

## **Nollywood as a Medium for Propagating Peace and Security in Nigeria: A Cultural Perspective**

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**Abstract:** *The contemporary Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, gained acceptance since its inception in 1992 and has become a veritable medium for addressing burning issues in the society. Issues like crime, kidnapping, ritual murder, political thuggery, sectarian crises, among others, have formed the thematic preoccupation of many a production. These are societal ills that negate the culture of Nigeria and batter the country's image before the international community, to the extent that image laundering becomes imperative. The issue of violence and insecurity in Nigeria has continued to generate palpable fear and there is the urgent need to restore peace and stability. Given its advantage in addressing sensitive issues, film will serve as a strategic medium to reach the generality of Nigerians. The fact remains that the prevalent trend of Nollywood producers has been following events as they happen, as reflected in the titles of the films that are released. Unfortunately, while they showcase Nigerian culture, they do that for commercial gains. Films like, **Living in Bondage, Issakaba, Baka Boys, Burial Business, Church Business, The Senator, Domitilla, Explosion, The Stubborn Grasshopper, Orija Shrine**, just to mention a few, were attempts to focus on such burning issues in Nigeria. This study examines Nollywood as a medium for propagating peace and security in Nigeria from a cultural dimension, arguing that the projection of our traditional ways of life will go a long way in sustaining national stability. It is recommended that government should intervene to provide the enabling business climate for Nollywood, so that stakeholders will invariably give serious attention to the propagation of peace and national security through their productions.*

**Key words:** *Nollywood, Medium, Propagating, Peace, Security, Cultural, and Perspective*

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### **I. Introduction**

It is, perhaps, imperative to come to terms with what we are going to talk about in this paper. I do not need to remind us that peace and security are interwoven and that there cannot be security without peace and vice-versa. Security itself can be viewed from different dimensions: food security, financial security, social security, personal security, national security, and so on. For the purpose of this presentation, it will suffice to confine ourselves to the domain of national or internal security in Nigeria.

Peace is an intangible phenomenon that suggests tranquillity, calm and serenity. It refers to a stable system of governance guided by principles and constitutional provisions, where everyone pledges allegiance to a central government and the laws are respected. Peace and security connote internal and national freedom, not feeling gagged or confined internally. It could also mean having freedom of movement, association, speech, choice, and so on. A polity can appear calm and peaceful; but then, it could also be a grave-yard peace, especially, where the people are forced to be submissive, under duress. Ikara buttresses this point when he states that:

ordinarily, peace should connote non-violence, but as we have just seen historically it is much more than that since latent hostility and animosity may be subdued out of fear of brutal force (16).

### **Culture, Peace, Security and National Stability in Nigeria**

Culture, as a complex whole, which includes language, foods, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs, and other distinguishing ways of life acquired by a people in given societies to adapt to their environment, is a social phenomenon that is best understood in the context of groups or individuals. Within the Nigerian context, however, cultural groups are more or less co-terminus with ethnic groups. By ethnic groups, I mean categories of people characterised by cultural criteria of symbols, which include language, value system and normative behaviour, whose members largely inhabit a specific part of a country's geographical area. With well over **350** ethnic groups, and about **510** indigenous languages, Nigeria can be appropriately described as a social milieu of rich cultural diversity. Firstly, each ethnic group can be identified to occupy a distinct geographical part of the country. Secondly, the respective ethnic groups employ their specific cultural traits and practices as

distinguishing features from other ethnic groups. Thirdly, despite their cultural specifics and claims to exclusivities, each ethnic group is an integral part of the larger Nigerian society. Fourthly, each ethnic group acts as an interest group that aggregates and advances the interest(s) of its members, a tendency that has been given greater emphasis under our nascent democracy. Lastly, despite the cultural differences that exist among the respective ethnic groups, there is also the inescapable fact that members of various ethno-cultural groups live and own property outside their cultural areas.

In *From Boroism to Ethnic Nationalism and Militancy in the Nigeria Delta*, I had taken a critical look at the problem of ethnic nationalism and militancy. Put clearly, the use of vigilante groups, which was purely for personal (or group) security, was given ethnic colouration due to exigencies in the Nigerian political arena. For example, the Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) became a force to reckon with in the socio-political landscape of Western Nigeria. The Arewa People's Congress and several *Hisbah* Groups had become dominant in the northern part of the country. The Onitsha Market Amalgamated Traders' Association (OMATA), the Bakassi Boys, and the Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), surfaced among the Igbo speaking states of Eastern Nigeria and had influenced the ideological inclination of the people to a large extent.

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which was the brainchild of the late environmental activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, blazed the trail in the Niger Delta. As it was to be expected, the heartless execution of Saro-Wiwa on 10<sup>th</sup> November, 1995, precipitated a chain of reactions that has reverberated to the present day. The Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality of the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC), and the Supreme Egbesu Assembly (SEA), popularly known as the Egbesu Boys, are some of the youth groups that were formed to protect the communal interests of the Ijaws.

