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"*Àgbà(lagbà) ló mò'dí eéta*": Playing Dangerously as an Everyday Art in *Taiwo Shango* (1965)

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ABSTRACT
In this article I discuss the cinematic representation of African modernity in Klaus Stephan's film *Taiwo Shango* (1965). Using the Yorùbá saying "*Àgbà(lagbà) ló mò'dí eéta*" and the notion of "everyday" as tools of reference, I pay attention to how the film presents human relationships and material symbolism to capture an African society's experience of change in Òkè Àjá, the story world.

KEYWORDS
African modernity; change; cinema; Klaus Stephan; Òkè Àjá; *Taiwo Shango*

ABSTRACT IN YORÙBÁ
Nínú àpilèko yìí, a gbìyànjú láti ş'àlàyé ohun tí a pè ní òlàjú ilè adúláwò gégé bí a se fihàn nínú sinimá, *Taiwo Shango* tí Klaus Stephan se ní odún 1965. Láti fi ìdí òrò yí múlè, a lo òwe Yorùbá tó ní Àgbàlagbà ló mò'dí eéta àti ohun tí a pè ní işe ojoojúmó, èyí tí a papò láti aara ìbásepò láarín àwon èèyàn tó wà nínú sinimá yìí àti orísirísi ohun táa lè tókasí tó ñ şe àfihàn àyípadà ní ìlú Òkè Àjá tí ìtàn náà ti şelè.

ÀWON KÓKÓ ÒRÒ (NÍ YORÙBÁ)
Òlàjú ilè adúláwò; àyípadà; sinimá; Klaus Stephan; Òkè Àjá; *Taiwo Shango*

Introduction

In this article I discuss the cinematic representation of African modernity in Klaus Stephan's film *Taiwo Shango* (1965) (*TS*), set in Òkè Àjá, a fictional Yorùbá town, nestled between heavy mountains and rocks that are geographically located in Ìdànrè, formerly Ufe Oke, which is recognised as Nigeria's largest cocoa-producing area. Using as tools of reference the Yorùbá saying "*Àgbà(lagbà) ló mò'dí eéta*" and the notion of "everyday", I pay attention to how the film presents human relationships and material symbolism to capture an African society's experience of change, represented in part by both colonial intrusion into its social affairs and the effort by some of its own people to save what is left of its cultural and ritual essence, as well as the consequences of these events within the framework of the cinematic world.

In telling this story, *TS* also provides a visually enthralling panoramic view of the Yorùbá community: its sprawling mountains and landscapes, the thick forests, the mixture of mud houses with thatch roofs and those with corrugated iron sheets, etc. In short, the images coalesce to form the nucleus of the semi-urban community that is portrayed in the film.

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However, my interest in *TS* is to engage the cinematic representation of African modernity in the semi-urban Yorùbá community, that is fashioned from the colonial encounter. Walter Benjamin contends that films often make "surgical" incursions into reality by capturing the (in)visible aspects of everyday speech and behaviour (2008, 27). As historically contingent aesthetic constructs, films present the collages of everyday objects that are often arranged in unexpected combinations which create startling compositions and unforeseen affinities in time and space (Gallagher-Ross 2018, 30–31). Moreover, while these ideas of social relationships and the "everyday" that I aim to discuss in *TS* may not be visible at first glance, a critical engagement will reveal them and their possible social significance. Considering this, I utilise two key terms as the operational tools of my analysis: namely, the Yorùbá adage "*Àgbàgbà méjì ló mo ìdí eéta*" ("Only two elders know the secret of the number three"); and the "everyday" as indicated by the title of this article. Through "*Àgbà(lagbà) ló mò'dí eéta*", which I term "unfriendly friendliness", I examine the construction of the "everyday" as an aspect of African modernity in Òkè Àjá, taking the love story-cum-ritual saga as a point of departure. Here, I engage its human agencies – Brian, Oju and Taiwo – and then close the analysis with a discussion of the significance of the first court scene, showing their connections to material representations of the colonial presence, including the church, the court room, the night-club, and the hospital.

I have appropriated "*Àgbàgbà méjì ló mo ìdí eéta*" from a Yorùbá proverb that originally captured the principle of social transaction in the Ògbóni cult and that expresses the involvement of the Earth as the divine third party in the deliberations. Lawal (1995, 44) argues that the meaning of this Yorùbá existential and philosophical paradigm is expanded through the *eéta* motif, which often features in Yorùbá rituals due to its connection to *àse*, the power to make things happen, such that the expression has come to foreground a dynamic that unites two elements/ideas towards a common/single purpose. For my purpose, I appropriate another version of the same proverb, "*Òré ò gb'elèta, elèjì l'òré gbà*" ("A third party can ruin a friendship"), to explore the intricacies and complexities that are involved in the mundane and social relationships that are presented in *TS*. Essentially, "*Òré ò gb'elèta, elèjì l'òré gbà*" links together both the physical and metaphysical assumptions underlying social interactions to stress that an ideal friendship can involve only two people, otherwise we risk a situation where one party manipulates or takes advantage of the other (Kosemani 1987, 26–27). In other words, there is a risk of a sort of "unfriendly friendship" (my term) that leads eventually to problems where relationships are not based on mutual interest. I have adopted the sense contained in "*Òré ò gb'elèta, elèjì l'òré gbà*" as a web of some sort, to examine the relationship between Brian, Oju and Taiwo in *TS*, and to explore the complexity of the connections between Ọ̀tùnba Fagade,[1] Taiwo and Òkè Àjá as well as the relationship of the "foreign" and the "traditional" in the semi-urban community as unfolded in the story world.

