

Historical Appraisal of Costume Authenticity in Biyi Bamidele's *Elesin Oba* Nollywood Film

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Abstract: Costume design is one of the most valuable visual elements of film making considering its significance to the overall film outlook, authenticity, cultural reflection and documentation. However, one aspect that has often been criticised in Nollywood films is the historical accuracy of the costumes in them. This alteration from a strict historical continuum diminishes verisimilitude in film due to costumes misrepresentation. This paper therefore, addressed this gap by examining the historical authenticity of the costume designs in *Elesin Oba* by Biyi Bamidele in order to determine the extent to which the costume designer realistically reflected the clothing styles and cultural norms of Nigerian's colonial era and old Oyo Empire in the film. The theoretical frameworks that foreground this paper are New Historicism by Stephen Greenblatt and Symbolic interactionism by John Dewey. This paper employed qualitative research method through analytical, descriptive and interview tools to gather the primary data in order to discover the creative techniques used by the costumier in the selected film; while the secondary data was sourced from relevant journals, articles, books and other internet materials in order to ensure a robust submission on the discourse. The Findings revealed that intensive research on the historical background of *Elesin Oba* by the costumier added depth to the historical narratives, character portrayal and enriched audience engagement. While, the key elements that contributed to historical authenticity of the costume designs in the film include: period-specific styles, appropriate colour, and meticulous attention to period fabric and accessories. However, the paper also observed that there are few costume accessories that the costumier improvised with instead of the real material in her costume designs. The paper concluded that, the challenges of costume misrepresentation in the production of historical films in Nigeria stemmed from the lack of proper research into the historical period of films by costume designers. The paper therefore recommend that, budding costume designers should research into the historical events and use them as a guide for their creative designs in order to avoid costume misrepresentation in their costume designs.

Keywords: Historical, Authenticity, Costume, Appraisal, *Elesin Oba*, Culture, Nollywood Film

Introduction

In film production, costume design has become an important visual language of cinematic narrative that plays significant roles in the communication of the encoded messages of a film to the audience. Notched within this purview, costumes can be credited to possess the attributes to successfully convey character's personality, mood, visual aesthetics, thematic concerns and cultural background of a film to the audience, making them an integral part of film productions. To this, Utoh (2015) asserted that, costumes have the capacity for transforming a performer on stage into a character while passing across cogent information to the audience. Connoting that, a performer wears a costume to effectively portray a character within the thematic preoccupation of a film before an audience.

Costume therefore, possesses the artistic and aesthetic qualities for capturing the audience attention, by intensifying their mood and conveying the message of a film through non-verbal means while enhancing the narrative and immersive experience to the audience. Hence, Shuaibu (2008) submitted that “costume is paramount among the visual elements used in relating human experience to the audience”, this implies that, costume is one of the most sensitive elements of production that enhances the visual understanding of the film by authentically interpreting the vital information about the characters’ experiences in a film to the audience.

Authentic interpretation of characters costumes in film therefore depends on the degree to which costume accurately reflects the character depicted, cultural context and historical period of the film. This authenticity in costume can be achieved by a costume designer through the recreation of the clothing and accessories of a specific historical period while paying attention to detail such as fabric types, construction techniques and silhouette. From historical records, varied styles and variations of clothing that humans wear have been used to fit them into the society.(Akpan , 2011) This clothing and their styles often reflect their social norms, economic conditions, political climate and social nuances (Hargrove, 2024).Which indicates that costumes are pertinent tools for cultural, reflection, promotion, preservation, authenticity and documentation. Viewed this way, Costume is thus a valuable visual element in film production for cultural identification and expression. Eze (2015) emphasised that “it showcases the cultural aesthetics, artistic styles and traditional representation of a people”. From the foregoing, it glaring that costume has that capacity to contribute significantly to the overall interpretation of the cultural and historical background of a film. Consequently, the deployment of costume in Nigeria historical film has taken a broader interface in defining cultural aesthetics, historical epochs and events in films. This Corroborates Abone (2008) submission that “film is, a historical event, a cultural artifact, and a look into the lives and moment of individuals, groups, and nations to both inside and outside audiences” Thus, in recent times, Nigeria film makers

have been making significant efforts toward enhancing the verisimilitude of movies through historically balanced costumes that realistically link their films with the period in which they are set.