Over the years, the country has experienced seemingly intractable security challenges, occasioned by several communal, ethnic, religious and post-elections violence, with devastating effects on the polity. After years of sporadic militant activities, pipeline vandalism, hostage-taking and kidnapping, mostly in the Niger Delta region that seriously affected the nation's oil revenue, the country has been currently battling with kidnappings and ritual killings in the Eastern part of the country and atrocious bombings of the Boko Haram religious sect, in the Northern part. For example, the audacious activities of the Boko Haram sect have led to wanton destruction of lives and properties and created an atmosphere of palpable fear, especially, in the northern part of Nigeria, to the extent that there are insinuations that the bombings are premeditated attempts to make the country ungovernable, and eventually lead to its disintegration. But then, more curious is the fact that while their grouse appeared earlier to have been against Christians, the realisation now is that even Muslims are not being spared.

Given the above background, a constant theme that has preoccupied successive administrations, since Nigeria's independence, has been the quest for the integration of the diverse ethno-cultural groups in the country and the evolution of a truly united Nigeria. This search for greater unity still remains a cardinal national quest. This is still the case under the present democratic dispensation, which has witnessed calls by various ethnic groups to the effect that they have been marginalised, as exemplified by the recent declaration of sovereignty by the Ogoni and the Bakassi people, all in the South-South geo-political zone of the country. These tendencies are not only deleterious to the national integration project; they also detract from the resolve, for Nigeria to remain one united, indivisible nation. Thus, the imperative of peace and security in engendering national stability and sustainable development in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised.

This explains why, in fulfilment of its mandate of re-orientating the citizenry, the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), a Parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, organised a two-day National Conference, on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2012, with the theme, "Culture, Peace and National Security: The Role of Traditional Rulers and Local Government Chairmen." The conference aimed at taking a holistic look at the current peace and security challenges and sensitising participants to their roles in resolving conflicts and ensuring peace in their domains. It was more or less, a wake-up call to our elders and stakeholders, for as the proverb goes, "what an elder sees sitting, the youth cannot see standing."

### **Security Reports in the Media**

There is no doubt that the media has been awash with unsettling reports everyday on security breaches in the country. It is pertinent to examine the early reports of security breaches, especially between 2012 and 2014, when everything came to a head with the kidnap of over 200 secondary school students in Chibok, Borno State. The editor of *Daily Sun*, Mr. Steve Nwosu, was attacked and shot on the right side of the head by gunmen, and robbed of the sum of ₦250,000.00. It was indeed a close shave with death as it happened when he just came out from a bank in FESTAC town, Lagos, where he had collected some money and entered a traffic hold up at Agboju area of Lagos (Omegoh 6).

In the past, Niger Delta militants used kidnapping and hostage taking as a means to press home their demands. But the approach has gradually turned into a very lucrative business venture in the eastern part of the

country. For instance, gunmen, in a commando style, kidnapped the traditional ruler of Ukpo, Dunukofia Council Area, Anambra State, Igwe Robert Eze, who happens to be the younger brother of an oil magnate, Prince Arthur Eze. The perpetrators laid siege in a Catholic Church in Ukpo, and kidnapped the monarch, shooting sporadically into the air to scare people away (Uzor 11). While the monarch was released, unharmed, and alive to narrate his ordeal, the case of Chief John Nzewi, a former Ohanaeze Ndigbo and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chieftain in Ihiala, Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State, was different. He was kidnapped during a senatorial re-run election in Anambra South and later killed after his abductors had collected a ₦30million naira ransom (Onuorah 7). Also, an Italian and a Briton kidnapped in May 2012 in Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State, were killed by their captors during a joint raid by United Kingdom and Nigerian security personnel in an operation to free them from a location in Sokoto. The victims, Mr. Mcmanus and Mr. Iamolinar, were working with the B. Stabilini Construction Company, building the Kebbi State branch of Central Bank of Nigeria, when they were kidnapped (Mudashir 1, 5).

In another development, some hoodlums disrupted the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lecture of the death of former Ondo State Governor, Chief Adebayo Adefarati, brandishing dangerous weapons and using them freely on people, injuring many and vandalising participant's cars (Ojo 57). Needless to say this is a usual occurrence during electioneering campaigns and elections into political offices. The acts of violence have even crept into elections of Community Development Councils (CDC), youth groups, and many others, all for personal or selfish gains. In fact, some unscrupulous politicians contract innocent youths to fight their personal wars, and after having profited therein, they callously abandon such young men to their fate. Such youths use the guns procured for them by their erstwhile principals to carry out nefarious activities.

