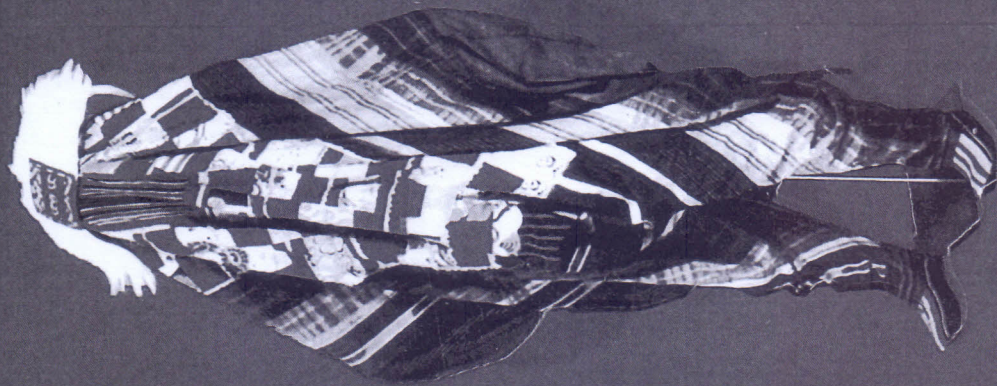


ALARINJO

A JOURNAL OF THEATRE AND MEDIA ARTS



THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND MEDIA ARTS, FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OYE-EKITI, EKITI STATE, NIGERIA.

ALARINJO

JOURNAL OF THEATRE AND MEDIA ARTS

VOL. 2 NO. 1

APRIL 2018

ISSN 2636-7238



A Journal of the Department of Theatre and Media Arts,
Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.



PUBLISHER

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Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

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ALARINJO: A Journal of Theatre and Media Arts (ISSN: 2636-7238) is a publication of the Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Federal University Oye – Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Paper subscription: Libraries and other Institutions, US \$75.00; Individuals, US \$50.00; Association Members, US \$30.00; Students, US \$25.00, Journal orders and remittance should be sent to ALARINJO Editor.

Manuscripts: Articles submitted for publication should be emailed to theeditoralarinjo@gmail.com. Manuscripts should meet the criteria outlined in the instructions for contributors (appearing at the end of this journal).

Publisher

FEMIKE GLOBAL NETWORK

Diary Farm Estate, Agege Stadium, Agege, Lagos State, Nigeria

dfemike@yahoo.co.uk

+234-813-692-9633, +234-802-306-8892

Cover Concept and Design

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Printed in Nigeria by

FGN Graphics Embassy

+234-805-407-4417

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CONSIDERING THERMODYNAMICS IN THE WORLD OF CINEMATIC IMAGINATION: AN INTERROGATION OF *INVASION 1897*

Benedict Binebai*

Abstract

Researchers and scholars have not been adequately connected to deployment of thermodynamics as a theoretic frame in the analysis of film and other art forms. Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to explore the theoretical frame of thermodynamics and its applicability to film in Nigeria. It appropriates the critical and literary analytical methods in the interrogation of the film text, Invasion 1897 selected for this study. The paper holds that cinema/film is an art that adequately hosts the thermodynamic academic frame of protection, freedom and balance. This is based primarily on the fact that film is essentially and instrument that conserves memory and instigates freedom and balance.

Keywords: Thermodynamics, cinema/film, freedom and balance.

Introduction

Beyond the literary fancy, this paper is planned with the impulse to relate thermodynamics to film or cinematic imagination. As it argues to put thermodynamics on the list of literary theories, it becomes imperative to understand the scientific concept called

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CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF COSTUME AND MAKE-UP IN SHAO AWON MASS WEDDING FESTIVAL

Tayo Simeon Arinde*
&
Mariam Monisola Ariyo*

Abstract

Culture is the belief, value, behavior, material and immaterial elements that constitute a people's way of life. Awon mass wedding festival of Shao is one culture that is of essence to the people of Shao. Consequently, this paper examines the implications of costume and make-up in Awon Mass wedding festival. It explores the cultural aesthetics of costume and make-up used by brides during the Awon Mass Wedding Festival. This study employs descriptive, participant-observation and interview methods of research. The participant-observation avails the researchers the opportunity to observe directly the festival from the pre-festival, festival to post-festival activities which affords it the opportunity to give a descriptive analysis of the various process of the ceremony. The interview method endow the researchers the opportunity to obtaining information directly from players at the festival. Information obtained from these methods provides our primary data. Materials sought from scholarly literary materials in the

