



**FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OTUOKE
BAYELSA STATE**

30TH INAUGURAL LECTURE

**‘OROBOSA’: THE EVOLVING POETICS OF
BENIN-LANGUAGE FILM IN NOLLYWOOD**

BY

OSAKUE STEVENSON OMOERA, fta, FIMIM

BA (Benin), MA (Benin), PGDE (Port Harcourt),
WBSD (North Carolina), PhD (Ibadan)

Professor of Theatre and Film Studies



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**30th Inaugural Lecture
Wednesday 28th January, 2026**

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Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Actors Guild of Nigeria (AGN)
Association of Movie Marketers (AMM)
Association of Movie Producers (AMP)
Bayelsa International Film Festival (BIFF)
Bank of Industry (BOI)
Benin City Film Festival (BCFF)
Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)
Centre for Digital Content Creation and Nollywood Studies in the Niger Delta (CEDICCANSUND)
Creative Designers Association of Nigeria (CDAN)
Creative Designers Guild of Nigeria (CDGN)
Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs)
Directors Guild of Nigeria (DGN)
Edo Arts and Cultural Heritage Institute (EACHI)
Edo Artistes Association of Nigeria (EAAN)
Edo Female Artistes Association (EFAA)
Edo State International Film Festival (ESIFF)
Edo State Skills Development Agency (EDOJOBS)
Federal University Otuoke (FUO)
Film Educators Guild of Nigeria (FEGON)
Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS)
Key Person Interview (KPI)
Local Government Areas (LGAs)
Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)
National Film Corporation (NFC)
National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO)
Nigeria Digital Content Regulation Conference (NDCRC)
Nigerian Society of Cinematographers (NSC)
Nigerian Society of Editors (NSE)
Points of Views (POVs)
Return on Investment (ROI)

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)
Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM)
Screen Writers Guild of Nigeria (SWG N)
Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria
(SMEDAN)
Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P)
Swiss Development Corporation (SDC)
Youth Employment and Development Initiative (YEDI)
Youth Enterprise with Innovation (YouWin)
United Nations (UN)

DEDICATION

This lecture is dedicated to my wife, Mrs Ighosogie Nadia Osakue-Omoera and our children, Osamumwenyekete Treasure Osakue-Omoera, Ukpao-sadoyo Tandred Osakue-Omoera and Aizeyeosabor Testimony Osakue-Omoera.

PROTOCOLS

The Vice-Chancellor

Deputy Vice-Chancellors

Other Principal Officers of the University (The Registrar, Bursar and Librarian)

Provost, College of Medical Sciences

Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies

Deans of Faculties and Students' Affairs

Directors of Institute, Centres and Schools

Heads of Departments and Coordinators of Units

Distinguished Professors

Professors

Members of Senate

Respected Colleagues, Friends and Guests here Present

My Lords Spiritual and Temporal

Our Dear and Esteemed Students

Gentlemen of the Press

Entire Members of FUO Community

Ladies and Gentlemen

PREAMBLE

According to Prof Francis Petersen, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, in an introduction to the inaugural lecture delivered by Prof Jonathan Okeke Chimakonam titled *The Communal Contract and the Real African Predicament: Colonialysis, Communalysis and the Danger of the Post-Community*, “inaugural lecture is one of the most cherished traditions in the life of a university. It marks not only the cumulation of years of dedicated scholarship but also a moment of reflection and dialogue with the broader society” (2025). Therefore, inaugural lecture is an academic rite that provides an inaugural lecturer a platform to display what he or she has been doing in the academe and the contribution he or she has made to knowledge in his or her field of research. It is a prestigious and elaborate academic ceremony which helps to reposition a university for global visibility. I hope this lecture will be beneficial to everyone present here and contribute to the transformation of our local communities in terms of theatre and film matters in the Niger Delta region in particular and Nigeria generally.