The country has also been inundated with incessant bomb blasts and indiscriminate shooting by armed bandits that disturb the peace. For instance, it was reported that unknown gunmen in three villages, in Kufara community in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State, reportedly killed no fewer than 10 people in March 2012, when gunmen went to the home of one Pastor Innocent Chukwuemeka Mari of Assemblies of God Church in Kufara, killing him and setting his church on fire (Ebije 10). The killing of 15 worshippers by gunmen, who stormed Deeper Life Church in Okene, Kogi State (Bashir 1), was a sad reminder of the 2011 Christmas Day Madala, Niger State bombing that claimed several lives. Other assaults on the Christian community have drawn reprisal attacks or attempted attacks on mosques, which have made Friday and Sunday worships palpitating. The unfortunate thing about this development is that just as oil production plummeted in the face of militancy in the Niger Delta, business activities have come to a standstill in many parts of the north. The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) said this much when it identified insecurity as a factor militating against distribution of goods to the north, saying that it had become a major challenge for investors (Agboola 17).

At this junction, it is necessary to highlight a few attacks by the Boko Haram Islamic sect that have had devastating effects on the nation. First, on Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2012, five people were killed and many others sustained various degrees of injuries as, Boko Haram, in coordinated attacks, bombed *ThisDay* newspaper office in Abuja, killing two and *The Sun* newspaper office in Kaduna, where three people lost their lives (Emewu 5, 8). Second, gunmen suspected to be Boko Haram members, invaded Zajeri industrial area of Maiduguri, Borno State, and shot two Indians and injured three others, before they fled in an unmarked vehicle, chanting "Allahu Akbar" (God is great) (Musa 1). Third, gunmen suspected to be Boko Haram, on revenge mission in Maiduguri, Borno State, shot dead Alhaji Abdullahi Bello, father of the detained sect's spokesman, Abu Darda (aka Abu Qaqa) (Ola 5). Fourth, a day after the Maiduguri Monday Market was attacked and a trader killed with many others sustaining injuries, suspected gunmen again torched a primary and secondary school in the Gambouru Ward in Maiduguri (Ndjavara 8). Fifth, the family home of the former Vice-President of Nigeria, Namadi Sambo, located in Tudun Wada, Zaria, Kaduna State, was attacked by unknown gunmen, who killed a cobbler and injured two policemen. This daring attack was happening at a time bombs exploded simultaneously in two places in Sokoto (Akowe 1).

Surprisingly, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the attacks on the former Vice-President's house and in Bauchi, Maiduguri and Damaturu, saying the struggle was targeted at government functionaries, security agents, Christians, and those assisting security agents to arrest them. The sect insisted that the bottom line of their struggle was to set the Muslims free from enslavement saying, "we only kill unbelievers" (Ali 1). More worrisome was the fact that the Boko Haram sect dared President Goodluck Jonathan that he cannot carry-out his threat to route them out in three months as they boasted that Nigerian security forces cannot contain them (Kandi 1-2). They even gave a caveat: For peace to return to Nigeria, President Jonathan must convert to Islam, a call the Presidency termed laughable.

In the light of the foregoing, US Department of State Country Reports on Terrorism revealed that Boko Haram attacks in the country rose from 31 in 2010 to 136 in 2011, and that 509 lives were lost. According to the report, Africa experienced 978 terrorist attacks with Nigeria alone accounting for about 20%, which was attributed to the aggressive attack tempo of Boko Haram (Yishau 2; Adeyemi 54).

While much of government attention on security issues has been on militancy (before now) and Boko Haram (currently), the fact is that ritual killing are on a very high scale in the country. Jerry Adesewo, Director of Arojah Royal Theatre, Abuja-FCT, had a close shave with death. Narrating his blood-chilling encounter with ritualists, Adesewo said his ordeal started on Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2012, after he had collected money from the bank to pay the artists, who had taken part in the “Festival of Barclays Ayakoroma Plays (FESTIBAP),” organised by his theatre company, and entered the front seat of a cab from Federal Secretariat to Wuse Zone 3, Abuja, for a cast party. It was the beginning of his journey to a den of ritualists, where about 11 innocent citizens were slaughtered. He narrated:

The driver told me that he will put on the AC for me to enjoy, though I did not agree to pay the N500 he had bargained (for). The next I knew was finding myself in a place, where I was chained, both hands and legs, mouth gagged and eyes blindfolded.... They collected all the money I had, ₦840,000.00, and still demanded that if my wife wanted to see me, alive, she must pay one million naira into my bank account so that they will use my ATM card to withdraw. In the first night, they took four of us out to kill, but the leader recognized me and said I should be taken back inside, so that I can enjoy the money they collected from me. As they brought more people to the place, they took them to “the blade” to kill them. Each time they took people to kill, I was spared, saying I should stay alive to still enjoy my money a little. Incidentally, I had just finished a 7-day fasting. Also, I was in constant prayers since they held me.... They served us food, but at a point, I refused to eat their food. I told the lady that was serving the food that there was no point eating the food as they will eventually kill me (Nnenyelike 1).