Hence, it is very important for costume designers to pay utmost attention to historical authenticity in costume design to avoid conflict in settings and character identity because film making is a sensitive process that harnesses other components to make an original cultural content. Costumiers are therefore saddled with the responsibility of researching into the era of the film they are working on in order to combine creativity with originality by researching into the garment, fabrics and styles of that period before reproducing or adapting them into film. Okafor (2020) explained that; Accuracy of costumes in period films is an issue because modern productions of historical events can differ dramatically from the actual period in which the designer is striving to recreate. Essentially, the success or otherwise of a costume designer lies in her ability to accurately represent the historical setting and create convincing costumes and a visually artistic, and audience satisfying aesthetics.

It is obvious from the quotation above that costume design is one of the most delicate components of film making considering its significance to film composition, authenticity, cultural reflection and documentation. However, one aspect that has often been criticised is the historical authenticity of costume in Nollywood movies. One of the main challenges faced by Nollywood filmmakers is the lack of access to authentic historical costumes which makes it difficult to recreate historical films accurately. Okafor (2020) observed that “Oftentimes, some costume designers in their bid to recreate history tend to alter what we know authentically about some historical situations, characters, props, fabrics”. She expatiated further that most times this alteration historically affects the outlook of the films, thereby making it inaccurate because there is lack of comprehensive research in the portrayal of historical films in Nigerian cinema which has resulted in the branding of some of the movies as fake or inaccurate. This paper therefore, seeks to bridge this gap by examining the historical authenticity of costume designs in *Elesin Oba* by Biyi Bamidele in order to determine the extent to which the costume designer accurately reflect the clothing styles and cultural norms of Nigerian’s colonial era and old Oyo empire in the film.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks of this paper are New Historicism and Symbolic Interactionism propounded by John Dewey in (1995) and Stephen Greenblatt in (1982) respectively. New historicism explores how cultural and historical context shape literary work by investigating the time and period in which the literary work was written through historical moments, political events, social structure, economic conditions and cultural movements which are embedded in cultural artifacts that respond or

reflect the cultural values, norms and anxieties of the time (Knapp & Farley, 2023). While Symbolic interactionism theory focuses on the ways in which people verbally or non-verbally create meaning through social interactions (Husin et al, 2021). By fusing the two theories together the historical and social constructs of this study are foregrounded in the context of costume. New historicism provides information on the historical and cultural background of its application, that is, how costume can be used to identify a people in history. While symbolic interactionism highlights that costumes are not just clothes but symbols that convey meaning and can influence how people perceive themselves and others in the society over time.

Thus, Dewey theory interrogates the extent to which costume serves as a symbol of interaction for the audience. This shows that, individuals interpret the meaning of costumes based on shared social norms, values, and cultural symbols. This makes both theories to be relevant in this discourse because in film, costumes play a prominent role in conveying character traits, social status, historical context, and cultural identity. The choice of costumes can therefore influence how characters are perceived by the audience and can contribute to the meaning and interpretation of the story. In this regard, what a person wears can influence how he or she behaves and how others perceive them. Maureen (2023) observes that “film costume expresses an identity, which is associated with geographic area or a period in history, but also indicates social, marital or religious status”. For example, wearing a costume of a historical figure may lead a person to adopt the mannerisms and behaviours associated with that figure and this will influence their interactions with others. The theory of New Historicism and Symbolic Interactionism therefore highlight the dynamic inter- relationship that exist among costumes, social interactions, and the construction of meaning in society over a given period of time. To this extent, the two theories are adopted as the theoretical frameworks for this paper because costume design, and film as a whole, rely on the audience’s response to the performers on stage based on what they their appearance signify to them over a period of time. So, costumes, are part of the larger film process and are therefore interpreted through the conventions that have evolved in that context over time.

Features of New Historicism and Symbolic Interactionism

- i. **Social norms:** Costumes reflects the social norms of a particular group or culture, conveying values and expectations. Social norms dictates what is considered appropriate or acceptable in terms of dress.
- ii. **Values:** Costume can express personal values such as modesty or self-expression. Costumes communicate values and attitudes influencing how others perceive the wearer.