Although I rely on several sources for the idea of the "everyday", I am essentially interested in the "doubleness" of phenomena embedded in "*Àgbà*(*lagbà*) *méjì ló mo ìdí eéta*" as a basis to understand the idea of African modernity in Òkè Àjá. This is in terms of probing the inner workings and metaphysical assumptions that underlie relationships, events, and physical structures in the story world. Rita Felski argues that everyday life "enfolds two distinct constellations of issues: a mundane social world and a phenomenological relationship to that world" (2002, 609). Felski lucidly captures my idea of the "everyday"

in Òkè Àjá, where the physical material world is acted upon by the metaphysical world. In arguing that the simple love story in *TS* is "acted upon" by a more serious cultural and ritual episode, I show that not only are the mundane and metaphysical realities fluidly blended in the community, but the various responses to that composition also constitute part of the "everyday" of my concern. For Newell and Okome (2014, 14), the "everyday" is often marked by "conflicting knowledges and desires" apprehensible by studying the social and cultural exchanges within a particular universe of experience, even though the specificity of both their nature and their extents is not always easily determined. Nonetheless, through a focus on Brian and Taiwo, and then on the accused driver and Ọ̀tùnba Fagade, I show how these two categories of "friendships" are useful to foregrounding what I mean by "everyday". Moreover, my idea of the "everyday" in *TS* also includes the "material stuff that populates daily life" and its "perception and recognition", knowing that the everyday is "always disappearing, replaced by new perceptions", since such acts are as "ephemeral as any theatrical [and, in this case, cinematic] experience" (Gallagher-Ross 2018, 4). Essentially, my focus includes the visible aspects of daily experiences and those things that form the bulk of the unnamed experiences within the story world that are not easily articulated, such as the film's idea of "the picture of God".

Of/About the Colonial Encounter or Metaphor of Decline?

Subtitled "The Second Day after the Death", *TS* preceded by five years Ossie Davis's *Kongi's Harvest* (1970) and Hans Jürgen "Jason" Pohland's *Bullfrog in the Sun* (1971),[2] but its place as a pioneer work in the history of film and cinema production in Nigeria is mired in the circumstances surrounding its production and dissemination, and its eventual disappearance until very recently.[3] Drawing from (or inspired by?) a particularly interesting (or intriguing?) aspect of Yorùbá "contemporary" history – that is, the botched ritual suicide of the Elésin Oba in Òyó in 1945, an event that also inspired two fine plays; one in Yorùbá, Duro Ladipo's *Obá Wàjà* (1964), and the other in English, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975)[4] – *TS* cleverly showed its connection to the past even though it was not explicitly stated,[5] hence it can also be described as "faction" since it merged together fact (history in this case) and fiction.

Some of the cast members of *TS* were leading figures of the Yorùbá travelling theatre of the 1960s and 1970s, most notably Kola Ogunmola (Ọ̀tùnba Fagade) and Akin Philips (Babaláwo),[6] or of the literary theatre that succeeded it, such as Ralph Opara (Dr Jamison) and Yinka Akerele (Patricia), while others were important personalities of Nigerian television, such as Christopher Kolade (Taiwo), Segun Olusola (Kehinde) and Elsie Olusola (Dr Oju), who featured as "Sisi Clara" in *The Village Headmaster*, created by Segun Olusola, her real-life husband. By featuring this diverse group of talents, *TS* shows its connection to the Yorùbá artistic tradition and its literary offspring and positions itself at the birth of television and film production in Nigeria. Studies have shown the progressive development of Nigerian theatre from its ritual origins to its present literary form: a journey from *Apidán* and *Alárìnjó* (the Yorùbá travelling theatre) to the purely secular and commercial versions of recent history that are often manipulated for aesthetic effect and agency (Adedeji 1978; Ogunbiyi 1981; Jeyifo 1984). This historical divide is represented by the assemblage of actors in the film. Also, since its emergence and development, the Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, has also continually drawn some of its

players and creative resources from this repertoire, especially Yorùbá traditional performance (Katrak 1986; Adesanya 1991; Haynes and Okome 1998; Adedeji and Ekwuazi 1998; Ekwuazi 2007).

According to the voiceover during the opening sequence, *TS* tells the story of the friendship between a European and an African which ends in unhappiness without either of them being to blame. The European we later learn is Dr Brian (Òkè Àjá hospital's medical director, played by Howard Vernon), and Taiwo (the chief protagonist of the film) is the African. But the events of the film are not as straightforward as the voiceover presents them, for the story moves quickly from this simple issue of friendship, through the love triangle that involves Brian, Oju and Taiwo (who is in another relationship with Patricia), before climaxing with the death of Taiwo. Taiwo intervenes in the community's ritual of (re)birth in place of his father, Ọ̀tùnba Fagade, who abandons his sacred duties and suddenly "disappears" (with both Brian's and Oju's assistance), after the demise of the ailing king. Nonetheless, the love story is the defining narrative, revealing some of the many interesting layers of the complexity of the relationship between the European and African characters within the film's cinematic gaze, and allowing us to grasp the formation of the "everyday" in the Yorùbá community of Òkè Àjá.

Deploying a "documentary" style to foreground the evanescence as well as the concreteness and stubborn solidity of the "everyday", *TS* also provides sweeping portrayals of interpersonal relationships among the people, such as traders who kneel to greet Ọ̀tùnba Fagade on their way from the market; remarkable depictions of Taiwo's "younger" brother, Kehinde, the community's scribe, personal secretary to the ailing king and a strong advocate of the community's cultural and ritual essence; Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's deeply ritualistic but also colourful "dance of death" on the hills; ritual observances and the pouring of libation at the local shrines; activities at the hospital; Catholic church services; the exciting and boisterous music played by highlife bands at the nightclub, featuring Fela Anikulapo Ransome-Kuti's Koola Lobitos; as well as courtroom sessions. It is within these portrayals that we are introduced to Brian and Oju's romantic affair, which is threatened by the prospect of her marriage to Taiwo through an arrangement by her parents and Ọ̀tùnba Fagade. While these scenes unfold, we also see Taiwo being drawn into the social uproar caused by his father's failure to live up to the expectation of his role, culminating in his own involvement in an ancient ritual and eventual death by suicide. While the love story cannot be described as a sweeping romance from this brief analysis, it nonetheless transforms into an "epic sadness" with the film's cataclysmic ending.