According Adesewo, only God knows how he was delivered after spending four nights in the ritualists den, confined to a spot, stating that he never stopped praying as the ritualists kept postponing his being sent to “the blade,” as they (the ritualists) called the ritual killing for an “Alhaji,” who used to come around midnight to collect the body parts.

From the above scenario, it is clear that the get-rich-quick syndrome has made many people to be involved in ritual killings. Thus, well-meaning Nigerians are happy when such evil persons are caught. For example, the Ogun State Police command uncovered a shrine in Ewualase village, Ogijo, near the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation depot in Shagamu Local Government Area, which was patronised by ritualists and fraudsters, according to the Police Commissioner, Ikemefunna Okoye (Nwaokolo 5). This is happening at a time officers and men of the Nigeria Police have been at the receiving end, as they have been the targets, reminiscent of the reign of Lawrence Anini (aka De Law), in Edo State, some years back. For example, two police officers were reportedly killed in Askira, a small community, south of Borno State, when gunmen suspected to be members of Boko Haram attacked a bank and police station. Resident said they ran into their homes for safety throughout the two hours that the attack lasted (Ola 7).

At this juncture, one could ask: What can we do when the house of a sitting Vice President, the convoy of a sitting Deputy Governor, and an Emir, who is the symbol of traditional authority, Vice Chancellors, and High Court Judges, among other prominent personalities in the society, are not spared? Which way forward? What is the fate of the common man when Legislators, Honourable Ministers, and even some Executive Governors, cannot move confidently in their home states?

### **Background on Nollywood**

There is no arguing the fact that Nollywood has come to define the totality of activities taking place in the Nigerian film industry, be it in English, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Edo, Itsekiri, Ijaw, or any of the many other Nigerian languages. It can be said that Nollywood had its cradle in pre- and post-independent Nigeria, with the theatrical (stage) and cinematic (35mm) efforts of the likes of Chief Hubert Ogunde, Chief Ifoghale Amata, Baba Sala, Ade Love, and Eddie Ugbomah, among others. The 1990s ushered the video craze, with *Living in Bondage* (1992), an Igbo language film, shot in VHS format, produced by Kenneth Nnebue of NEK Video Links and directed by Chris Obi-Rapu. Though there were some Yoruba language video films shot and released into the market in VHS format before then, *Living in Bondage* was the first commercial success, in terms of mass appeal, and it opened the eyes of practitioners and investors to the viability of film production as a business venture in Nigeria. These individual efforts, at different locations and times, have laid a solid foundation for the Nigerian film industry, popularly called, Nollywood. According to Arisi, One of the latest craze in Nigeria’s social and economic life is the invasion of our homes by home video, a form of social entertainment with its attendant educational effects (1).

Nollywood is like a raging fire in the harmattan, capturing the hearts of Nigerians with such fast speed, like never before. According to a survey conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, Nollywood has grown to be the second largest film industry in the world, behind Bollywood, overtaking Hollywood. In 2011 alone, around 2,000 movies were made in Nigeria, which translates to a staggering 40 films each week. Nollywood films, unlike Hollywood blockbusters,

are produced on low budgets, with an average production taking just about 10 days and costing between ₦5million and ₦10million.

Hala Gorani and Jeff Koinange, former CNN correspondent in Nigeria, put the value of the Nigerian film industry at \$250 million. Nollywood films are increasingly popular in Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and, more recently, in North America. Because of its increased popularity, Nollywood has had the former CNN and BBC presenter/reporter wrap up the shooting of his first movie, *Streets of Calabar*, which, he says, will raise the bar of filmmaking in Nigeria. Thus, from its humble beginning, Nollywood has grown to become a large oak tree, with teeming local and international audience. In other words, it has since metamorphosed into a global brand, which could be used by government as a platform for propagating peace and stability.

### **The Imperative of Culture in Sustaining Peace**

Culture is globally recognised as the most significant element that fosters the process of development and modernisation. Culture equips a people with the appropriate moral values and the right perspective for comprehending their history and environment. It is an embellisher, the cement, fabric and clothing of the society and the totality of way of life. An understanding of the dialectical relationship between culture, peace and national security is therefore important in addressing the developmental needs of society.

Changes in society, and its development chances, are predicated on fundamental transformation of the social and cultural orientation of the people. The primacy of culture in development was given global recognition by UNESCO through the launching of the World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997). One of the objectives of the WDCD was the acknowledgement of the cultural dimension of development. UNESCO observed that no nation can afford to neglect culture in its development process irrespective of its economic growth or its political and economic advancement.

The current crises in our socio-political and economic life have been attributed to the cultural disorientation of the citizenry. There is pervasive anarchy in the way people now think and behave. In place of the cherished cultural values of fair-play, kindness, patriotism and communal living, our citizens have imbibed negative practices of dishonesty, stealing, disrespect for elders and criminal acts. Instead of diligence in labour, most people take the easy way out to acquire wealth and fame. As it has been noted earlier, the get-rich-quick syndrome has become the order of the day. This tendency is clearly at variance with the society in which our parents lived. They lived peacefully in their village huts, which had no doors. They slept with both eyes closed, not afraid that some miscreants will invade their privacy and probably cart away their belongings. Yam barns were built at the backyards; there were no fears of thieves visiting such barns. Those who had questionable traits were known, and were promptly called to order, when there were incidents. Indeed, there was social order.