- iii. **Cultural symbols:** Cultural symbols such as traditional patterns, artifacts or colours convey meaning and identity. The meaning of cultural symbols in costume is subject to interpretation influenced by individual perspectives and cultural context.
- iv. **Social status:** Costume can convey wealth, occupation or social position. Costume can be used to signal social aspirations or to challenge social norms influencing social mobility
- v. **Historical context:** Costumes reflect the social, economic and cultural conditions of a particular historical period. The meaning and significance of costumes evolve over time Influenced by changing social norms, values and cultural contexts of a society
- vi. **Cultural identity:** Costumes convey cultural identity, traditions and beliefs of a a society. Costumes can be used to preserve cultural heritage and traditions, influencing cultural identity and continuity.

From the foregoing features, it is glaring that costumes embody series of cultural, emotional, and historical qualities that stand in for a set of broader societal values as symbols that convey meaning and help define social roles, status, and identity within the society. These features will provide the framework for understanding and examining how the costumes in *Elesin Oba* film are perceived as symbols that convey meaning that help to shape the understanding of the past in this study.

Synopsis of *Elesin Oba*

Elesin Oba is a Nollywood film written and directed by Biyi Bamidele as an adaptation of Wole Soyinka's play; *The kings Horseman*. It is a film that centres around the historical event that happened in early 20th century in Oyo empire in Southwestern part of Nigeria during the British colonial rule. During that time, it is customary for the Elesin Oba (king's horseman) to lay down his life and die with the king when the king dies to ensure a safe passage for the deceased king into after life in order to prevent misfortune in the land. Due to this sacrificial act, he is highly respected and honoured in the Oyo society as a high ranking officer of the king. But, Elesin Oba becomes power drunk and leverages on this privileges to selfishly exploit the people of the community in order to satisfy his greed and egocentric nature. However, his fortune suddenly dwindles with the unprecedented clash of cultural beliefs that ensue between him and the colonial authorities who are unfamiliar with the Yoruba tradition and hold the opinion that the idea of ritual suicide is barbaric and evil. So, when the king dies, they deliberately disrupts the rite of passage by arresting and imprisoning Elesin Oba in order to stop him from carrying out the ritual suicide. Due to this action, the King's body is buried without the Elesin Oba. This makes him not to be able to fulfill his traditional rites. Consequentially, his inability to perform his traditional responsibility has grave consequences for him

in the film because his medical doctor son; Olunde performs the suicide ritual instead of him and the agony of losing his child with the disgrace of not living up to the expectation of his people eventually lead to death

Historical background of Oyo Empire and Abobaku in the 20th century

The Oyo empire, located in present-day Nigeria, was a powerful and influential state that thrived from the 15th to the 19th century. The empire's political structure was highly organised, with a centralised monarchy headed by the Alaafin (king) who was revered as both a political and spiritual leader of the kingdom (Nte , 2018). Religion also played significant roles in Oyo culture, with the worship of various deities and ancestral spirits. The Yoruba pantheon of gods and goddesses, known as the Orisha, were equally central to their spiritual beliefs, they serve as intermediaries between the supreme being and human influencing various aspects of their daily lives, including rituals, festivals, and art forms (Metych , 2024).

The Oyo empire people were also renowned for their artistic and cultural achievements, particularly in the areas of weaving, sculpturing, pottery, and music. Central to them was the weaving of Aso Oke; a unique traditional hand woven cloth worn by the people of Oyo, which mostly symbolises their identity and status (Moses, 2013). Additionally, they also had a rich oral tradition, with storytelling being a vital means of passing down history, myths, and cultural values from generation to generation. The Oyo empire's tradition and culture were deeply rooted in a rich tapestry of art, religion, politics, and social structure, making it a vibrant and dynamic civilisation in West Africa. Interestingly, one of the indigenous practices of the of the Oyo people during the early 20th century was the “Abobaku”. This practice is the tradition where the Elesin Oba (kings horseman) must voluntarily commits suicide in order to accompany the king to the join his ancestors after the death of the king in order to continue the spiritual cycle. Ogunumekan (2024) observed that Abobaku’ was a form of human sacrifice in Yoruba land. It was an essential part of the burial rites of Yoruba land in those days. This practice is essentially for the sustenance of Oyo people’s well-being to prevent misfortunes and calamities in the land (Aremu , 2023). It was a sacred practice that gained some level of acceptance among the people of Oyo empire in 20th century (1941-1946) but because of the sacrificial nature of the practice and the influence of modernity, it was stopped and dwindled into oblivion of forgotten memory. The practice has now become a point of reference in history for scholars and historians in the documentation of Oyo empire’s religious practice.