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related fields such as; books, journals and internet sources provide our secondary data. Our findings reveal that make-up are not just used for beautification of brides, they are also used to discover pregnancy on the new brides and can also make a man impotent if necessary precautions are not taken. It was also discovered that brides take active part in the making of their cloth (Aso-oke) worn on the wedding day, from the planting and harvesting of cotton to making of the dye used on the clothing. This study concludes that Awon Mass Wedding Festival is a very rich traditional festival that can be placed side-by-side other traditional festival in Nigeria. Therefore, people of Shao should elaborate it with a view to showcasing it to the outside world. In the same vein, Government of Kwara State and Nigeria should play their part in moving the Festival to the level of attracting global attention and patronage.

Keywords: Culture values, Awon mass wedding, cultural festival

Introduction

Society has been variously described as a group of people sharing same cultural affinities such as language, dress, norms of behavior and artistic values over a long period of time. They meet from time to time to renew their common interest, which joined them by mutual consent with a view to deliberating, determining and act toward a common goal. Consequently, the Encarta (1) defines society as: "the web of relationships and interactions among human beings."

Drawing from this, one can deduce that Culture is universal to mankind and not peculiar to a particular group. It is dynamic and flexible; it is neither static nor rigid hence its ever changing nature from time to time. Since any culture fits and serves the person who owns it, it can rightly be claimed that no culture is superior to the other. Every culture is good in itself in relation to the people who possess it, which means, it remains relevant to them for as long as they cherish it. Little wonder why Ododo (23) describes culture as "a summation of all the elements and ingredients that define a people, these element can be appreciated through the peoples shared beliefs and values like their beliefs system, customs practices and social behavior". Due to the fact that culture is ever dynamic and renewed from time to time, people of a given environment weave it around a symbolic event that they call festival.

In this paper therefore, we examine festival as it relates to the culture of a people within a given society. We note that festival serves as a very important element of culture, thus it is observed by communities as a time to commemorate a special event or time of reunion, a time to eat, drink and dance. It is a joyous moment in the life of the people. Festivals in many places are held annually to celebrate significant landmark and special remarkable events that have occurred in the history of the people. Hence, festival have their backgrounds rooted in the history of the community. This is what Gregory explains when she describes festival as:

Communal celebrations involving carefully planned programs, outpourings of respect, rejoicing, or high revelry, established by custom or sponsored by various cultural groups or organizations. Such secular celebrations differ from religious festivals and feasts in that the focus is not on the significance of the rituals of holy days of a particular faith but on the public honouring of outstanding persons, the commemoration of important historical or cultural events, or the re-creation of cherished folkways. (1)

Subsequently, we examine *Awon* Mass wedding festival of the people of Shao, the importance of the festival to them and the cultural values of the festival to the people of Shao.

Awon Mass Wedding Festival is one of the many traditional festivals in Nigeria. The festival is one major traditional festival that is organised by the people of Shao, which underscore the importance of the festival to the entire people of the community. Shao is an ancient Yoruba town at the Northern fringe of Yoruba ethnic territory of Nigeria, located on the world map at longitude 4 35E and Latitude 8 35N (1).

Awon mass wedding festival came into existence occasioned by the appearance of a one breasted woman, who visited Shao many years

ago. To continue to mark the period, the woman laid down some rules and regulations, which she said the community must follow. She also blessed them with two special plants; *cotton* and *Elu*. These two plants she assured them would boost the economy of the community. The two plants, apart from being a source of income to the people of Shao are used as costume and make-up for *Awon* brides during the *Awon* mass wedding festival. This in essence shows that beyond its primary objectives of beautifying the body of the brides, they are also used for spiritual purposes.

Arising from the above, this paper examines the costume used by the *Awon* brides and how they acquired them for use during the festival. In the same vein, the study illuminates on how the make-ups used during the wedding festival are gotten by the brides and its cultural implications. To properly execute this research work, the study employs descriptive, participant-observation and interview methods of research.

The participant-observation avails the researchers the opportunity to observe directly the festival from the pre-festival, festival to post-festival activities with a view to allow for a description of the various process of the ceremony. The interview method provides the opportunity for obtaining information directly from payers at the festival. Information obtained from these methods provides our primary data. Materials sought from scholarly literary materials in the related fields such as; books, journals and internet sources

provide our secondary data.