Unfortunately, the spate of insecurity and violent crimes continue to rise despite the presence of the Nigeria Police and military personnel. What we have today is near complete erosion of our cherished cultural values, which has created a state of mutual distrust among the various ethnic nationalities and religious groups. This has been exploited by selfish politicians and other gullible groups at the detriment of national peace and security. It has lent credence to the calls for a holistic approach in addressing the peace and security challenges confronting us. An integral part of this advocacy is the acknowledgement of the cultural dimension in the quest for sustainable peace and security in Nigeria.

Elsewhere, I have cited the example of Japan, where their cultural orientation came to the fore in the natural disaster that devastated the country. They did not openly bemoan their plight; there were no donations from donor agencies; there were no chaotic situations in gas stations or supermarkets; there were no lootings, and the likes. They maintained law and order, due largely because of the culture they had imbibed (Ayakoroma, *Arts...* 17-18). Indeed, culture differentiates and creates uniqueness. Back home, the observation that different tribes in Nigeria have their areas of strategic advantage, is not far-fetched. For example, the Igbo are renowned for their business acumen; the Yoruba are more academically-oriented; and the Hausa have strong political inclinations, could be said to be all rooted in the phenomenon of culture.

### **Nollywood as a Medium for Propagating Peace and Stability**

A video film is not produced in a vacuum. It tells a story of a personality, a society or an environment. Such a story, whether real or fiction, is aimed at either taking corrective measures on cultural, religious, social, political, or economic phenomena, promote given core values, or purely for leisure and entertainment. Thus, Nollywood is not alienated from its socio-political and cultural environment, as it portrays phenomena such as myths, beliefs and human practices, which are in the domain of culture. According to Ayakoroma, “video films act as a very potent socialization medium that shapes ideas, styles, attitudes, and cultures of nations, in the sense that it is a giant mirror which reflects the values and ideals of a given society” (Ayakoroma, “Nigerian Video Films” 3). Put succinctly, Nollywood is an avenue for cultural promotion because movies mirror the society that creates them.

Paradoxically, Nollywood, as a cultural instrument, has been under-utilised. This is in the sense that it has not been appropriately used in addressing the country's security challenges. More emphasis has been on the "hard-power" commando-style, which requires militarisation and prompt deployment of troops to hot spots. While not condemning this methodology, it is my thinking that the "soft power" approach needs to compliment the hard-power strategy. Even on the international scale, emphasis is now shifting to the use of cultural diplomacy to promote national interests and international co-operation.

Okunmalenide observes, rightly, that a nation's movie industry serves as one of the artistic avenues to showcase her culture and that Nollywood is like a mirror reflecting existing cultures in Nigeria. To him, culture is multi-dimensional, including established systems in social orders, like corporate, social, political, legal, religious and spiritual ways of life. However, his grouse is that Nollywood has persistently misrepresented the legal system particularly in areas of "arrests" in criminal procedures, prior to the course of evidence in trial. His advice to producers, scriptwriters and actors, is for them to subject their works for assessment by those familiar with such areas of focus, like legal practitioners.

Mbah also cites the undue emphasis on ethnic differences, instead of unity, which has perverted the minds of the people and made them turn against each other, as evidenced in the Jos killings. He also condemns the sponsorship of insurgency groups by faceless politicians, who have profited greatly from this disintegration campaign. The question then is: How can Nollywood arrest these conflicts and institutionalise the culture of peace in Nigeria? Former US Ambassador to Nigeria, Terrence McCulley, at the closing ceremony of a 10-day film directing workshop for movie makers, held in Lagos, urged Nigerian filmmakers to use movies as a means of promoting the unity of the country (Famutimi 73).

Nollywood has in the past tried to address these peace and security challenges but the cultural dimensions has not been fully harnessed. The prominent role of culture in films is aptly described by Hyginus Ekwuazi, when he states that films are made from a conditional imagination and for a conditional market; and that the conditioning index is culture. He argues that the producer, the director and audience all relate to the film as the proverbial "Blindness of Hindustan to the Elephant" and that the blindness stems from cultural reality. Ekwuazi opines that the prism through which reality is apprehended is culture: cultural biases and prejudices and that every film is a cultural encyclopaedia (79-81).