Historical Authenticity of Costume Design in the Settings of *Elesin Oba*

There is no gain saying the fact that, historical events in films are easily identified, interpreted and understood by the audience through the costume designs in them. Importantly, this is because authentic historical costumes always align with the period, time and setting of a film which the audience intuitively respond to based on cultural symbols, social norms, economic condition and historical context. By implication, this infers that costume can be used to identify a people in history as authentic costumes do not just dress characters they bring history to life. Thus, adequate knowledge of the historical background of a film by a costumier is sacrosanct to a successful portrayal of historical costume in period films. It is observed in *Elesin Oba* film that Bunmi Oladipo; the costume designer combined her vast experience in archival research with her versatile costume skills to authentically reflect the historical and cultural background of old Oyo empire by grounding the characters in believable reality to the audience through costumes.

To this extent, her design concepts were visualised in the different indigenous fabrics and accessories worn by the actors throughout the film. For example, traditional Yoruba textiles such as Adire (tie-dye fabric) and Aso-oke (handwoven cloth) were engaged by the costumier in different scenes to authentically depict the period and setting of the film as early 20th century and old Oyo empire respectively. This was achievable, through the texture, colour, pattern, and silhouette of fabrics she deployed to vividly accentuate the fashion trend of that period in order to effectively communicate the historical narrative of the film to the audience authentically. In view of this, indigo and white colours with impressive patterns were showcased by the costumier as the dominant colour of Adire fabric during that period. This is historically in tandem with scholarly submissions from authorities on Adire fabric in Yoruba historicism who noted that Adire was an indigo-dyed cotton cloth with striking blue and white patterns commonly worn by people of Oyo empire especially women in the early 20th century (Tarinabo, 2024).



Fig 1: Maidens Beautifully Dressed in Traditional Indigo Colour of Iro and Buba Adire to Show the Period and Setting of the Film

Photo credit: Excerpt from *Elesin Oba* by the Researchers

Costume Design and Socio-Economic Status of the Characters in *Elesin Oba*

In the film, various costume designs of the people of Oyo empire were culturally and authentically showcased by the costumier to highlight the social structure within that society and depict the social economic-status of the characters in the film in line with the history of Oyo people. To this extent, prestigious traditional fabrics such as Aso-oke were designed by the costumier into complete Agbada, Buba and Sokoto styles for wealthy and influential male characters to project their affluence and high ranking status within the Oyo society while their female counterparts wore Iro and Buba styles made from the same fabric for the same purpose, but villagers in the film were perceived in different patterns and styles of Adire fabrics of lesser quality to amplify their lower-class status in various scenes in the film. Making the film to look realistic and grounded while helping the audience to connect with the story and character on a deeper level because cultural memory always transfer or migrate visual motifs of the past to the present.

Similarly, accessories of the characters were culturally sourced by the costumier of the film in order to articulate their historical authenticity in the portrayal of the social ranking of characters in the film. To this end. Special traditional accessories such as cowries, beads, horse whisk, crowns and walking sticks were harnessed as important part of Oyo dress culture by the costumier to depict social hierarchy and aesthetics within the film. These accessories were selected by the costumier based on the historical antecedents and cultural practices of the Oyo people. At the same time, the foot wears worn by actors in the film were carefully chosen by the costumier to project the type of shoes worn by Oyo aristocrats and the colonial masters during that period according to their socio-economic status.

These locally-made foot wears include; traditional beaded shoes, leather shoes and fabric foot wears. The ingenious conception and application of the aforementioned foot wears by the costumier must have emanated from careful research into the history of the Oyo people especially during the period depicted in the film. This shows that the costume designer has worked closely with historians and cultural experts to ensure that the costumes are both visually striking, culturally authentic and historically significant.



Fig 2: Elesin Oba is Beautifully Costumed in Aso-oke Fabric to Reflect the Affluence that is Attached to his Character

Photo credit: Excerpt from *Elesin Oba* by the Researchers

From the picture above, Elesin Oba was beautifully costumed in a colourful Aso- Oke attire that highlighted his social status as a chief to the king in the Oyo community. The costume of Elesin Oba further gives deeper insight into the class dichotomy that existed in the Oyo empire at that time, because his position as the king's horse man afforded him the privilege of having an elevated status in the society unlike other villagers around him who wore Adire fabrics. The regal costume of Elesin is a pointer to his socio-cultural relevance in the film.