Definition of Terms and Concepts

Some terms and concepts run through this work, which we consider germane to illuminate on as they are used in the context of this study. They include: *Costume*, *Make up*, *Festival*, *Llaali*, *Aso-oke*, *Alari*, *Sanyan*, *Etu*, *Shine-Shine*, *Awon*, *Ojubo awon*, and *Elu*:

Costume: Costume is a cloth worn especially by actors in a theatrical performance. Costume includes; garments accessories worn in a particular country. Utoh (130) defines costume as "the items of clothing, accessories and ornamentation worn by the actor or actress for the purpose of defining character and establishing the circumstances of the character's existence by situating him or her in time or space". The above definition is adopted for this study as it captures the meaning of costume in the context of this work as it relates to *Awon* Mass Wedding festival.

Make-up: Make-up is a colorant and other substance applied to the skin of an actor/actress to enhance his/her visibility, improve his/her appearance and give a clue to the generality of the actor/actresses. Hodge (251) describes make-up as: "an assisting statement of an actor's characterization". This definition is relevant to our research because *Awon* couples make use of different substance on their body for identification.

Laali: *Laali* is a local nail polish, which is gotten from a particular leaf called *ewe laali*. (*laali* leaf). *Laali* is a natural nail polish, so it cannot be removed like the modern nail polish. This is one of the make-up elements used by *Awon* brides.

Aso-oke: This is a traditional Yoruba hand woven textiles. These textiles are produce from locally sourced materials ranging from cotton, local silk, bark, goats wool to raffia. It is the only type of costume used by *Awon* brides.

Alari: *Alari* is a red crimson traditional *Aso-oke* use for formal and traditional ceremonial events. It is pre-dye in red camwood before weaving. It is woven on Yoruba men's traditional loom.

Sanyan: This is a woven using locally manufactured silk yarn on the traditional loom of the Yoruba. This *Aso-oke* type has white stripes and it is brownish in color. It is the most expensive of all the locally produces Yoruba *Aso-oke*. It is one of *Aso-oke* used by *Awon* brides.

Etu: A type of costume. *Etu* is bluish in color. It is mostly use during chieftaincy ceremonies and other important traditional festivals.

Shine-Shine: This is a contemporary type of *Aso-oke*. It has shining linens hence the colloquial name 'shine-shine'.

Awon: *Awon* is the name of the mysterious one breasted goddess that visited Shao village. She is the reason behind awon festival.

Alawon: He is the custodian of *Awon* status. There is a particular family bestow with this responsibility. The festival cannot be celebrated without this family.

Ojubo- awon: This is the spot where people gather together to worship *Awon* goddess.

Elu: A plant from which dye is gotten to dye Aso-oke into various colours. It is also the plant bequeathed on Shao people by *Awon* goddess.

Osun: Is a stone that is reddish in colour. It is used by Yoruba women and children as make-up. It is also applied on the skin for medical purpose. The material is applied on *Awon* brides to distinguish them from other maidens in the olden days.

An overview of Culture and Traditional Festival in Nigeria

The essence of a society is hinged on the premise that people in a given community agree to share some communalities, which manifest in their adherence to cultural ethos and ways of life that are attached to the cultural life such people. When one looks at this agreement, one will conclude that those individuals share a common cultural value. Thus culture becomes an important value

that any society would strive to preserve. Aliyu in his submission defines culture as:

The totality of ways of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges of living in their environment. It gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic aesthetic and religious norms and mode of organisation, and distinguishes one group of people from the others. (28)

It is in this same vein that Ugbeyavwighrem (2008) cited in Kafewo (28) sees culture as: "the entire essence of human existence and refers to those intellectual and artistic integrity that have been cultivated and nurtured over time, which the people hold sacrosanct" These definitions are without prejudice to the definition earlier posited by Edward B. Taylor in his book *Primitive Culture* (1871) also cited in Kafewo (28) where he describes culture as: "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society"

The above definitions and especially the one by Taylor, underscore the intertwine relationship of society and culture. It becomes clear that it is within the content of the society that we have culture and subsequently festivals, which are observed annually or biannually as the product as a way of preserving the culture of the people. This is also credence to how the African man holds its culture in

exercising their belief that time may pass by but the tradition and cultural heritage of the people never pass by. Hence, Yoruba people believed in different spirit, which is celebrated at different period of time in the year. Some festivals are celebrated annually, while others may be biannually depending on the spirit the people believe in. It is in line with this that Soyinka (34) describes festivals as:

A cultural event within which diversified forms are found and forms which through their visual impact tend towards the creation of differing categories for a comparative description" a cluster of performances in any given community. It is a conscious performance, informed and controlled by aesthetic idea by the competitive desire also of "showing off" dramatic skill.

