

AFRICAN THEATRE:

STUDIES IN THEORY AND CRITICISM



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ISBN: 978-978-54690-2-8

Published by
**The Department of Theatre Studies,
Methodist University College, Ghana
&
The Department of Performing Arts,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria**

CHAPTER THIRTY – NINE

Promotion, Development, and Preservation of Arts and Culture in Oyo State, Nigeria

Segun Oyeleke Oyewo

Introduction

Arts and Culture in the traditional and the contemporary contexts have been and continue to be crucial to world development, because the wealth of a people's cultural life can be found in the many individual artists and also arts organizations that provide an array of artistic and cultural events for the citizens. Culture has been observed to have a dynamic relationship with two other equally important components of economics and politics. According to Leonard Jeffries (1991, p5), economics is primary and depends on ecology-basic local resources, while politics is the control of economics i.e. how resources are utilized. Culture cements economics and politics and provides the boundaries within which the society will operate depending largely on the values, interests and principles of the society. Arts and culture are very important to economics and politics by providing both direct benefits to governments and communities as well as indirect benefits such as values, mores, ethos, serving as merit good to the entire society. This relationship forms the basis of organizing society.

Culture's relationship with the arts is predicated on the fact that often times the arts in their various forms-visual and performing-serve as the codification and indices of the particular culture. According to Soyinka (1982), the history of a society is the history of the dramatic pattern of that society. In essence, where the culture is there arts will be and vice versa.

The realm of existence is composed of a past, the present and the future, while in Yoruba philosophy, four levels/realms of human existence have been identified, namely; the world of the unborn, the living and the dead. An abyss or transition void also exists between these worlds as the fourth realm. A breach in any one causes a cataclysm in the others, a disturbance of the homeostasis that keeps the Yoruba world solid. This way of life is aptly captured by WS in the classic play, *Death and the King's Horseman*. In essence, arts and culture are inextricably linked although culture transcends the arts. It is observed that an artless society is a heartless society; similarly a society without its own culture living on borrowed culture will not only turn out heartless but soul less as well. The arts and culture can and must influence, for good, our sincere search for solutions to economic and political as well as social problems.

The invasion of our arts and culture by assault from the internet and most unfortunately how we lap up every serving on the net hook, line and sinker brings about the strong need to not only retaliate these global assaults, but launch an

offensive to promote our culture. African arts and culture are constantly under attack either direct or subtle. Since our culture encapsulates our principles, they have to be sold locally as well as internationally for the preservation of our time tested values and ipso facto our development in all facets of life.

Some Definitions

At this juncture, we have to define some key terms crucial to this discourse, they are: promotion, development, presentation, marketing, and Arts and culture.

Arts and culture are two terms that are always inextricably linked because they serve as economic and social asset in any society. The arts represent the intellectual component/sector of the culture of a society and often times serves as the codification and indices of the totality of way of life of a society. It usually serves as the means of giving creative expression to the life of a people. Within the context of this paper, it comprises of the visual and the performing Arts which are both important ways of expressing and documenting the culture of a people. The arts can also be seen in two guises, namely; the economic sector of culture and the purely creative sector. This stresses the economic relationship between and the impact of culture and creativity. In the arts, even those that emerge from the many rituals in our society, the aesthetic is usually the basis but most arts whether traditional and contemporary have a kind of ritual origin. This has been substantiated by various scholars like the Cambridge anthropologists who traced Modern Greek Drama and Theatre to some primal rituals. Adedeji (1979) has also studied Egungun ritual as being the origin of modern Yoruba/Nigerian Drama and Theatre. Just like in the Greek and other western traditions, in most modern dramas the aesthetic become foreclosed while the rituals recede to the background. In some other forms however, the ritual drama and Theatre still exist as distinct forms of theatre. All the performing arts as well as visual whether traditional/ ritual or contemporary, exhibit elements of culture as most are embedded in culture having sourced their material from the traditional.