Conteh-Morgan postulates that human sanity is a situation free of injury or threats to an individual's, group's or community's well-being, including freedom from threats and or direct attacks on physical and psychological integrity (72). He also identifies three sources of human security: personal sources – harmful actions directed against people or property with visible consequences (banditry, lootings and strife, and so on); Institutional sources – harmful actions and neglect of institutions that undermine human rights and human security (oppression, corruption, torture, and so on); and structural and cultural sources – harmful actions and results linked to the new modes of thinking and cognition in the society at large, globalisation which has led to national and local disintegration in some case (69-71).

### **Portrayal of Security Issues in Nollywood**

At this juncture, it is necessary to identify a few films that focus on the security situation in the country.

- a) *X-Gang* (Thompson, 2005) deals with some condemned criminals that get out of jail to continue their evil deeds, robbing banks and causing panic in the country.
- b) *New Jerusalem* (Onyeabor, 2005), on the other hand, is a story of an armed gang run by a woman (played by Patience Uzokwor) that specialise in robbing banks and prominent citizens of the country.
- c) *State of Emergency* (Benson/Thompson, 2000/2002), a terrorist gang holds some ministers hostage in a conference, asking the government to do their biddings before they could all be released.
- d) *Lost Kingdom* (Okoh, 1999) tells the story of a young man, who makes his money through armed robbery, becomes a philanthropist, and is later crowned as the Igwe, only to unleash terror on the people.
- e) *Issakaba* (Imasuen, 1999), a movie that went up to four parts, is based on the atrocious activities of the Bakassi Boys that terrorised the eastern part of the country in the late 90s. In order to contain the spate of armed robberies in the community, well-meaning persons decide to form a group to counter the activities of the robbers. They started by cutting off the hands and legs of robbers, or even beheading culprits, until the Issakaba boys became a tool in the hands of some unscrupulous persons and derailed in its initial security functions.

In addition to the above, films like, *Living in Bondage*, *Baka Boys*, *Burial Business*, *Church Business*, *The Senator*, *Domitilla*, *Explosion*, *The Stubborn Grasshopper*, and *Orija Shrine*, just to mention a few, have been attempts to focus on burning security issues in Nigeria. The bottom line in most of the films is that they were produced for commercial gains. They did not aim at examining the given situation(s) in order to find lasting solution(s) to the national security challenges. Furthermore, most of the films do not jolt viewers into

rethinking the realities on ground and exploring avenues of ameliorating the ills so portrayed, as it is to be expected, if the productions were to duly promote patriotism.

### **Maximising the Potentials of Nollywood in Propagating Peace and Security**

One laudable soft power avenue to curbing the debilitating threats of insecurity is harnessing Nollywood potentials because of its unique qualities. It is pertinent to delineate some of the avenues, through which this could be implemented.

- a. ***Nollywood: A Veritable Platform for Role Modelling and Mentoring:*** Since the coverage of Nollywood is enormous, almost without borders, reaching several millions in the comfort of their rooms, it is at a vantage position to sway views and opinions of even the common man. Nigerians have come to accept these stars and celebrities as heroes and people they can look up to. The citizens believe these stars must have been specially favoured by God. But beyond this, they see them as specially gifted and hard-working and secretly long to be like them. So, whatever they say, do, or wear, becomes a contemporary issue of interest. It explains the massive involvement of Nollywood celebrities in advertisement of products and services, believing that their endorsement will result in large scale patronage by the consumers. The telecom, fashion, and cosmetics, are among the many industries that readily come to mind. In recent times, our political gladiators have keyed into the visibility of Nollywood stars in their electioneering campaigns. It will also be recalled that Nollywood stars played prominent role, either for or against, the fuel subsidy removal crisis in January 2012. Also, veteran Nollywood actor, Richard Mofe-Damijo (RMD), was appointed as Special Adviser to the Governor on Entertainment and Talent Development in Delta State, before being elevated to the position of Honourable Commissioner for Culture and Tourism. Dr. Sam Dede (SD) was the Director-General, Rivers State Carnival and Tourism Development Agency. Ejike Asiegbu, Okey MacAnthony (Okey Bakassi), Rita Dominic, Nkiru Sylvanus, and Hilda Dokubo, have served, at one time or the other, as Special Assistants to their governors, on Arts and Entertainment Matters. Bobmanuel Udokwu has taken up various appointments in Anambra State. These are all positions, which could be used to mentor the younger ones and turn them away from certain social deviant behaviours.
- b. ***Nollywood: A Source of Financial Empowerment of Practitioners:*** It is an indisputable fact that movies have the power to translate people, across social strata. Ordinary Nigerians, who ordinarily did not amount to anything among their peers and communities, have, through movies, become leading lights. The duo known as Aki (Chinedu Ikedieze) and Pawpaw (Osita IHEME), for example, normal setting would have been a handicap. However, through the movies, they have relied upon their other talents to surmount the limitations they appear to face. These two incredible young men are bona-fide super stars all over Africa, Europe and America. Patience Ozokwor, also known as, Mama Gee, was retired and unknown until she featured in Nigerian movies. Today, she commands a huge local and international followership. Many more abound and they are all Nigerian pride. Security operative will never beam their search-light on these people when looking for criminals because they are icons and have abundant national pride and esteem, courtesy of Nollywood!
- c. ***Nollywood: A Medium for Curbing Societal Vices:*** It is also true that some story-lines emanating from Nollywood have hit against inequality and social injustices, campaigning for the addressing of such ills and imbalances. It is so obvious, that part of the reason why there has been so much heat and insecurity in the country can be attributed to this factor. For instance, the Niger Delta Militants were up in arms against their own country because of the cry of marginalisation and injustice. The Egbesu Boys of Africa was at the forefront of the mobilisation of the Ijaws of the Niger Delta in the mid-1990s. In spite of providing a greater percentage of the nation's wealth, many Ijaw youths are unemployed; and violence became a gainful employment and a veritable survival strategy for them (Ayakoroma, *Boroism* 12).
- d. ***Nollywood: A Medium to Integrate Deprived Groups and Individuals:*** This has been one of the major reasons precipitating conflicts and insecurity in Nigeria. As noted earlier, the feeling of being oppressed or marginalised have resulted in several violent protest actions against the state or. The Niger Delta militants and most minority protest groups fall into this category. In cases like this, Nollywood should naturally undertake productions emphasising the need for leadership to imbibe the culture of communication and harmony, which encourages openness in communication and allows aggrieved parties to freely express their grievances. The leadership must understand the need to listen to grievances and respond positively and promptly, as it is the practice in our indigenous cultures.
- e. ***Nollywood: A Medium to Alleviate Poverty:*** Poverty is the major reasons for the insecurity in our nation; and this has been attributed, largely, to leadership failure, decline in our work culture, and the get-rich-quick syndrome among the generality of Nigerians. This can be corrected by ensuring that its productions project how leadership failure has impoverished Nigerians by enthroning the "Culture of Transparency and Accountability." Also, productions promoting the "Culture of Hard Work" should be encouraged, to correct