Beyond celebration, festival has its benefits. Therefore, looking at festival from the perspective of benefits, William (63) observes that:

Festivals bring about the suspension of ordinary time, a transformation of ordinary space, a formalizer of ordinary behavior. It is as if a community becomes a stage set and its people actors, with a battery of seldom-seen props and costumes. Meals become feast, and greetings, normally simple, become ceremonies.

Thus festival served different purposes either for the religious, ceremonial or ritual. According to Ogunba and Irele) Traditional festival is:

An indigenous cultural institution, a form of art nurtured on the African soil over the centuries and which has therefore, developed distinctive features and whose techniques are sometimes totally different from the borrowed form ... an integral, dynamic part of the culture of an unalienated African (4)

From the definition above, it is obvious that in Africa, traditional festival would continue to be pertinent as it has been in the past. Traditional festival over the years had developed and incorporated new things, which are clearly different from the western ways. Thus, in any traditional festival some of the following if not all of these are predominant; singing, chanting, drumming, dancing, mimicking, masking and masquerading, costuming, painting, tattooing, decoration, gesture, ritual properties, performances, audience banter, improvising etc.

Oyewo (22) expands this when he submits that: "a typical traditional festival, which is communal in nature, involves the entire populace. In a set of organization that runs through three phrases; the pre-performance phrase, performance phrase and the post-performance phrase". We support the earlier summation

because in any traditional festival, all the members of the community are involved directly or indirectly in any of the three phrases.

When we examine roles of major players in a festival celebration, the role of the king cannot be over emphasised, especially in traditional festivals. Kings who are referred to as custodian of tradition cannot be chunk aside. This is why no traditional festival can commence without the king performing all necessary rites. The success or failure of a traditional festival lies much on the king. Oduyoye puts it that traditional festival:

Is the re-creation of history (natural history, social history) aspect of festivals which makes the participation of the king and chief obligation in the drama of the festival. For as the descendants of the founder of the tribe, he acts the role of the founder at festival times.(153)

The above submission underscores the importance of the king during traditional festivals. The king is the most important personality and not the chiefs because he serves as the chief organizer of the festival.

In this paper, we examined the festival ingredients in *Awon Mass* wedding, particularly examining types of costumes and make-up their cultural implication. What fired our interest in on this study is partly because little or low state attention

has been accorded the festival in spite of its cultural richness and majorly to examine the types of costumes and make-up used by maidens at the festival with a view to underscoring the cultural importance and implication that are associated with them. Especially that some scholars hold the view that the festival can only become a tourist attraction if necessary attention is given to it by the government. This Yusuf (213) succinctly advances in his submission thus: "*Awon* mass wedding has potentials that can be developed to meet international standard; it can empower the youth and the people or community as well as attract the international and National Tourist."

In addition to the above, people of Shao see the festival as forum for reunion with friends and even families that they have lost contact with over a long period of time. This, from our finding is one of the reasons why elders in the community are determined to keep the culture of having the festival if not for anything but to keep the youths together. Adekunle (12) confirms this that:

The Shao *Awonga* Forum for the past three to four years has been involved in the effort to keep the cultural festival going annually. This revivalist role is what has sustained the festival and it is what has succeeded in bringing us together.

History of *Awon Shao* Mass Wedding Festival

History had it that *Omo Larele* (the son of *Larele*) was a hunter and each time he goes on hunting expedition, he cultivates the habit of going to a small stream to drink water. On one of such occasions, he met a strange fair in complexion, one breasted woman whose name was given as *Awon*. The woman was said to have appeared mysteriously to *Omo Larele* and requested to be taken to *Oba Olanibo*, the first *Ohoro* of *Shao*. A version of history has it that the mysterious woman spent nine days among the people while another said she spent 18 days. *Awon* was said to have held a closed door meeting with the *Ohoro* and his chiefs during her stay. On her way back, she was seen off by the *Ohoro* in company of *Omo Larele* and other chiefs through a path which was chosen by *Awon*.