Culture has been defined variously and the most celebrated one sees culture as a totality of the way of life of a people. Culture is also a set of beliefs and understandings a society has about the world, its place in it, and the various activities used to celebrate and reinforce those beliefs. Raymond Williams (1983:11) proffered four definitions of culture; 1. Culture as a developed state of mind 'a cultured person' 2. The process of this development 'cultural activities', 3. The means of these processes as in culture as the art and humane intellectual works, and 4. As a whole way of life 'a unifying system' through which a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored. All four are useful for this paper. In the cultural policy for Nigeria (1988), culture is defined as the totality of the way of life evolved in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization thus

distinguishing them from their neighbours. All these definitions point to a crucial fact that culture is neither a relic of the past nor fossil of a dead civilization and also reveal the arts as irreducible part of culture. Arts and culture have grown in importance in global reckoning thus increasing the awareness that their preservation and promotion are vital to human development and harmony in all facets of human endeavour.

Preservation refers to the safeguarding and protection of our culture, conserving those aspects that define our corporate existence and conserve our philosophy while controlling the permissible level of change and ensuring its continuity as much as possible. It has to do with retaining the authenticity of our various identities, Yorubanness, Nigerianess, Africanness etc.

Promotion refers to sponsorship of, encouragement and support given to arts and culture. Marketing is a very crucial process of promoting arts and culture but transcends presentation of culture to include some level of commercialization on how to make the arts and culture economically viable in both their traditional as well as contemporary contexts. Whether we call it publicity, PR, or advertisement, it comes to the same thing; making people aware of who you are and what you are doing, is also called marketing.

Development is defined as either a process of change or advancement in an event, ideas etc. For cultural development, man must become discontented with some of the many things as they are and provided by their discontent, be led to find a way out. Development in this context is not about changing the authentic but dwindling cultural values, but changing back to revive them to make them not only acceptable to the owners of these cultures, but also lift them up and develop programmes to make them attractive to other people to be economically viable in addition to preserving them for posterity. Danger in negative change can be found in Ogbe Ate quoted in Wande Abimbola, (1984) about the proverbial fish and it reads thus:

Ohun tá a ní kì í wù wá, / We do not value what we have
Tẹni ẹlẹni níí yá ni lára, / Rather we are excited by other's
a díá fún iwodere, / Divines for iwodere
Tíó sàgbákò fàwọn ẹja / that ensnares the fishes.

Every year nations all over the world make billions of dollars from various legal forms of Arts and Culture entertainment. Also in Nigeria, Live Arts and culture and in the media have become major sources of income and foreign exchange earner; this is in addition to achieving the goal and function of reorientation of the populace. Arts and Cultural entertainment have now become big business and the saying that it should generate only psychic reward is outdated. While this is desirable, pecuniary gains are now of utmost importance and the dynamics of the industry justifies investment as well as adequate marketing of arts and culture.

Importance of Arts and Culture

It is important to first of all assess the universal and specific import of Arts and Culture that makes it important for development. What are the benefits of arts and culture to the numerous stake holders in the community/ecosystem? According to Max Kaplin quoted in Hampton (1998 p 57) "...the arts enrich, transform and even save lives... the arts are essential to life but in a different level of reality from food and air. One can live without the arts; one hardly does."

The Arts and Culture have always been a means of accord, community reformation, enhancement, order, integration, discovery, intensification, expression, interpretation, entertainment, education and enlightenment/information. In all these, throughout the ages, they have been used to draw attention to individual and group political agendas, social issues, religious, economic as well as educational state and wellbeing of the community. Globally various visual and performing arts of both the traditional and contemporary mould abound to attest to the benefits derivable from them.

In fact Arts and Culture are very important and dynamic sectors in world economy affecting not only the activities directly linked to it but also other sectors. Increase in economic growth, disposable income and leisure time, political stability, aggressive tourism campaigns among other factors have fuelled and are also attendant to the significant growth of arts and culture.