Although the final parts of *TS* seem rushed, its initial premise of a friendship between a European (Brian) and an African (Taiwo) and Oju's involvement in this relationship are well laid out. The conflict that this friendship throws up is a useful place to begin to study how "*Òré ò gb'elèta, elèjì l'òré gbà*" captures "unfriendly friendliness" and its value in understanding what is meant by African modernity in Òkè Àjá through the events of the story world. *TS* also briefly presents the "spiritual" connection of the king and Ọ̀tùnba Fagade to Taiwo as well as the moral, physical, and metaphysical responsibilities that tie them together. In using these relationships, among others, to capture the "threnodic essence" (Soyinka 1976) of the ritual action that underlies the love story in its broader connection to Òkè Àjá, we are persuaded to see the ties between Ọ̀tùnba Fagade and Taiwo beyond the father–son relationship.

Sidestepping the love affair momentarily, however, let us consider how, on the one hand, *TS* captures a once glorious community that is undergoing rapid change and loss in social perception and material establishment through the symbolism of an ailing African king, and, on the other hand, the "revival" effort by Taiwo's act of death. Since a king is a (meta)physical representation of the soul of the community among the Yorùbá people, the demise of this king can be taken to be a metaphor for the "collapse" of the traditional structure that he represents in the face of inroads by the colonial presence. But this apparent "collapse" did not just occur; rather, it is caused by the relationship between the "foreign" and the "traditional" within the social structure, a relationship that can be viewed through a blend of human, psychological and material dimensions. For instance, activities at the village hospital show clearly that Western science and orthodox medicine have supplanted the community's reliance on herbal cures; also, activities in the Catholic church, its liturgy and spirituality, are markedly different from the pouring of libation and invocation at the local shrines and the elaborate ceremony around Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's failed ritual observance after the king's demise. While these constitute *TS*'s notion of "the difference between the picture of God which man constructs for himself" between the African characters and their European counterparts, they also determine the nature of the sustained economic, socio-cultural, and political exchanges in the community, the complexities of which impact people's personal destinies.

Moreover, keeping in mind this scenario while examining Brian, the most important human representation of the colonial presence, the "foreign personae" in Òkè Àjá, we see how *TS* foregrounds the dynamics of mobility and exchange between Europe and Africa through Brian, who straddles both worlds; through him, the audience is subtly lectured about the "sociology of immigration" (Waldinger 2015a, 2305). Although Brian articulates some knowledge about Europe that is anchored in the postulations of leading philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, Pascal, and Schopenhauer, whom he mentions freely and easily, he also demonstrates a deep knowledge of Òkè Àjá's tradition. Meanwhile, despite Europe's advancement and sophistication, "everything is muddled up and distorted" according to Brian, while "in Africa, everything is still all right" – hence he prefers Africa's "innocence" (*TS*). With Jamison at the nightclub, Brian expresses an opinion about Europe that goes beyond mere "beer parlour philosophy". By demonstrating a deep knowledge of the cultural and ritual practices in Òkè Àjá, which Oju describes as his "scientific interest" in the community's affairs, Brian proves beyond doubt that, ironically, he is more "rooted" than some of his African counterparts. Through Brian, *TS* conveys the complexity of "conflicting knowledges and desires" that Newell and Okome insist are features of the "everyday" in any given society, and particularly in Òkè Àjá.

In both his plot-defining "pillow talk" with Oju and the uncomfortable but truthful chat with Taiwo, Brian is forced to face the truth of his situation in the community. Brian expresses the pain of occupying a liminal space in the community, a state of "in-betweenness", which he ironically shares with Òkè Àjá as it undergoes a transitional phase, both in content and in character; hence, his glorification of Africa seems hypocritical rather than truthful. We can see his frustration over the prospect of losing Oju to Taiwo, especially when she admits painfully that "[Brian] is a stranger. A stranger to her country and to her family", and that "[o]ur children wouldn't know where they belonged" (*TS*). At this point, we can see why Brian reassesses his life against unfolding events and reflects on

his nearly two decades of "investment" in a "foreign" land. Recalling that he left Europe 15 years prior to the events in the film, he thinks it is "[t]oo long to be able to go back", but then adds: "You can't make your home in a place where you'll always be a stranger" (*TS*). Trapped in this "here" and "there" quagmire, Brian's situation invites us to revisit the issues around trans-border and international circulations of people and ideas. We are reminded on the one hand of the complex processes of incorporation and/or exclusion as well as the experience of integration and marginalisation, and, on the other hand, we are urged to see how these dynamics impact places of origin and/or host places. As Roger Waldinger formulates it in his book *The Cross-Border Connection: Immigrants, Emigrants, and Their Homelands*, there is a paradox to this cross-border connection wherein immigrants forge interconnections between their places of origin and their destination, which often results in a deterritorialised world of unbounded loyalties and flows (2015b). Following Waldinger, Brian's overall experience in Òkè Àjá and his affairs with Oju show how those interconnections forged by immigrants between place of origin and destination are built and maintained and why they eventually fall apart.

Importantly, however, while examining Brian's knowledge of Òkè Àjá's ritual practices in relation to that of his colleagues – Jamison, a devout Christian, and Oju, who grew up in a household where local traditions were disregarded (except an arranged marriage) – we should not lose sight of his most important role in the film: that is, articulating the "unfriendly friendship" of Europe and Africa and the critical logic of "*Òré ò gb'elèta, elèjì l'òré gbà*" philosophy through his relationship with Oju and Taiwo. Clearly, Brian is central to *TS*'s "colonial gaze" on Africa, being at the centre of both the love saga and the tragic ritual episode that wraps everything up. For instance, he announces the king's transition and is "blackmailed" by Oju into participating in hiding Ọ̀tùnba Fagade from performing his sacred duties, having to prove that he neither wants to "observe how a man will come about his own death and by what means" nor is "able to determine what drugs and herbs are used in such cases" (*TS*); he also confirms Taiwo's death by suicide. So, at every significant point in the story, Brian is always present, strategically positioned to play a crucial role. Yet, going by the logic of "*Òré ò gb'elèta, elèjì l'òré gbà*", Brian still does not fully fit into the social reality of the community, especially its ritual practices, although he represents parts of its "everyday".