In her farewell address, *Awon* disclosed to *Ohoro* and his chiefs that they would no longer see her but she would hand over a charm to them to establish their strong settlement. When this was done, they should rename the settlement after her as *Shao Awon*. In addition, she urged them to set aside a day, every year to commemorate her presence among the people and to ensure that all marriageable girls are given out in marriage on this day. That is, all maidens of the town are to be married in a mass wedding ceremony to their suitors on the same day. She then pledged to always bless the people with children if her injunctions were followed faithfully.

Immediately after her speech, she fell down and vanished only for water to gush out at the spot which later developed into a big river called *Awon* River. The spot where she fell down and from where water started to gush out is called *Awon Yale*. It is also called *Ojubo Awon* (*Awon Shrine*) where people gather to worship *Awon* goddess. Prior to her disappearance, she told the people that two rivers *Moro* and *Asa* would come and meet her at that spot and it happened as predicted.

Oral tradition has it that both *Moro* and *Asa* were *Awon's* husbands. Hereafter, the people of *Shao* decided to carve an effigy to represent *Awon* and her two husbands as it is seen in the picture in Figure 1 below:

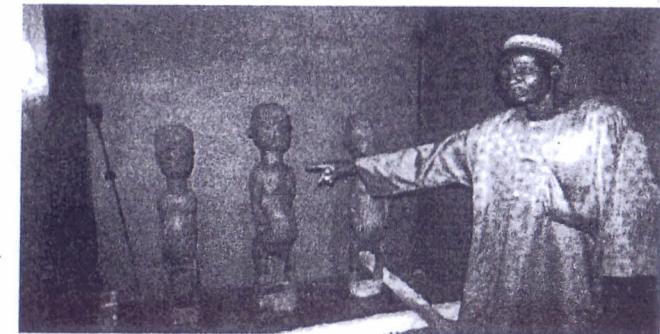


Figure 1: Baba Alawon explaining something about the effigies of *Awon* and her Husbands Picture: courtesy of Researchers

Interestingly, in figure 1 above, *Awon's* effigy in the middle was carved with two breasts. The reason why this was so could not be provided by Chief Alawon.

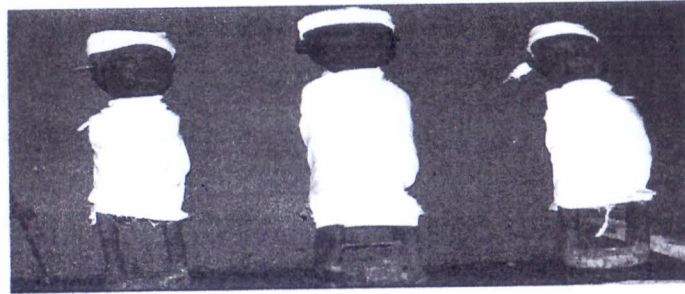


Figure 2: The Effigies of Awon and her husband after being costumed
Picture: courtesy of Researchers.

Process of Awon Mass Wedding Festival of Shao

The institution of marriage in *Shao* is one unique culture of the people and a thing of pride to the people. Giving out a daughter's hand in marriage in *Shao* is not the affair of the parent alone, but that of the whole community. Like every other traditional marriage in Yoruba land, *Awon Shao* mass wedding festival is divided into three phases; pre-performance, performance and post- performance phase.

Pre-Awon mass-wedding festival

The Pre-performance stage of *Awon Shao* mass wedding festival includes; courtship, introduction and engagement. To establish the institution of Marriage in *Shao* starts with courtship. This stage is observed for the couples to understand themselves before they finally get married. Although, courtship not part of the injunction left behind by *Awon*, but this was introduced so that the couple and their families can assess the would-be couple.

There are two ways through which a man finds a wife. These are *Ifoju sode* (to be on the lookout) the young suitor keeps his eyes open to search for a girl that might catch his fancy and *Ibasile*. *Ibasile* in the custom of *Shao* people is the situation whereby a girl is betrothed right from womb. This kind of choice is usually made when the father of the boy is interested in a particular family in the town and wants his son to marry from the family. It is to concretize and perpetuate an inter-family relationship. All that the man has to do is to watch out for a pregnant woman in other family.