the erroneous belief that it is only the privileged that can make it in life. There is need for Nollywood to de-emphasise “ritual for money,” robbery for enjoyment,” or “kidnapping for ransom” films and undertake productions that will inculcate the culture of hard work in our citizenry. This is to give credence to the wise saying that, “a good name is better than riches.” The creative ability of the younger generation can be stimulated when Nollywood undertake productions that will showcase our cultural industries, which help to occupy them and reduce their propensity to indulge in activities that will threaten peace and security in their areas. This is where the \$200million Nollywood Intervention Fund announced by former President Goodluck Jonathan is very timely, because it will have positive effects on the industry.

- f. **Nollywood: A Medium to Reduce Ethnic Differences:** Ethnic differences constitute one avenue that has been highly exploited by some Nigerians for political gains or otherwise. The persistent Jos crisis that has claimed so many lives, including two serving legislators, has been largely attributed to people sowing the seed of discord between the Hausa/Fulani and the natives. It is an irony that people who had lived happily together for ages have suddenly become sworn enemies. Nollywood can lead the vanguard towards enthroning peace and security in the Jos Plateau through productions highlighting the culture of reflection, making them assess losses they have suffered, compared to the gains of the sponsors of these ethnic crises. Also, producers should ensure that they project more of the things that unite us rather than the things that divide us as a people. This will help to strengthen the bond of unity among the citizenry and frustrate any divisive tendencies, thereby building a culture of peace in the nation.
- g. **Nollywood: A Means of Checking Political Thuggery:** The recent spates of armed robbery and kidnapping for ransom, in the country, have been attributed to the do-or-die style of politics by present day politicians. It could be argued that the Boko Haram insurgents, like the Niger Delta militants, were thugs, who were armed by politicians to realise their selfish ambitions. As usual, these young men were abandoned after the elections, with no visible means of survival. Since they were not “settled,” they used the arms that had been acquired for them to engage in criminal activities, thus, constituting a threat to the nation’s peace and security (Ayakoroma, *Boroism* 15-16). Nollywood can correct this ugly trend by undertaking productions that condemn political thuggery and ballot box snatching and stuffing, and promote the enthronement of sound democratic culture, as exemplified in the “One Man One Vote” doctrine of the present administration, where the voters determine the results of elections.
- h. **Nollywood: A Medium to Project Heroes of the Past:** Nollywood can embark on producing movies projecting the lives and times of Nigerian heroes and heroines. Works on the founding fathers of modern Nigeria, like Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, Mallam Aminu Kanu, Ernest Ikoli, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, as well great women leaders, like Queen Amina, Queen Idia, Chief Margaret Ekpo, Hajia Sambo Sawaba, and Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti, among others, can help build patriotic traits in the citizenry. This can be achieved through adaptation of their auto-biographies or biographies.
- i. **Nollywood: A Medium to Strengthen Social Institutions:** The collapse of social institutions like family, educational system, legal systems, among others, has also contributed largely to the state of insecurity in our nation. These social institutions act as moral guards for the citizenry. The family is the first school where societal norms, values and beliefs are inculcated in our children; the **dos** and the **don’ts**. Parents have abandoned this all important role. They do not correct their children, when they do the wrong thing. Some, due to the exigencies of their career, have abandoned their parental role for housemaids and other caregivers. The products are the unruly and violent children we have today. Nollywood should not contribute to the number of deviant children in the society, who threaten the state of peace and security in their communities. Nollywood should rather champion the culture of moral life and respect for elders and constituted authority.