Arts and Culture also play a prominent role in cultural diplomacy. This has to do with the use of arts and culture to foster international understanding and it has been time tested even among nations in traditional societies. In this context it portends great prospect in curbing or at least contributing to the reduction of terrorism. Beyond this, traditional arts and culture help in providing traditional interpretation to certain situations, morals and ethics. For these reasons arts and culture need to be promoted and marketed for the moral, economic uplift and security of the society.

Nature of Arts and Culture

An odd paradox exists in Arts and Culture field that in spite of its great benefits to society, it is weak in the market place and at the same time grows phenomenally in terms of pecuniary and numerical context responsible for thousands of jobs annually. In Nigeria for instance the performing arm of culture represented in festivals at various levels have grown tremendously with or without government support.

The arts like all cultural products are said to be weak in the market place because of characteristics inherent in their nature and to their organization structure. These characteristics according to Baumol and Bowen (1966) are;

- (1) Since labor costs increase yearly, production costs rise constantly
- (2) Cultural production does not lend itself to assembly-line methods but requires single-unit production
- (3) For the most

paid audience cannot be substantially increased without incurring further costs larger halls or extra performances (4) Since it is very difficult to judge audience reaction to new productions, risk estimation is very difficult (5) And since the performing Arts are "live", the organization cannot build up an inventory for the reduction of risk.

Vogel (1999) sums this up when he says that arts organisations seem always to live on a financial precipice which he sees as a function of live – audience size limitations, the great expense of coordinating an effective production, and the perpetually high cost of money for risky ventures. Live performances according to him are also economically inefficient because performances are consumed at the point of production. Productivity cannot thus be raised significantly in the performing arts – an hour is an hour. According to him (2001:287) a live performance is unique in that it is itself an end product. A higher ticket price reduces demands which mean that in spite of increasing cost of production; attendance at live performing arts is price inelastic. A combination of these shortcomings of the arts and economic realities has greatly affected the performing arts especially in Nigeria, but the bottom line is that they must survive in view of their various benefits to society.

Baumol and Bowen (1966:65) justify the need for the survival of the arts when they opine that "If through no fault of their own the arts cannot survive without public support, the necessary support should be provided". But the arts is said to be overwhelmingly commercial in origin, organisation and objective. As a result survival and economic viability is not impossible, the arts are not strange bedfellows to business.

The summation is that no matter the artistic challenge and the politics of the arts, the economic survival / commercial reality cannot be waived aside. Whether in subsidised or commercial arts and culture; visual, performing arts or theatre in the media, the four distinct business functions of financing, producing, distributing and marketing/advertising are very salient. It is interesting to note that the theatre like all other cultural products have a high potential to make money in spite of the entire advocacy for public support for them because every year nations all over the world spend billions of dollars on various forms of arts and entertainment.

Aspects of Arts and Culture

Arts and culture are expressed in diverse ways as cultural tourism, arts festivals, theatre, music, dance, visual arts, crafts, films, literature, museums and monuments.

The totality of cultural heritage used to refer to monuments and collection of objects, but this perception has changed in recent decades partially as a result of instruments developed by UNESCO. By its definition,

Cultural heritage also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

This perception recognises intangible cultural heritage as an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of globalisation. It further observes that the importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation in itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. Finally UNESCO brings about four characteristics of intangible cultural heritage as follows; 1. Traditional, (contemporary and living at the same time), 2. Inclusive (implication for continental and Diaspora Yoruba), 3. Representative and, 4. Community based. This much prominence is given to cultural heritage by UNESCO because it forms a critical meeting point between arts and culture and a viable means through which the arts and culture can be preserved, promoted and marketed. Unfortunately however Nigeria was not represented on the membership of the jury which has such African Countries as Ghana, Tanzania and Benin Republic as members. As a result, only two items have been adopted as intangible heritage in Nigeria namely; Ifa Divination System and Oral heritage of Gelede, the latter together with Benin and Togo. In the same vein it has Osun Osogbo Sacred grove and Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa State recognized as world cultural heritage sites.