In the case of the former, when the boy and the girl had agreed, both parents are involved. Thereafter, the boy's parents would pick an *Alarina* (intermediary), usually a woman. The *Alarina*'s responsibilities include a critical research into the history of the family line of the girl to know whether there is any particular hereditary disease along the family line. Once the family has been cleared of any negative tendency, a formal betrothal is arranged.

Some elderly family members are sent from the groom's house to the would-be bride's house. This meeting usually is between the two parents alone. The first thing that transpires between the two families is the custom of *Ikobi*, (the presentation of *kolanut* and money), which stand as a form of application to the bride's family. If the *kolanut* is accepted, it means the bride's parents have agreed to give out their daughter out in marriage to the would-be groom's family.

Thus, from that point in time, everybody in the girl's family recognized the boy as a son-in-law. The formal introduction and engagement is followed by payment of dowry, which is called *Owo ori*, (payment of dowry) is an integral part of marriage custom of *Shao* people.

However, after the introduction, engagement and payment of all necessary dowries, the bride and the groom look forward to their wedding day. However, they are not allowed to meet sexually until the wedding day. When the wedding day is approaching, the bridegroom will advance the bride some money to procure all necessary things in preparation for the wedding. Also, firewood is cut by the bridegrooms who are usually accompanied by their friends and relations to do the job. The firewood is used for cooking during the Awon Mass wedding ceremony. Thereafter, Baba *Alawon* will make it known to all villagers. The groom will also inform the villagers as the town prepares for the forthcoming *Awon Mass Wedding* festival.

Awon Mass Wedding Festival

The Mass wedding, which comes up either in late October or early November each year, marks the climax of the events. In those days, the day of the festival is usually chosen after the oracle has been consulted but today, government determines the day. At the ceremony eighty to hundred girls of marriageable age are given out in marriage during the Awon mass wedding festival on the same day.

However, all brides and people of the village are expected to meet at Baba *Alawon*'s compound, as early as possible in the morning, before the festival begins. There, they served with *Egbo* (a delicacy made from corn) and palm wine. After eating, they will all walk to *Awon* River, where the bride's virginity would be confirmed.

Traditionally, a mat is spread on the river, each bride is to stand on the mat, if the bride is still a virgin, she would not sink but if otherwise, she would sink. After this, all types of food are thrown into the river and Baba *Alawon* would perform other necessary rite. Villagers and visitors who are interested are asked to drink from the river water and also take home because they believe that water from the river on the day of the ceremony can cure all kinds of diseases and solves any type of problem. Thereafter everybody in the community gathers at the wedding village square where all kinds of other programs are done such as *Ekun iyawo* (chanting of family cognomen by brides) as contained in the picture in figure 4 below:



Figure 4: A bride chanting her family cognomen (*Ekun iyawo*).
Picture: Courtesy of Researchers)

Each bride will come out and sing the cognomen of her family. She will also display her family occupation. During the festival, different types of costumes are used by entertainers but the brides are the only one that are allowed to use *Aso-oke* of any type during the ceremony as contained in the picture in figure 4 while Baba *Alawon*, *Iyalode*, (Head of women) Priests and *Odua* (the priesthood caucus) are clad in white costume. The brides must make use of umbrella because it is believed that it must rain during or after the festival.



Figure 4: One of the researchers and Awon brides during the 2015 Awon mass wedding festival at Shao. Picture courtesy of the Researchers

In every festival performance, there are dramatis personae. In the case of *Awon* mass-wedding festival of Shao, the *Ohor* of Shao, *Alawon* and *Chief/boo* (the chief in charge of sacrifice) are the major officiating personnel. The *Ohor* and others are escorted to the venue by their relations and followers, dancing and singing while the villagers receive them.

Post – *Awon* Mass- Wedding Festival

Preceding the village square ceremony is the return of the bride to her parents' house. Later in the evening, when all visitors must have gone, the groom's family will go to the bride house dancing and singing the song produced below in front of the bride's house:

E ba wa gbe iyawo wa, Anabi la fi beyin o.

Omi nbe lagbala wa, iyawo lodo mo o.

Translation

Release our wife to us, we beg you in the name of God.