Costume Design and Character Development in *Elesin Oba*

As earlier mentioned, costume is one of the most important visual aspects of film because it projects the characters' role to the audience from one scene to another. In *Elesin Oba* there is a deliberate attempt by the costume designer to use costume to accentuate characters transformation and development in the historical narratives of the film. As human nature gets complex, the design of

costume in films changes to capture intricate factors like temperament and mood swing. These changes innately reflected the characters growth within the plot progression of the film in tandem with the true life story of Abobaku in Oyo empire. Hence, the costume designer focused her attention on projecting the physical and psychological transformation of Elesin Oba in the old Oyo society through costume. For example, when the king was alive. The flamboyant Aso-oke costume he adorned lay credence to his unruly temperament as well as the level of affluence and importance he enjoyed in the society. The texture, colour and style of his costumes explicitly projected his characterisation clearly to the audience. But, when he was arrested and imprisoned by the colonial master his arrogant disposition and mood changed in the film, costume was used to historically establish the physical and psychological details of the transformation. This was visible in the costume worn by Elesin Oba when he was put in the jail by the colonial master.



Fig 3: Elesin Oba is Girded in a Wrapper inside the Prison During his Incarceration by the Colonial Master

Photo Credit: Excerpt from *Elesin Oba* by the Researchers

The above picture showed the costume worn by Elesin Oba when he was in prison, its shabby appearance was a total contrast to the sophisticated costume he wore earlier that was full of elegance and grandeur. This reflected the impact of the costume in the character development of the film. The costume complimented the depressive state of mind of Elesin Oba who was incarcerated by the colonial master in order to debar him from committing ritual suicide. The wrapper girdled around his shoulder painted the picture of his unpleasant situation inside the prison. His psychological state was aptly projected through this costume which outlined the impact of the costume design in his character development.

Significantly, the costumes of the other characters in the film were also not static they evolved with time, situation and events in the film. The costume designer vividly revealed the physical and psychological transformation in human existence as result of change through costumes because the costumes of the villagers singing dirge of Elesin Oba after his death were different from the costumes of the villagers at his wedding ceremony. These are some of the variables that defined the impact of costume in the development of each character in the film. Thus, In line with history the costume designer has used costumes to play crucial roles in character development, influencing how characters are perceived by audiences while projecting important aspects of their personalities, backgrounds, mood and roles within narrative of the film from historical perspective.

Historical Symbols in the Costume Design of *Elesin Oba*

The costumier of *Elesin Oba* engaged costumes to depict cogent historical symbols in the film. The costumes in the film were rich with historical icons and artifacts that enhanced the storyline by providing deeper insights into the personalities of characters and the period of the film. One of the key ways that costumes communicated history in *Elesin Oba* is the symbolic portrayal of the categories of traditional Yoruba Aso-oke fabrics such as Etu, Sanyan, and Alaari worn by major characters in the film for different occasions. Each of these classical Aso-oke are distinguished by its colour and texture. Etu is deep indigo blue cotton, Sanyan is a tan-coloured fabric and Alaari has vibrant purple colour made from silk. With the appropriate colours, patterns, and textures of the fabric, the costumier was able to authentically project the social hierarchy, religious beliefs, gender roles, marital status, occupation and cultural identity of the Oyo empire people in the film.

Besides the aforementioned functional values of the of Aso-oke fabrics, traditional embroideries were also employed by the costumier as cultural icon to beautify the costume of important characters in the film and show the fashion sense of the Yoruba people of Oyo empire during the colonial era because embroidery was a unique form of traditional decoration used to embellish the Aso-oke of the upper class within the Oyo society at that time. Hence, the attention to detail of the costumier in creating beautiful intricate designs in the representation of the highlighted embroidery helped her to create a sense of authenticity that resonated with the audience in the historical appraisal of the costumes in the film.