On the other hand, Taiwo presents a different and interesting angle for our purposes. Although Brian's knowledge of the local traditions of Òkè Àjá clearly surpasses his own, Taiwo undergoes a major mental and psychological reorientation during his unscheduled visit to the Babaláwo after he escapes being lynched by the angry, frustrated villagers who are reacting to his father's shameful conduct. With the priest, Taiwo admits his poor knowledge of his people's tradition: "*Mi ò mò ní pa è ni jòóò Bàbá, bá mi ṣé*" ("I have no knowledge about it, Baba, please help me to handle it"). The Babaláwo's response is profound; he reveals that Taiwo is "destined" for the task ahead: "*Bí o tilè jìnà sílé, bí Òòṣà tilè jìnà síe, ìpín eni kìí d'èhìn léhin eni, orísun eni kìí padà l'éhìn eni*" ("Even if one is far from home, and if it seems that the ancestors are far away from us too, our destiny is not, our origins are not"). Taiwo responds: "*Èmi náà ò fé jìnà sílé, sùgbón mi ò mò nípa è ni*" ("I also don't want to turn my back on my source, but I have no knowledge about it") (*TS*). This conversation foregrounds another important point: that Brian may appear more knowledgeable about the traditions in Òkè Àjá, but the door to self-awareness and "apotheosis" is opened only to Taiwo, not even to Ọ̀tùnba Fagade, his father.[7]

Meanwhile, during Taiwo's encounter with the Babaláwo, we have a demonstration of the original idea of "*Àgbàgbà méjì ló mo ìdí eéta*" that I explained at the beginning of this article. This meeting lays the foundation for Taiwo's final act in the film, as he embraces the tradition of his people via the Babaláwo and the Opón Ifá (the divination tray), an epiphanic experience, different from how he initially reacted when Kehinde broached the subject. By identifying with the source of his being, Taiwo acquires a new identity. It is from that moment that he jettisons the toga of a "modern" man, established by his legal training and professional experience. Importantly, after that encounter we see him take his father's ceremonial traditional attire, which he places over his shirt as a subtle suggestion of tradition subsuming modernity, or an African consciousness taking over from a foreign one. That he had worn similar traditional attire to the palace on a day when the ailing monarch had one of his several fainting fits also suggests how circumstances, both mundane and spiritual, prepare him for the role that he plays at the end. I will return to this aspect shortly (Figures 1–5).

Moreover, the original idea of "*Àgbàgbà méjì ló mo ìdí eéta*" is in operation in the encounter between the Babaláwo and Taiwo because both can be considered sages in their own different ways: one versed in esoteric wisdom, the other in mundane worldly knowledge, with the Earth as the "absent-present" witness. Notably, we must mention Ifá's role (as represented by the Babaláwo and the Opón Ifá) in this relationship because of how it aids Taiwo's realisation of selfhood, which is critical to our reflection on African modernity in the film, and more so because of Ifá's position at the centre of the institutionalised, material construction of cultural identification for the Yorùbá

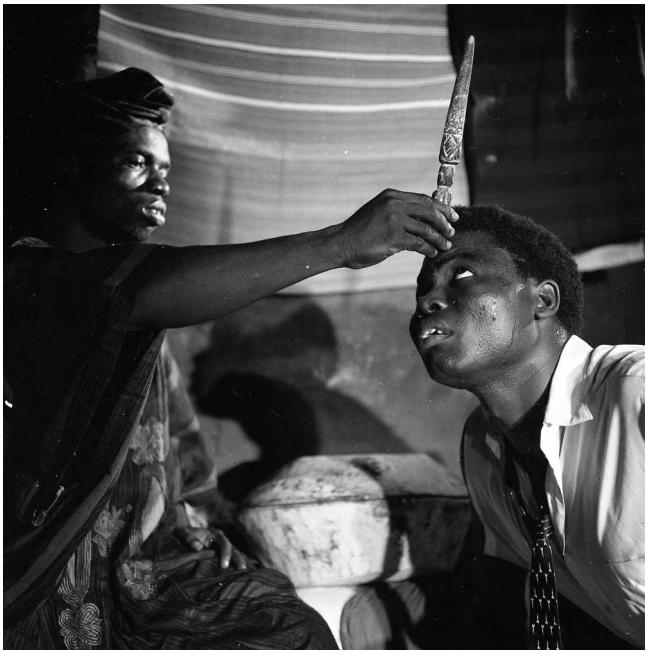

Figure 1. Taiwo (Christopher Kolade) consulting the Babaláwo (Akin Philips).

Credit: Film still from *Taiwo Shango oder: Der zweite Tag nach dem Tod* (1965), Iwalewahaus, estate of Nina Fischer-Stephan & Klaus Stephan | University of Bayreuth © Film: Klaus Stephan | © Photo: Nina Fischer-Stephan.

Figure 2. Taiwo at his father's (Kola Ogunmola's) bedside … .

Credit: Film stills from *Taiwo Shango oder: Der zweite Tag nach dem Tod* (1965), Iwalewahaus, estate of Nina Fischer-Stephan & Klaus Stephan | University of Bayreuth © Film: Klaus Stephan | © Photos: Nina Fischer-Stephan.