We have plenty water in our backyard our wife will not go to the stream to fetch water

After the song, they will go back home, to go and wait patiently for their in-laws to bring their wife. Few minutes later, a man and a woman will follow the bride to her in-laws house, where she is received by her senior wife. The senior wife will then wash the new bride's legs with water before she is allowed to enter her husband's house.

Traditionally, the new bride used to wear the eldest wife's cloth for seven days. This is done to foster unity between them. Also, the *Alarina* (intermediary) waits to collect the white cloth with blood stain after the first conjugal meeting of the couple to show that the wife was met as a virgin. The white stained cloth would be handed to the bride's family. Subsequently, the families would then kill a goat and celebrate. However, if the otherwise happened, the bride

would be embarrassed alongside her families, which is the common practice in Yoruba land. This white stained cloth would then be kept by the bride's mother, who would use the cloth as encouragement object to young girls in her care. However, this has changed over time. Nobody pays any special attention virginity, thereby making the services of an *Alarina* irrelevant. Also, brides who in those days must wear the eldest wife in compound's cloth for seven days no longer do so due to civilization. It is to be noted that almost all these norms had changed but washing of the brides legs remain.

Costume and make-up used in Awon Mass Wedding Festival of Shao

During the Awon Mass wedding Festival of Shao, one kind of costume is common and that is Aso-oke. Aso-oke is made from cotton (gotten from one of the plants that Awon, the one breasted woman bequeathed on the people of Shao) and dyed into any colour the bride choses. The dye is also gotten from *Elu* plant, another plant that Awon goddess said would grow in large commercial use for the use of Shao people. Elu plant and its plantation are in the pictures in figure 5(a) and (b) below:



Figure 5(a): *Elu*, plants from which dye is extracted for dying Aso-oke, the Awon mass wedding festival maidens' costume.

Picture courtesy of the researchers.



Figure 5(b) *Elu* plantation in Shao shown to the researchers by a Shao farmer. Picture courtesy of the Researchers

However, in recent times, various types of *Aso-oke* are used by *awon* brides that range from *Alari*, *Sanyan* to *Shine-shine*. Unlike it was in the past, no special attention is paid to costume again because people of Shao no longer plant cotton and *Elu* from which they weave Aso-oke and the dye use in dying the Aso-Oke. It is to be noted that the Priestess, *Iyalode* and other personality that officiate during the festival wear white costume because of their ceremonial roles and because *Awon* goddess is associated with purity, which the white costume depicts.

Cultural Implications of Costume and Make-up in Awon Mass-Wedding Festival

Acquisition of costume used by brides during *Awon* mass wedding festival is the sole responsibility of the bride's mother assisted by the bride. However, one week to the wedding day, each couple is expected to buy a suede (*aran*) material, which would be worn

alongside any type of cloth that would be worn by the couples. Each couple is allowed the choice of any color of their choice of the material. This is done purposely to identify them as one of the next *Awon* couple. *Aso-oke* is the commonly used costume, which are mainly *Etu*.

Etu is one of the Yoruba traditional attires used for all kind of ceremonies. This is the type of *Aso -oke* that is commonly used during the *Awon* mass wedding festival because it is produced within the community with the active participation of the bride. Although, other types of *Aso-oke* gotten from another community are also used by the brides but, they are least patronised because they are considered as very expensive. Another intriguing thing is that for the first seven days in their husband's house, brides are not allowed to wear their personal cloth. They wear their senior's wife's cloth to foster unity and love between them.

Shao people, like many other ethnic groups in Yoruba land, also use make-up elements such as *Osun* (a red powder substance gotten from red stone) and *Laali*. *Osun* and *laali* are the major types of make-up used by the brides for identification. They also enhance their beauty. Both the brides and the grooms apply *Osun* all over their body a week before the festival for villagers and visitors to recognise them as *Awon* brides and grooms (*Awon* couples). *Osun* is said to be medicinal potent in curing all kinds of skin diseases. It was also revealed that *Osun* has spiritual powers especially when

mixed with other ingredients like *Iye Agbe*, (Agbe bird's feather) *Iye aluko*, (aluko bird's feather) *Iko Odidere* (parrot's feather) and some other portions, it is used to make love charm for the maidens, so that they would be loved anyone that come across them.

