Du Lagos, sometimes organise seminars to sensitise people on the importance of being educated in the French language. In the same vein, various educational institutions such as the Department of Creative Arts, University of Lagos, have gone to Alliance Francaise for the purpose of artistic collaboration. As a cultural non-governmental



organisation, Alliance Francaise Du Lagos has facilitated the propagation, documentation, growth and advancement of culture with the medium of arts. The organisation has also created a synergy between France and Nigeria. However, a lot of works still have to be done by this organisation. The chapter therefore recommends that Alliance Francaise Du Lagos should engage in more artistic endeavours that will enable the popularisation of French art and language in Nigeria, as well as broaden the frontiers of Alliance Francaise in Nigeria. Apart from hosting educational bodies, Alliance Francaise should also collaborate with these institutions to enable a wide followership of individuals, corporate bodies and cultural organisations in the activities of Alliance Francaise. Workshops, seminars and conferences should be organised regularly for artists and teachers of French language in Nigeria in order to improve on the standard of French language education and stay in line with world best practices.

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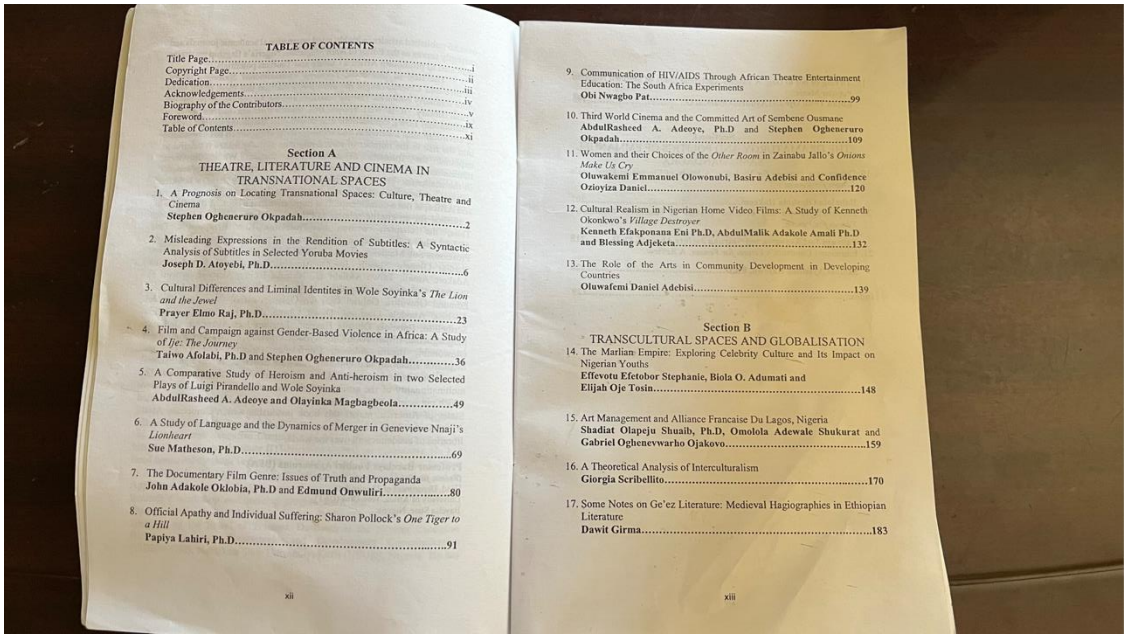


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About the Book

Transnationalism as a novel field of study is widely covered within the literary, linguistic and performative space in this book. The fecundity of the intellectually engaging chapters on transnational spaces is obvious with the fact that the contributors cut across diverse continents and nations. This book is a compelling read for all scholars and students in culture, performance, literary and film studies.

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