The standards in the Nigerian education system have been on the decline, in terms of the character of the products. Lecturers have been accused of exchanging marks for sex (or money), selling handouts to students, and, sometimes, encouraging cheating during examinations. Thus, students assault those lecturers, who believe in hard work. This is promoted in the movie, *Jenifa*. The legal system has also been poorly projected and made unreliable in most Nollywood movies, where judgments are awarded to the highest bidder. This contributed to the reason why most people today would rather take the law into their hands, rather than seek legal redress in the law courts, which led to the wanton destruction of lives and property in different parts of our nation. Furthermore, the image of the police has been battered beyond redemption in Nigerian movies. The force is almost always portrayed as incapable of doing anything right, which is unfortunate. The truth of the matter is that for every robbery incident, there must be a case of an arrest of a robber somewhere; for every bomb that explodes, there is a case of bombs detonated somewhere. The message should be that given the necessary manpower development, empowerment through provision of modern facilities, enhanced condition of service, and cooperation from the general public, the police can serve the country better.



- j. **Traditional Institutions:** As it were, traditional rulers in their various domains act as custodians of our cultures and traditions, as well as being spiritual fathers to their subjects. They are also known to serve as linkages between government bureaucratic machinery and the grassroots, an all important role, which serves as an institutional safety valve. This is through the constant reports they receive from their various subjects in their domain, which ensure proper monitoring of the activities in these places and prompt actions taken where the need arises. They have also been known to play prominent roles in resolving conflicts and ensuring peace in their domain through holding courts in their palaces. However, today most of our traditional rulers do not effectively play these roles. Instead of telling epic/histories stories, where people wear sack-cloths, Nollywood should examine the state of the traditional institutions currently, and how they could be invaluable in the sustenance of peace and security in the country.

## II. Recommendations

Before concluding this paper, it is necessary for us to make a few recommendations, aimed at ameliorating the situation.

- a) Nollywood must take into cognizance its important role in reflecting the ills of our nation and play a corrective role.
- b) Nollywood must recognise the importance of indigenous culture in its movies, as they are products of the creative industries, and culture is the medium by which productions are assessed.
- c) Stakeholders should strive to organise the sector in order to access funding from government.
- d) Government needs to fund productions as stated in the 1988 *Cultural Policy for Nigeria*, to enable producers to promote cultural ideologies for nation building.
- e) Nollywood must be in the vanguard in the institutionalisation of the culture of peace and security in Nigerians, by ensuring that cultural values that promote peace and security are projected in their movies.
- f) Nollywood must de-emphasise values that tend to divide us as a people and emphasise more on the values that unite us in its movies.
- g) Packaging of films, as regards the story content, video and sound quality, and editing, should be improved, to ensure that its role as a cultural communicator is not undermined.
- h) The National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), as the regulatory agency, should ensure cultural content in films and encourage works that promote sound cultural values of peace, unity, and integrity.
- i) Professionalism in Nollywood should be encouraged, through appropriate welfare standards, rights education and regular training and re-training programmes.

## III. Conclusion

It has been established in this study that since Nollywood came into lime light, it has become a formidable medium for the utilisation of cultural resources. It is a vibrant aspect of our creative culture that needs to be identified as such. It has served as a veritable platform to inform its viewers, both knowledgeable and narrow-minded, on the peculiarities of other sections of the society. It is a platform for the presentation of our culture for the common good and development of the country. But then, for Nollywood to be effective, as a medium for propagating peace and security, there has to be intervention on the part of government to ensure that it projects the cultural ideology of our shared values of peace and mutual coexistence. While the \$200million Intervention Fund is a commendable effort, it is imperative that stakeholders ensure that Nollywood is effectively used as medium for promoting peace and security in Nigeria.

However, it is imperative that Nollywood be used to strategically examine the current peace and security challenges, occasioned by the nefarious activities of the Boko Haram sect. This is premised on the fact that its properties of sights and sounds gives it the capacity to explain situations of life or social issues affecting viewers, and makes it an effective medium for propagating peace and security messages, as people often hypnotically accept whatever is offered in the films they watch. It also provides an avenue to share perspectives, social integrations, inter-group understanding, as well as being a binding force for breaking barriers between communities. In totality, it is fair to say that with Nollywood, there is no limit to the functionalities and possibilities as a medium for propagating peace and security, provided it is appropriately funded and given due attention by government.

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