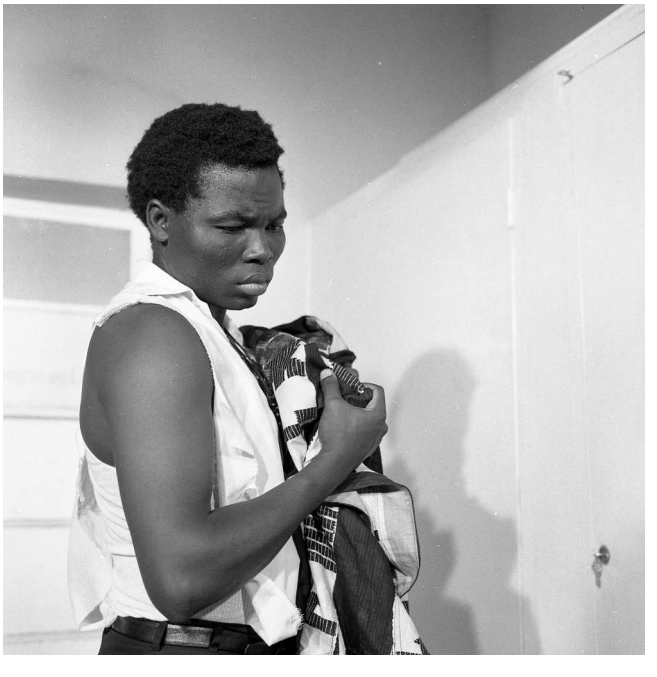

Figure 3. … taking his father's *agbádá* … .

Credit: Film stills from *Taiwo Shango oder: Der zweite Tag nach dem Tod* (1965), Iwalewahaus, estate of Nina Fischer-Stephan & Klaus Stephan | University of Bayreuth © Film: Klaus Stephan | © Photos: Nina Fischer-Stephan.

Figure 4. … thereby assuming the Ọ̀tùnba's role.

Credit: Film stills from *Taiwo Shango oder: Der zweite Tag nach dem Tod* (1965), Iwalewahaus, estate of Nina Fischer-Stephan & Klaus Stephan | University of Bayreuth © Film: Klaus Stephan | © Photos: Nina Fischer-Stephan.

Figure 5. Ọ̀tùnba Fagade (Kola Ogunmola, centre) and elders holding court.

Credit: Film still from *Taiwo Shango oder: Der zweite Tag nach dem Tod* (1965), Iwalewahaus, estate of Nina Fischer-Stephan & Klaus Stephan | University of Bayreuth © Film: Klaus Stephan | © Photo: Nina Fischer-Stephan.

people. For Wande Abimbola, Ifá's stories are "a type of 'historical' poetry" and historical references that illustrate the patterns of social change (1976, 20); Barber (2013) contends that the stories of Ifá are similar to and relevant as documented histories, detailing how the Yorùbá people interact among themselves and with their environment in verifiable spaces and time; and for Adélékè Adéèkó, Òrúnmìlà (also Ifá, *Elérìí-ìpín*, *ikú dúdú àtélewó*, etc.) "construes being as the continuous coaxing from tokens of the uncoverable past useful means of approaching the present, which is in the future of the past" (2017, 20). As shown by the Babaláwo and Taiwo's encounter, knowledge from Ifá makes the past present; and Taiwo's action going forward, including placing his own "modernity" at the service of his community and trading sophistication for local concerns, further highlights this point. Kah Nath Jah argues that modernity in all traditional culture goes along with the process of a new identity consciousness: "Since the former is an outer-directed process, the latter must necessarily be inner-directed. Hence, identity consciousness finds its basic symbolic structure in the past tradition" (2005, 11). Colonial modernity, Nath Jah maintains, is the direct impact of colonialism against which people attempt to identify with their traditional culture in the process of de-traditionalization or westernisation. Indeed, Taiwo's action engenders the need for critical self-reflection in relation to the cultural past.

However, as Nath Jah (2005) notes, there are ways in which colonial modernity makes the individual not feel the need for protection by the community, acting rather in their own perceived best interest. This applies to Ọ̀tùnba Fagade, who seeks protection from and accommodation within the structures of the colonial modernity that was bent on eroding the traditional values that he represented. Therefore, following the monarch's demise, it is logical that Ọ̀tùnba Fagade is thrown out of the equation since he no longer feels protected by or in need of identification with the tradition. In Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's case we have in operation another instance of "*Òré ò gb'elèta, elèjì l'òré gbà*"; the human–Earth relationship recognises only Taiwo, who has embraced tradition, not Ọ̀tùnba Fagade, who turns his back on it.

Essentially, therefore, Brian and Taiwo are two significant bodies representing the two social forces acting upon Òkè Àjá: while the former symbolises the colonial "characterhood" whose "unfriendly friendship" with the African community seeks to destabilise the latter's balance, the latter puts the broken pieces together. Blair and Cook (2016, 75) note that bodies, like language, also function as meaning-making materials through which our "consciousness" engages with others and with the environment. In this frame, we should see how Brian and Taiwo embody real and imagined "in-betweenness" – the former as an "outsider-insider" and the latter as an "insider-outsider" – in their relationship to Òkè Àjá and its "hybrid" and "syncretic" composition, or even its mixed transitional dynamics. As Blair and Cook argue, "[m]etaphors and image schemas increase our cognitive efficiency" and affect how we "use an understanding of one thing (seeing what is before us, for example) to make sense of another (knowing something) such that we can 'see' what another person means" (2016, 18). In conversation with the Babaláwo, Taiwo recognises his poor knowledge of his community's tradition and his own implicit connection to that tradition. At that moment, he is in a state of "hyphenated identities" that he gladly embraces. By embracing that state of hybridity and eventually acting upon it, he demonstrates the capacity of human agency to help the community form "singular spaces with plural images" (Merton 1972; Humphrey 2007), whereas Brian

rejects his homeland, and, with his action, one can conveniently say that he favours discontinuity.

This means that, as a transitional figure like Brian, Taiwo also embodies the symbolic comings and goings of both human beings and ideas, but of a different sort. Although he has also travelled widely and has acquired foreign knowledge (he is a lawyer), choosing to submit that knowledge and everything else to the service of his people underscores the fact that he is markedly different from Brian in a remarkable way. The physical representation of this difference includes the time he takes to wearing Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's resplendent *agbádá* (a loose outer garment often worn by elderly Yorùbá men), both the material symbol of the older man's cultural identity as a Yorùbá (elder) and a reflection of his office as "the king's horseman".