Fig 4: Iyalode is Seen in the Picture in an Embroidered Yoruba Traditional Aso-oke

Photo Credit: Excerpt from *Elesin Oba* by the Researchers

The traditional Yoruba embroidery and accessories in the costumes of Iyalode were symbolic because they further reinforced the historical and cultural authenticity of the film. The fabrics reflected the period and social standing of her character. Traditional accessories such as beads are also symbolically and aesthetically represented in the film. They are made from local materials like coral, glass, shell and cowrie for actors crown, necklaces, bracelets amongst others in order to signify status and also define religious and cultural expression. This attention to detail by the costumier not only add to the visual aesthetics of the production but also helped to immerse the audience into the historical setting of the play. However, it is worthy of note that, some accessories were wrongly given to few characters by the costumier because they were not in tune with the period of the film. For example, Elesin's bride was given golden jewelry with contemporary designs by the costumier instead of traditional coral beads on her wedding day, which contradicted what a typical Yoruba bride of that period should wear because it did not conform with fashion and culture of the people of Oyo empire.



Fig 5: The District Officer is Dressed in an Official outfit of the British to Welcome the Commissioner

Photo Credit: Excerpt from *Elesin Oba* by the Researchers

Beyond the lapses noticed in costume design of *Elesin Oba*'s bride, It is worthy of note that the costume designer made conscious efforts to incorporate elements of colonial icons and insignia into the colonial masters costumes to symbolise the influence of the British colonial presence in Nigeria. Characters representing colonial officials and missionaries were dressed in European-style, such as suits and dresses, which indicated their colonial influence during the colonial rule in Nigeria. Hence, their costumes served as a visual representation of the historical background of the film, by helping to transport the audience to colonial era in Nigeria. This corroborated Zipprodt assertion (1999) that "symbolic costumes are like visual shorthand that allow the audience to immediately understand what a character represents without needing to spell it out explicitly in the dialogue". Thus, the symbolic use of traditional Yoruba costume design, coupled with colonial outfits created a dynamic visual contrast in the film that underscored the cultural and political tensions of the period. Through these symbolic costume designs the film did not only tell a historical story but also paid homage to the rich cultural heritage of the Yoruba people.

Therefore, it can be alluded that the general representation of costumes in the film carried symbolic, cultural and historical essence which stemmed from socio-cultural belief system of the Yoruba society during the colonial era. The costume design of each character had a symbolic inference that exposed their social status and cultural inclinations. Interestingly, the costume designer symbolically used some costumes in the film to expose the political power play and conflict in the

religious beliefs of the Yoruba people and the British colonial masters. This was aptly portrayed through the character of Mr and Mrs Pilking who wore the Egungun (Masquerade) costumes to welcome the commissioner in a party. This confrontational action is a sign of bastardisation of the Yoruba culture because the Egungun cult is a symbol of ancestral spirit in Yoruba land. However, wearing their costume to a party is directly making mockery of one of the revered cult groups in the Yoruba society, this is because the Egungun costume goes beyond mere clothing but embodies symbolic religious belief system of the Yoruba people, hence defiling its apparel is an abomination to them.

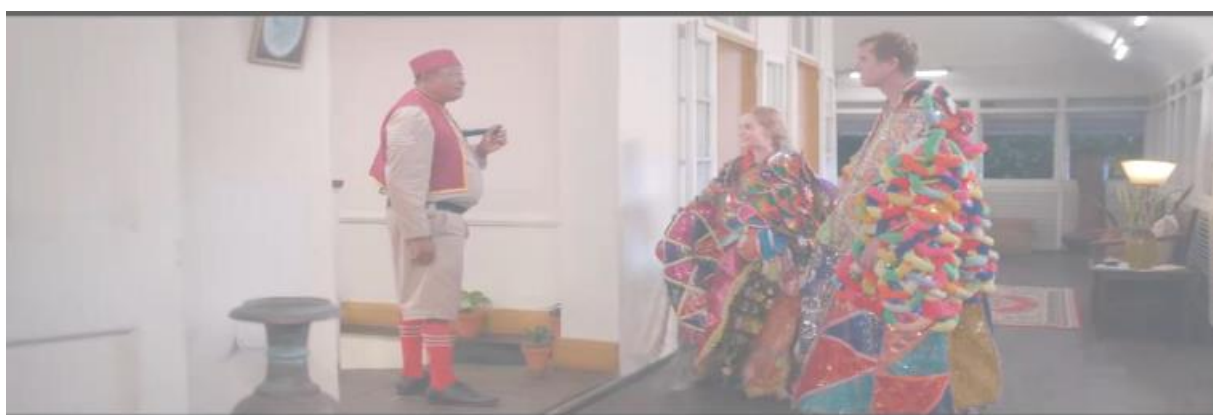


Fig 6: Mr Pilking and his Wife adorned in Egungun Costume while talking to Sergeant Amusa.