Models from elsewhere

As mentioned earlier, Arts and Culture are universal phenomena but the degree to which they are fostered is directly proportional to the level of development of that country. The level and nature of involvement in culture significantly indicate the level of civilization. Often times also the perception of what arts and culture are determines the seriousness with which it is promoted by government and participated in by the populace. It is thus crucial at this point to consider some models of arts and cultural promotion in some countries around the world.

Republic of South Africa: The purpose of Department of Arts and culture in the RSA is to promote Arts and Culture and mainstream its role in social development. It has three chief directorates to achieve this viz; Arts and Culture in society; Arts, social development and youth; and National Language service. These chief directorates are further divided into Directorates and sub directorates. The major highlights of the functions of the Chief Directorate of Arts and Culture in society are:

- To develop, promote and sustain Performing Arts in South Africa,
- To strengthen the involvement of civil society groups for the promotion of CACS,

- To guide and assist funding bodies in promoting Arts and Culture and
- To support and promote Arts and Culture festivals for social cohesion, poverty alleviation, job creation, cultural development and presentation. (RSA 2006)

Seventeen items ranging from arts and Culture summit to National symbols are engaged in fostering culture in the RSA. Other items on the list are legacy projects, Arts and Culture organization, cultural industries, cultural tourism, Arts festivals, Theatre, Music, Orchestras, Dance, visual and performing Arts, Crafts, film, literature, Museums and National Library of South Africa.

South Africa's Arts and Culture are as varied as one might expect from a diverse culture, a diversity that strongly determines the aims of the cultural body to develop and preserve its culture to ensure social cohesion and nation building.

The Irish government, like that of every developed country, has long recognized the importance of providing the arts and culture as a dimension of international relations since 1949. This is in spite of the fact that a large part of its international cultural reputation comes about independent of direct state intervention. Its funding policy for artistic and cultural projects overseas, for instance is largely for diplomatic, cultural as well as economic reasons.

Ireland built its promotion on the Australian model where government interest themselves in the arts domestically and internationally for the same range of reasons stated above. This Australian model is said to be most appropriate, which according to Irish policy review (2003) is because the model builds on the strength and expertise of the government's principal arts funding agency and it fully engages the government and other stakeholders – not only in the contemporary arts, but in heritage culture, film and broadcasting. Other key agents include artists and arts organizations themselves.

Pennsylvania Council on the Arts is a good example of a state arts council that blends arts with culture and defines its Arts to include the heritage, traditional and contemporary arts of the diverse people of the state. Its mission is to foster the excellence, diversity and vitality of the arts in Pennsylvania and to broaden the availability and appreciation of those arts throughout the state. Its current strategic plan for 2012 – 2017 offers us some interesting lessons, as an evidence of PCA's serious commitment to helping make the arts available to all Pennsylvania.

... the plan delivers support for access to the arts throughout the community, continues to leverage successful regional partnerships. Supports the recognition of PCA staff to maximize the efficiency of our internal operations; and develop our information services and the website to be an interactive source of information sharing and community building.

As diverse as these bodies are, they are instructive to the development of arts and culture in Nigeria and specifically oyo state. Because of the wide influence

of Yoruba language and culture however, in Nigeria and in the diaspora, peculiar situation warrants peculiar handling beyond the lessons gleaned from these and other world examples.

First and foremost it is crucial that before arts and culture can be marketed effectively it has to be fostered within the immediate environment. In this process, every facet of society has a significant role to play because arts and culture affect all stakeholders in the ecosystem of the arts and culture. This ecosystem includes government, individuals, professionals, business men, religious institutions, universities etc

The significance of the promotion of culture and Arts is hinged on two pedestals namely: indispensability for people to achieve spiritually affluent life and secondly as sources of creative economic activities at the local, national and international levels. In view of this, different categories of people have significant roles to play and these are role of government, practitioners, entrepreneurs and the entire community.