I stand before you today to present the 30th inaugural lecture of the Federal University Otuoke in my area of expertise, which is Theatre and Film Studies. My journey to becoming a professor is a classical story of resilience, hard work, audacity of hope, and politics of words, men and God. As a committed practising Christian, I strongly believe that service to God is possible only through service to fellow human beings in our homes, families, communities, and our profession. This philosophy has underscored my unflinching commitment to the pursuit of truth, which is the ultimate purpose of scholarship. This also explains why I have committed over two decades of my life to the growth and development of the research and practice of Theatre and Film Studies. Today, by the grace of God, I am the Vice-President of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists [SONTA] (Programmes and Projects), President of Film Educators Guild of Nigeria (FEGON), Fellow

of the National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP), the highest honour of the apex professional body of theatre artists in Nigeria. Also, I am a Fellow of the Institute of Mass Communication and Information Management of Nigeria (IMIM), Coordinator of Association of Christian Academics (ACA), a global platform for Christian academics, an exultant member of the *Aiwan-Erain-Ekpen* age group of Eguare Ebelle, among others. I hope my lecture will inspire a new breed of African scholars who will remain resolute and determined to make a mark come what may in their chosen academic vocation regardless of the pull him or her down (PHD) syndrome or academic or professional ‘gang up against’ they may be confronted with or imagine that they face. All they need to do is to come to the marvellous light of Christ Jesus, which incidentally our great family university: Federal University Otuoke emblematises as the Light of the Niger Delta.

My topic is ‘Orobosa’: The Evolving Poetics of Benin-Language Film in Nollywood. It has a title and a subtitle. The title is an Edo (Benin) saying, which means “Everything is in God’s hands.” I am an Edo man of Benin and Esan descent. My mother was a Benin whose ancestry is traced to the Benin royal family, as epitomised by her family greeting script: *Lamogun*, which is only used by the royals in the Benin Kingdom. My father is an Esan man from the Idumhuehinmhin Quarters of Eguare Ebelle, a scion of the Oshodin lineage of the Ebelle Kingdom. In both the Benin and Esan speaking areas that I come from, ‘Orobosa’ means “Everything is in the hands of God.” In the Holy Bible, we see its equivalent in Ecclesiastes 3:14. In both Benin and Esan ethnicities, ‘Orobosa’ is used and in my over 50 years in God’s green earth I have found that everything is actually in the hands of God, whether anyone agrees or not. Hence, I seize this opportunity to let you know or remind you that everything we do, including research and development (R&D), emanates from God and should necessarily bring Him glory and honour while we try to improve the human condition by making the world a better place.

The subtitle is a part of my little contribution to R&D that God has graciously granted me grace to achieve for the socio-cultural and socio-economic development of society. In my academic sojourn of over 20 years, I have basically worked in three main areas of Theatre and Film Studies: Nollywood studies, with emphasis on indigenous language films; Media sociology, with emphasis on the social impacts of the media, development communication and cultural communication in developing areas of the world, including Nigeria; and Cultural dynamics, with emphasis on African theatre performance studies and African literature. The connecting rod of these three areas for me is that I am at the cutting edge of knowledge generation and dissemination, with specific reference to Nigerian (African) Studies. In this inaugural lecture I have chosen to dwell on an aspect of Nollywood studies which I am an exponent of in scholarship. Aside from receiving my Ph.D. in it at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, I have led research efforts in this area globally, including mentoring scholars and supervising the works of interested student researchers. It might interest us to know that Nollywood, the generic name for the Nigerian film industry, has become a global brand with many segments of indigenous language film production sites across Nigeria and beyond. Evidentially, Nigeria is made of over 500 ethnicities and languages (Omoera, 2020a) and the potentialities of making ethnic films in indigenous Nigerian languages are enormous in terms of socio-cultural and socio-economic transformation of society.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, in this talk, I would like to narratively explore ways in which threads of my research and thinking may offer alternative ways to consider change in applied media and arts practices, particularly in equipping teeming youths in our society with marketable skills and providing them with support systems to make the best out of life, using the available crafts and trades in filmmaking activities. Emerging from the idea that change is founded on reflection, understanding and collaboration, I will give some suggestions on how our seething youths in the Niger Delta and indeed Nigeria can be equipped with creative skills to make edutainment content for local and global audiences and contribute to our local economies. In this