With his bodily transformation, Taiwo announces his readiness to venerate sacred traditions and the seizure of authority, albeit spiritually, from his father.[8] Meanwhile, the first time that we see Taiwo dressed in native attire is when he pays the king a courtesy visit in the company of Brian. It was unknown at the time that the action is a foreshadowing of what happens at the end. In that scene, the monarch had lost consciousness as usual and needed urgent medical care; Brian was willing to provide this but was prevented from doing so by the elders who felt "offended" by his presence in the palace. In fact, it was Taiwo who put the seemingly embarrassing situation under control with his presence. By wearing Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's *agbádá* later, *TS* shows its audience how a son takes over from his father, how a virile "modernity" supplants a tired, "traditional" system that has already lost the verve and energy to sustain itself. Most importantly, it is a profound metaphor of how the community's new and hybrid identity, which Taiwo represents in this case, has taken over from the obsolescence that Ọ̀tùnba Fagade represents. This means that it is not only the monarch who dies; Ọ̀tùnba Fagade also metaphorically dies with him. Ironically, this fact is more pronounced with Taiwo's death, his corpse accorded the respect that was meant for his father. By the time the film ends, Ọ̀tùnba Fagade is neither shown nor mentioned: the action climaxes with the ritual procession in Taiwo's honour.

Meanwhile, in addition to Brian's signification in the film, the church building, the post office, the nightclub, and the courtroom also form the material representations of the colonial presence in Òkè Àjá, even as they constitute a significant part of African modernity and the "everyday" as presented in the story world. As forms of multimodality, they are not only important to the form and meaning of the "everyday" in Òkè Àjá; they also constitute part of what the film means by differences in the "image of God". Note here the church's liturgy and worship songs that are forms of devotion to a certain higher being, and not to the gods of the local shrines; its hymnals that contrast sharply with the sacred chants at the shrine or the invocation and music during Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's ritual dance; and, of course, the dirge performed by the procession of initiates at Taiwo's funeral. Alongside these are the loud and boisterous orchestral types of music at the nightclub, which also contrast sharply with the controlled solemnity of the chants at the shrines, whose vitality is matched only by the heavy drumming during Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's "dance of death" at the marketplace, and the preceding procession dance through the streets and on the hills.

While all these foreign material symbols form an essential image of the colonial presence within the larger framework of the African traditional milieu of the community, they

also show that we are dealing with an African society that, on the surface, seems rooted in its past but that had undergone disintegration from within, a disintegration that Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's action may very well have captured. With such a diluted consciousness and socio-cultural hybrid identity, the "African community" before us is, in its totality, composed of a blend of the "foreign" and the "traditional" by which its "everyday" is firmly established. As Newell and Okome explain, although the "everyday" can be "locally situated", under certain circumstances, such as the emergence of new social groupings, waves of thought or social perceptions, it can also become "hybrid and syncretic" (2014, 1–3). This is the case of Òkè Àjá that *TS* presents, as I have outlined above.

Inserted into this rich tapestry of interpersonal and group relationships that I have been discussing so far are two courtroom scenes, one of which I will discuss next. As part of the "everyday" in Òkè Àjá, the court events not only show us how traditional legal arbitration in the community has been supplanted by, or morphed into, a foreign system of justice, but they also provide a glimpse into one of the activities by which Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's social status is established at the beginning of the story. Three things are useful to keep in mind here: (1) the role of gestural acts that are different to those based on obedience and deference to authority, or on cultural dictates; (2) modes of dressing as a tool both to delineate character and to show relationships among people; and (3) the significance of the environment to an understanding of the two previous points within the larger framework of social hierarchy in the film.

Body as Language/Language of the Body

Cognitive theory has shown that prostration and kneeling are excellent examples of acts of deference to authority. They also show "feudal allegiance, humble prayer and deference to monarchs and nobles" and represent the "gestural embodiment of social and cultural ideas" that stress the seemingly unbreakable connection between gesture and thought (Seymour 2016, 42). As Amy Cook writes, gestures such as kneeling are "embodied, embedded, and transactional *performance*" that reflect hierarchical power relationships and show that "the performance of the action does not signify; it creates" (Cook 2010, 135, emphasis in the original). However, Cook's idea of "performance" suggests that some gestures can be used as manipulative devices, by twisting their logic beyond their cultural significance, so that they are deployed as "a mind-shaping tool" (Seymour 2016, 43); here, they function as mere pretence and/or make-believe. In *TS*, the first court case is an excellent example of such a "performance". In this scene, the action of the driver on trial for reckless driving becomes a "performance" that is laced with elaborately embellished gestures, while Ọ̀tùnba Fagade, who heads the judicial panel, gives a simple, unfussy response. I discuss these two opposing responses or gestural acts as follows.

After the driver's long rambling speech, Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's remark "I'm afraid nobody believes a word you say. *But I'll let you off with a caution once again*" (*TS*, emphasis added) shows that the driver is a *serial offender*, who aims to convince the jury of his innocence with a long, unnecessarily verbose dramatisation instead of simply admitting his guilt in killing his neighbour's goat:

> Yíyí tí mo yí owó okò béè, ótún lo s'ápá ibí, mo tún yí báyìí. Ní'gbà ó di èèkérin tí ñ ma yí owó okò padà, ni àgùntàn kan kàn sáré dé ló kó sí mi ní esè. Bó ti kó sí mi ní esè, béè ni mo bá dúró. Bí mo dè ti dúró béè ni mo sòkalè. Àhà. Bí mo ti sòkalè, béè ni mo rí àwon èrò tí wón ñyo ní