The Role of Government

The Primary role of government in fostering arts and culture rests partly on providing an enabling policy to determine the philosophy and direction of its arts and culture and partly by the establishment of viable government institutions and bodies to see to its administration. Nigeria is not short of such policies and administration organs on culture at national, state and even local government levels of administration. These policies have defined methods of implementation which are largely hinged on fostering before marketing.

There have been good programmes employed towards this; some of these have not been sustained while some are still extant. The National festivals, Abuja carnival, state festivals among others are examples of the latter. The Open Theatre programme of the National Theatre of the 1980s belongs to the former category while at the state level, a laudable programme of Oyo State children's cultural ensemble was launched precisely on Monday 11th June 1984. Professor Wande Abimbola the then VC of the then University of Ile-Ife in his speech at the occasion displayed an enthusiastic optimism about the prospect of a better future for our culture. Sustaining such laudable project is a good function of government in discharging its responsibility.

Primarily however government is supposed to give an enabling environment for Arts and culture to flourish. While this is so, it does not preclude it from providing direct intervention where necessary. Featherbedding i.e. provision of direct employment by government to artistes is a practice all over the world hinged on the argument of arts as merit good/market failure which though of good value to society cannot sustain itself economically, justifying its needs for public support. While the fostering and marketing is beyond government alone, the terrain is for it to set agenda that will provide a conducive environment for it to thrive, not

only in the urban centres as is presently the case, but with a sustained presence in the rural areas as specified by cultural policies as well.

The Practitioners: This is another crucial level in the fostering of arts and culture and their marketing. The field of the arts especially the Performing Arts is the one with diverse guilds and associations, but this rather than be an advantage creates a fluidity that does not augur well for fostering arts and culture. The onus to foster arts and culture rests on these competing rather than complimentary associations to bridge the gap to compliment government's efforts and even put government on its toes. Intra association as well as inter guild rivalry has been observed to cause setback for arts and culture as a profession especially on the issue of patronage and sponsorship by willing entrepreneurs and philanthropists.

Entrepreneurs: The entrepreneurial approach has been employed in the arts and culture field all over the world. This set of people, either corporate or individual has the financial capacity to foster arts but either back out as a result of disunity in the arts and culture field and/or low returns on investment. There has however been a renewed interest by some of them in marketing cultural festivals and other arts. Professional associations, educational institutions constitute a central point to key into this renewed interest to positively impact on the quality of product and performances in the arts and culture world/industry. And most importantly, they should exhibit proper control on the contents of the evolving programmes in terms of moral values beneficial to society but which will not sacrifice artistic challenge for share commercial / pecuniary gains.

The community also plays a prominent role in this project of fostering the arts by the communal nature of, its arts and culture. This communal essence has given rise to the concept of African/tragedy which is communal in nature in its drama. It is by this communal essence that festivals (cultural and Arts) are being rejuvenated and this same attributes can be utilized in contemporary arts and culture field.

A good rapport among these various categories of members of the ecosystem will definitely put the field of Arts and Culture in required culture and arts balance.

Strengths and Challenges

In all of these it becomes expedient to assess the strength and challenges of our arts and culture in Oyo State. Currently our strengths and opportunities outweigh our challenges, however, those challenges punctuate our need for more funding, increased and continuous capacity building, sustained cultural researches and programmes to enhance cultural participation across the state.

The strength and opportunities of our culture and Arts are on one philosophical level of the state as a pacesetter "Ajisebi oyo..." The strength of this philosophy lies in the reminder and reinforcement of our state as a trail blazer in positive things. Coupled with the various arts and cultural products that are

unquestionably seen as Oyo State brands, then we are on a strong footing in fostering the arts and culture and making it profitable.

Another strength is in the vision of Ministry of Culture and Tourism which reads "revitalizing Oyo State Culture and Tourism towards transforming and repositioning the state to generate employment, reduce poverty in the society and contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of the state" In my opinion one great opportunity to explore is the presence of Yoruba in the continent and in the diaspora which provides vast markets and opportunities for diasporas collaborations. I will conclude this chapter on a note of optimism about these laudable declared intentions of the government at fostering the arts and culture fervently believing that actions expressed will be in oncorde with the intentions.