In the case of *Laali* is another make-up applied on *awon* brides. This is applied on the hands and the legs a night before the wedding festival. A piece of nylon is used to cover the *laali* after applying it on the body. It is then washed away the next morning. This is applied as much as they want the hand and the legs to be dark. To a lay man, *Laali* might just be a way of enhancing woman's beauty, but to the Shao people, *Laali* is used for so many other things, which must be done before the brides pack to her husband's house. According to the oral tradition however, as much as the *Laali* is useful, it is dangerous for men if the substance touches a man's manhood as it can make a man impotent. This is the major reason why nylon is used to cover the surface when *Laali* is applied on a woman.

In the Shao tradition, *Laali* enables one to detect pregnancy in a woman. After three months of marriage the elderly women in the house will start to observe the new bride for pregnancy through her legs on which *Laali* is applied. It is the belief that *Laali* remains for a particular time on the bride before it can fade away but if it fades before that time, it means there is a visitor in the bride's body (meaning she is pregnant). The legs will start to peel, giving the indication that the bride is pregnant. In addition to that it is also

applied on the brides to ward off evil as well as for spiritual purposes, when mixed with other traditional substances that we mentioned earlier in this paper. We found that they also use Laali for protection against any type of charm that the bride may accidentally steps on (Atepa). It is also used stop miscarriage.

Findings

Our findings reveal that in the past *Shao* people were economically viable because the community grows its own cotton from which Aso-oke is waved. The *Elu* plantation is also a veritable source of income for the people of Shao because each family grows its own *Elu* plantation. It is from the plant that the dye used for dying Aso-oke is gotten. Sadly, that was a thing of the past now as Shao people no longer plant cotton nor keep *Elu* plantation, which explains the reason why the costume that are used in recent time are sourced from elsewhere.

Our findings also reveal that *Awon* brides of this period are no longer the virgin maidens that they used to be rather, they are young ladies, married with kids who are picked randomly from various compounds within the community just to keep the tradition of *Awon*. This is so because of the influence of civilization, which turns most maiden urban dwellers in search of greener pastures.

It was also found that till today, *Shao* people do not just use make-up elements like *Osun* and *Laali* for beautification of the brides; they

still use the *Laali* make-up as pregnancy detector in new brides. In addition to that it is also applied on the brides to ward off evil as well as for spiritual purposes, when mixed with other elements that we mentioned earlier in this paper. We found that they also use *Laali* for protection against any type of charm the bride may accidentally steps on (Atepa). It is also used stop miscarriage. It is also used to make *eyonu*, a charm for drawing affection for the new bride. It was also revealed that when *Laali* touches a man's manhood, it can make the man impotent which explains why bride covered the areas where *Laali* was applied to prevent impotency in their men.

Our research also revealed that maiden do not want to be married in a mass wedding any longer, rather, they want an individual marriages in Churches and Mosques in Shao or elsewhere. The refusal of *Shao* maidens to participate in the festival was the reason why young ladies are picked randomly in the community to preserve the tradition and the culture of *Awon* festival.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that *Shao* people have by allowing modernity to affect the *Awon* Mass Wedding Festival, neglected a great cultural identity and tradition that over the years has distinguished them from their neighboring community. This undoubtedly is the reason why the community's economic standard has been affected.

However, it is still gratifying to note that Shao people in spite of Christianity and Islamic religions, they still hold sacred the tradition of Awon Mass Wedding Festival

In view of the fact that Awon Mass Wedding Festival is a culturally rich tradition of the Shao people. We recommend that the festival should be moved to the next level rather than allow it to be moribund. It should be elevated to the level of annual event that will attract international attention. Nigeria and Kwara State have not paid the desired attention to the Ministry of Tourism. *Awon* shrine in particular, especially the spot where water comes out from can have construction of a resort centre that will make the spot a tourist attraction visiting point.

The organizers should also rejuvenate the aspect of costumes making. Now that Government is encouraging that Nigerians should go back to the farm. Through this Shao's wealth through cotton and Elu plantation will come alive again and perhaps encourage those who have ran to the cities in search of greener pastures to return to base.

Farming, which was the major occupation of the people, should be rejuvenated, so that the major plants(cotton and *elu*) that bring economic benefit, recognition and identity to the community can be revived. Through this the making of *Aso-oke*, the traditional African costume and the art of dying can be brought back alive in

Shao. We also encourage the two families (Ile Alawon and Ile Iboo) who are directly involved in the festival to see the festival as their traditional heritage that must not be allowed to die even in the competitive face of modernity.

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