> òkòòkan, tí wón ñyo ní òkòòkan. Bí wón ti pé l'émi lórí nìyen. Mo bá ñbè wón, ejòóò, a má jèé k'Ólópà ó gbó. Won ò gbà, béè ni Olópàá bá yo símí. B'Ólópàá ti mú mi, béè ló ñmú mi bò níbí, mo bá ñbe Olópàá lójú ònà. Títítítí Olópàá sáà fi mú mi dé òdòo yín. (*TS*)[9]

> As I swerved the car this way, [the goat] quickly ran that way, then I quickly turned back. When I turned again the fourth time, that was when the goat suddenly appeared and ran head-on into my car tyres. What! Then, I stopped straightaway, and quickly came down from my vehicle. That was when I saw the people appearing in twos and threes, suddenly they have formed a crowd, all milling around me. I started pleading with them not to call the police. But they refused. Instantly, the police have appeared and arrested me. As soon as the police arrested me, I started begging and pleading, but they refused and insisted on bringing me here. That was how I was brought here before you.[10]

While the driver's frantic but feeble "defence" continues, Ọ̀tùnba Fagade simply looks on with dignified calmness, as does the jury panel made up of elderly titled men drawn from among the oba in council. They are the same set of people who prevented Brian from attending to the ailing king when he visited the palace with Taiwo, and whom Taiwo informed of his decision to take his father's place as the carrier. In short, they are the same traditional element that, distinguished by their grey hair, represents the old order that colonial modernity has supplanted in the community. Even in this scene, apart from being easily manipulated by the driver through his theatrics, their silence shows that they have long passed their time of glory. As the driver rants, his performance is merely a feeble attempt to persuade men who have already concluded their judgement prior to his being brought before them; we see Ọ̀tùnba Fagade shake his head with pity, quietly share his thoughts with the elder sitting next to him before pronouncing the verdict. Even though it is only a fine, it does establish the authority of the jury over legal matters in the community. This is the first "victory" of "tradition" over modernity, as it were, before the more significant one via Taiwo's death.

In Edward C. Warburton's opinion, "performance" of this type is a "unique" form of creativity, of "the ends govern the means type", which relies on the close relationship between "the individual and the environment" and the "situatedness" of both, often forged through a sort of "'enactive' cognition of action" (2016, 93–94). By "enaction" we mean the spontaneity of performance as a situated activity that is guided by the mind, with the purpose to manipulate, in a situation where "invention depends not on special mental processes but on special purposes", and that takes place in the real-world environment (97). Moreover, the driver not only addresses the jury; he also uses the performance to seek public sympathy. In short, he seeks to manipulate both the jury and the audience. Considering that road transportation is a recent means of mobility and, of course, a major feature of the "everyday" in the community, owning a car also shows how the driver is relevant in the new social order as a "modern" man through his material acquisition, even though he strives to retain membership of both communities of influence by any means.

Thus, the driver's use of gesture as a mind-shaping tool against Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's calm, dignified demeanour can be understood through the lens of embodied cognition that shows how "prompts in our environment … guide our actions" because such performances are not meant for entertainment per se but for making stronger commitments and claims than others (Blair and Cook 2016, 129). To "survive" the dock, he must use the power of imagination to whip up emotion to facilitate sympathy. Evelyn Tribble

notes of cognitive ecologies: "[They] are the multidimensional contexts in which we remember, feel, think, sense, communicate, imagine, and act, often collaboratively, on the fly, and in rich ongoing interaction with our environments" (2011, 94). The driver's theatricality is simply meant to whip up such sympathy and feelings that mere expression cannot fully communicate; but Ọ̀tùnba Fagade is right, nobody believes him.

I have highlighted this short, seemingly isolated, scene to show its contribution to the film's documentation of the colonial presence in Òkè Àjá. To start with, the driver's car is a material representation of that colonial presence. Added to this list is Ọ̀tùnba Fagade's chauffeur-driven car, as are Brian's, Taiwo's, Oju's and Patricia's vehicles, but the driver's car has a different signification to the others due to its "reckless" usage, and it functions as a metaphor for the bulldozing strength of the colonial presence. Other material representations – the church and the hospital – also encroach on the community despite their benefit, but the driver's car acquires a notoriety due to its (ab)use by the driver, showing the destructive potentialities of modernity and how foreign elements that are useful within a traditional community also embody aspects that destroy. As Shaun Gallagher (2005, 37) notes, "the body schema functions in an integrated way with its environment" through "performed gesture" because the "action … has become reflexive under certain circumstances" (McCarroll 2016, 145). Yet, through his performance, the driver secures victory against factual guilt that the crowd has come to witness in the court. Here, *TS* seems to be saying that, while it constitutes an abstraction of everyday practicalities, the courtroom also shows that everyday life "encompasses a theatrical relation: the perceiving and the things perceived; the spectator and the spectacle", if we go by the logic that in Òkè Àjá the "every day is as ephemeral as any theatrical experience" (Gallagher-Ross 2018, 4).

Moreover, although he is physically alone, the driver's loneliness is not necessarily a weakness but a strength, established by his mode of dressing. As already seen in the example of Taiwo, clothing makes a difference and bodies bear the marks of their clothes, their culture, and their representations. In the driver's case, it gives him agency and power. According to Sarah McCarroll, clothes proverbially make the (wo)man and "*do* something to the body, change its material reality"; they impact how "bodies live in and experience the world" (McCarroll 2016, 141, emphasis in the original). When we first encounter Ọ̀tùnba Fagade, he presents a dignified posture that shows how bodies and clothing are intimately tied together. For the Yorùbá elder, *agbádá* (the flowing male gown) and *fílá* (cap) of varying shapes are both indications of age and status. In *TS*, Ọ̀tùnba Fagade bears both with immense dignity and exudes that respect all the time. The members of the jury are similarly dressed while the driver is different from them. As McCarroll argues, clothing exists in such a profoundly intimate accord with the body within a historical sense that it imprints on the wearer the expectations of appropriate cultural behaviour and defines "the human experience of the self" (2016, 146–147, 155). Whereas Ọ̀tùnba Fagade represents "tradition" and the old order in the court, the driver, clad in open short-sleeved shirt and trousers, represents a "modernity" that is difficult to overlook. So, here in this courtroom, the "colonial environment" into which the local judicial system has been subsumed, we have a clash of bodies clothed in and moving through space, as constituent elements of both the cultural environment and its hybrid form, while they also both serve as significant aspects of the everyday experience of the story world.