Photo Credit: Excerpt from *Elesin Oba* by the Researchers

The above picture shows the Egungun costumes worn by Pilking and his wife for a party. The costumier used the costumes as a symbolic representation of the intention of the colonialist to dislodge the Africans from their cultural beliefs.

Genre and Costume Design of *Elesin Oba*

The costume designer of *Elesin Oba* to a large extent relies on the film genre to determine the costume choices in the film. The costume designer utilises costumes that are peculiar to the historical narratives in the film to enhance the characters' roles and set the mood of the film in order to convey the emotional depth of film to the audience. The costume and designer projects the genre of the film through the colour of costumes that reinforce the sad mood of the characters in the film in line with tragic occurrences that pervaded the story of *Elesin Oba* in the 20th century Oyo empire. The costumes of the characters in the film were carefully designed by the costumier to give additional information about the tragic undertone of the film essentially through colour. Apart from ceremonial scenes

where bright colours were used to resonate the celebration atmosphere by the costumier, dull costume colours such as black, grey, indigo and others were centrally employed to tell the visual story of the film particularly the downfall of the Elesin Oba as the tragic hero in the film.



Fig 7: The villagers with the Corpse of Ogunde in front of the Prison where Elesin Oba was Kept
PhotoCredit: Excerpt from *Elesin Oba* by the Researchers

The above picture captured the mourning scene after the death of Olunde. The tragic nature of the film was pronounced through the costumes of the villagers. Dull colours were used by the costumier to reflect the sad mood in the highlighted scene which was in contrast to the bright ceremonial costumes worn by villagers earlier in the film. The costumes in the mourning scene exhibited the mood of sadness peculiar to the characters involved. The progression of the tragic plot of the film was evident in the costumes of the characters. This means that the costume designer explored this to tell a visual story of the tragic ending of the film.

Findings

The findings of this paper revealed that, the costume designers of *Elesin Oba* has committed a lot of attention to historical accuracy in costume designs of the film through intensive research on background of the film. This did not only add depth to character portrayal but also enriched the audience's engagement with the narrative, fostering a deeper appreciation for the historical period depicted. It is also observed in the paper that, costume elements such as period-specific styles, authentic fabrics, appropriate colour, and meticulous attention to accessories contributed to the film's historical authenticity. Also, it is equally noted that, characters' costumes were used to realistically reflect their socio-economic status and cultural delineation in order to enhance the depth of visual narrative in the film. Although, it should be mentioned that, there are some costume accessories that

the costumier misrepresented due to her inability to get the exact material in her bid to achieve historical accuracy in the costume designs of the film.

Conclusion

This paper concluded that costume design is a powerful visual tool of film making which the costumier of *Elesin Oba* meticulously used in recreating the fashion and style of colonial era in the film. These costume elements authentically evoke the era's societal norms, cultural nuances, and political backdrop. The period-specific style, choice of fabrics, colour, and accessories not only visually enrich the characters but also serve as visual cues that immerse viewers in the historical narratives that characterised the old Oyo empire and the plot structure of the film.

Recommendations

It is observed that costume design is a sensitive part of film making, hence, proper attention should be given to the adequate replication of costumes that are peculiar to the fashion style of a film in order to avoid misrepresentation by a costume designer. Also, proper attention should be given to comprehensive research by the costumiers in order to have a balanced and accurate historical representation of costumes in a film. It is equally the recommendation of this paper that costume designer should consult historical texts and images such as books, and online archives that provide information on the traditional clothing and textiles of the culture they are working on. Additionally, it is advisable that costume designers should always collaborate with historians and cultural experts who have vast knowledge about diverse cultures and history in order to gain insight into traditional costume aesthetics. Furthermore, costume designer should visit museums or online collections that feature clothing and textiles to observe and study the designs, fabrics, and construction techniques that will advance their design concepts. Training and retraining of costume designers through workshops, seminars and symposia are also germane for sustainable growth and development of costume design practice worldwide.

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