It is expedient to make some recommendations for all stakeholders to enhance the fostering and marketing of arts and culture of the state. We therefore recommend as follows:

1. The Government should explore ways to reduce operational expenses to registered performing and visual arts troupes in the state. This is referred to as the "arts incubator model" usually provided in the aspects of accounts, marketing, management assistance, legal advice, low cost healthcare etc.
2. Make provision to provide direct growths and targeted grant aids to arts organizations.
3. Translating major artistic works into Yoruba and sponsoring their performances.
4. Embark on legacy projects.
5. Evolve strategies for the growth of cultural industries – Yoruba theatre, movies etc., such as organising Yoruba plays, prose and poetry writing competition and undertaking the publication and or production of the winning entries.
6. Provision of logistic and financial support for Yoruba film industry, the idea of a film cultural village will be profitable in this context.
7. Encourage cultural participation across the state in both rural and urban areas by developing regular performances / exhibition programmes to develop audiences across the state.
8. Networking with Africans in the diaspora in the field of arts and culture.
9. Make the children theatre ensemble programme international as Yoruba/African children performance/cultural ensemble.
10. Carrying out a research on continuity and change through primary and secondary orality of Yoruba cultural performing arts.
11. Partnering with corporate bodies for promotion and marketing of Arts and cultural events.
12. Holding regular "family meetings" dialogue with stakeholders.

13. Initiate town and gown projects through projects with interested entrepreneurs.
14. Organizing theatre and culture awareness programmes in schools and campuses across the state in conjunction with professional organizations.
15. Mediating and bridging the gap among competing theatre guilds and associations.
16. Organizing workshops and "museum theatre" for tourists to Oyo State.
17. For the sustenance of corporate funding of the arts, artistes and professional should be encouraged to improve on accountability.
18. Jointly organize finishing schools as a unification / moderation of the apprenticeship system of training of the traditional and traveling theatre with government and private partners empowering the trainees.
19. Mapping and publishing of state cultural industries and evolving on line calendar of arts and cultural events based on pan Yoruba collaboration.
20. Increase the awareness of the visual arts by including it in public buildings / structure and in city beautification.
21. By branding peculiar cultural products and practices in Oyo State..
22. Organize arts and culture festivals.
23. Lastly, the state should make efforts to identify and sponsor intangible and cultural heritage sites in Oyo State for recognition by UNESCO. The benefits of this recognition are not quantifiable.

Conclusion

One major area of concern for live Yoruba arts and culture is the estrangement of majority of the populace especially youths as a result of some stereotypes and shibboleths about it, prominent of which is the over mythification and mystification of the arts and culture. This misconception necessitated that great Yoruba professor Akinwunmi Isola to retort in an interview "I am a writer not a priest". The comment is instructive and puts great responsibilities on the arts and culture stakeholders to correct such inaccuracies that elicited this reaction from the erudite professor.

Finally, it is crucial to note that in the current "buzz-concept" in poverty alleviation, the arts and culture offer viable alternatives to the weakness of the SAP and Donor Approaches.. They offer a compliment to the popular NGO approach premised on rural development with a focus on women. Arts and cultural approach is viable creative option open to African government to address the issue of poverty. The conservationist approach which has to do with rural resource autonomy through ecotourism is one other option. Oyo State is blessed abundantly in these (Arts and culture and ecotourism), and as a result they can be merged to become a formidable force in the emancipation of our people as stated in its

mission statement. The degree to which we foster and market arts and culture will determine our future as a people.

In conclusion it is desirable for stake holders to sponsor a research to produce comprehensive data on public and private arts and culture facilities within the state and on the economic contribution of selected arts organizations to her socio-economy. The data thus generated would serve as a foundation for a more in-depth economic and marketing study to be undertaking in future.

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