Conclusion

In my introduction, I mentioned that *TS* projects a kinship with Nollywood via the route of the Yorùbá performance tradition by featuring some of its major players. I also add that it does the same thing with its cast – a blend of the "modern" and the "traditional" – and it shares this quality with Nollywood and with the Nigerian nation itself.[11] Haynes and Okome contend that Nigerian (home) video often gives us "something like an image of the Nigerian nation – not necessarily in the sense of delivering a full, accurate, and analytical description of social reality, but in the sense of reflecting the productive forces of the nation, economic and cultural" (1998, 106). As Biodun Jeyifo also points out, the fusion of the "modern" and the "traditional" that contributed to the growth and development of travelling theatre coincided with that of the "citified" population in Nigeria, such that the country itself is composed of "fragments of *elite* culture and lifestyle largely based on a composite mix of Western middle-class forms and neo-traditional approximations" (Jeyifo 1984, 3–4, emphasis in the original). Moreover, this hybrid configuration is often reflected in the nation's popular art, such as film and music. In Barber's opinion, popular art forms in Nigeria are syncretic, a blend of activities from "rural hinterland on the one hand and the metropolitan countries on the other", and are often centred on social change (1987, 23). Undoubtedly, for its eclecticism, which is like the Yorùbá travelling theatre and its offspring, Nollywood, and its (re)presentation of the fragments of real life through its blend of the past and the present that I have termed the "everyday", *TS* should also be categorised as popular art and accorded its pre-eminent place in the pantheon of Nigerian films (see Olusola 1965, 2012).

In this article, I have discussed the cinematic representation of African modernity in Klaus Stephan's *Taiwo Shango*, shot in 1965, just five years after Nigeria's independence from British colonial rule and barely a year before the historic first military coup d'état that signalled the country's descent into perpetual violence and gloom. I discussed how both the human agency and materials[12] in the story world constitute what I have termed the "everyday", something that can be easily overlooked but is nonetheless significant in many ways.

Notes

1. "Fagade" is mentioned only once by Kehinde when he speaks with Dr Brian on the phone about the outbreak of smallpox in Òkè Àjá, but the appellation "Ọ̀tùnba" has an interesting history, one that bodes well for the transitional phase of the film's setting. Unlike real-life traditional titles in Yorùbáland, such as the Òyómèsì in Òyó and the 16 kingmakers of Ilé-Ifè, the Ihare or Agba Ife headed by Obalufe of Iremo and the Modewa headed by Lowa of Ilé-Ifè, "Ọ̀tùnba" ("the right-hand man of the king") is a modern creation. Segun Olusola would later use "Fagade" as the name of the headmaster in *The Village Headmaster*, which he created in 1968, the longest-running soap opera on Nigerian television (1968–88).
2. Based on an amalgam of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and featuring Princess Elizabeth Toro of Uganda, *Bullfrog in the Sun* was later renamed *Things Fall Apart*, while *Kongi's Harvest*, based on Wole Soyinka's play of the same title, featured Soyinka as the titular character, "Kongi". Both films were produced by Calpenny Nigerian Films, the first indigenous film company in Nigeria, established by Francis Oladele in 1965, the same year *Taiwo Shango* was shot, but it is uncertain whether Oladele was inspired by it. Film stills from *Things Fall Apart* by Stephen Goldblatt were shown in Tinubu Square, Lagos, in 2021, and in Uganda the following year. The exhibition was organised by the Modern Art Film Archive, which was also responsible for the Nina Fischer-Stephan installation "The Respectful Gaze" discussed in this special issue.

3. The history of *TS*'s production and subsequent disappearance is an interesting one, underscored by Segun Olusola's engagement with it. One hopes that this project will resuscitate interest in the film and draw attention to its significance to the history of film and television production in Nigeria.
4. Mo Abudu's Ebonylife TV and Netflix recently released *Ẹlẹ́ṣin Ọba: The King's Horseman* (2022), a film adaptation of this play, translated into the Yorùbá language by the linguist Kola Tubosun and directed by Biyi Bandele.
5. Knowledge about this historical event does not really matter since the film was originally made for a West German television audience who would not have known about it.
6. Ogunmola, founder and director of the Ogunmola Travelling Theatre, was an excellent actor and theatre manager. He was famous for *Làńké Òmùtí*, his adaptation of Amos Tutuola's novel *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*; Philips became the manager of the troupe after Ogunmola's death in 1973.
7. A contemporaneous handwritten Yorùbá script and an English translation of this scene exist in the Bayreuth archive, but I have used my own translation in order to convey the nuances.
8. I have used this term deliberately for two reasons: (1) to show *TS*'s relationship to the botched ritual episode in Òyó as suggested by its subtitle; and (2) to identify the subject of Soyinka's comment about the "misbegotten … film by some German television company" (Soyinka 1975, 6).
9. It is worth noting that no Yorùbá script of this scene exists while the shooting script only briefly describes it. My conjecture is that either an actor of the Ogunmola company or a gifted resident of Ìdànrè improvised the scene, which comes across as very lively.
10. Translation by the author.
11. Here, I refer to the "traditional" represented in part by Ogunmola and the members of his performing troupe as well as the other characters that are identified with the native structure in Òkè Àjá, while the "European/elite" or the "foreign" is represented by Vernon and to some extent by Taiwo, Dr Jamison and Patricia due to their Western orientation and training. For instance, before television or the filming of *TS*, Kolade and Olusola were the founders of Players of the Dawn, an amateur theatre troupe that staged foreign plays that featured Ralph Okpara and others who later joined Soyinka's The 1960 Masks.
12. See: Dancygier 2016, 21–39.

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