presentation the word ‘film’ is interchangeably used as video film, video drama, cinema, movie or motion picture, or moving images. This is because, thanks to the Nigerian spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation, it was Nollywood that started the digital revolution that the filmic world bought into and eventually the boundary between celluloid and video film has broken down forever (Omoera, 2013a; Omoera, 2014a; Omoera & Ojieson, 2022).

In reality and in scholarship, the word ‘Bini’ does not exist any longer and many film and media professionals and scholars and even the general public do not know this. I am convinced that this inaugural lecture is a veritable platform to reiterate that the Oba of Benin has made a proclamation as far back as 2006 (Benin Traditional Council - Palace Press Release, Ref. No. BTC.A66/VOL.IV/262 dated 28th August, 2006) that the word Benin should be used for the people that live in the 7 LGAs in Edo south, the land, and the language spoken in this area. Ethnographically, therefore, I use Benin interchangeably with Edo in this presentation. I hope you will be positively de-schooled as you listen to my humble presentation. In global film practice and discourse, there is now emphasis on stories that are indigenous to Africans and their culture instead of rehashing western models in our filmmaking enterprise. It pays more for Nollywood content creators, screenwriters and producers to explore African folklores, myths and legends in crafting entertainment products for Nollywood audiences around the world. Hence, my humble theorisation of “Homefrontism” as a model using the Benin film experience as a basis in scholarship (Omoera, 2014a; Omoera, 2017; Omoera, 2020; Omoera, 2024).

Theorisation or poetization is critical to knowledge production just as practice. Practice helps to feed theoretical principles and theoretical principles help to establish critical standpoints or canons that could stand the test of time and help to explain a phenomenon or predict or refine a lived experience. This is what I did with the ‘Homefrontism Paradigm’ in the Benin Nollywood. Theory can never be irrelevant. If I may ask, is there any human being without an idea, a viewpoint, a proposition about things observed or

experienced, to guide him or her? Is there a field of human endeavour without general rules, laws, principles or criteria informed by the nature and practices of the field and aimed at explaining the field for better understanding and practice? Theory is not a monster; an abstraction imposed from outside.

Generally, in Theatre and Film Studies and humanistic sciences, theory is ostensibly an explanation or justification for an existing phenomenon. It cannot exist before practice. For instance, Aristotle's *The Poetics* came after the writings of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. LeShan (1973) quotes Sir William F. Barrett as saying that "facts without a theory is a mob, not an army." In other words, theories ought to explain the facts in a systematic manner. Without theory facts cannot have a systematic gathering of ideas. Hence, theory provides a broad framework in the light of which we can understand facts in an organised and systematic manner (Merton, 1996). The point is individual facts, by themselves, are a disordered collection (a mob). They only become a potent, organised, and effective force (an army) when they are structured and given direction by a coherent theory or explanatory principle. The theory provides the context and connection that allows the facts to be used for understanding, prediction and progress. Furthermore, Schwandt (2013) argues that there is a mutually informing relationship between practice and theory. That is, there is a practical element in every theoretical position and a theoretical element in every practical position. One readily comes away with the idea that there is a symbiotic relationship between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge which must be properly tuned to enrich human society. It is this kind of intellectual drift that informed "Homefrontism" in an attempt to repurpose the evolving poetics of Benin film. I will come back to the point of "Homefrontism" being a theoretical fortification aimed at repurposing African film in world cinema.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, art and culture are vital to both a thriving society and fulfilling lives. They are recognised as an essential part of the develop-

mental infrastructure. For instance, Nigerians are avid consumers of cultural and media content. We spend several hours each day engaging with various cultural and creative industries (CCIs) products such as dramatic skits, stand-up comedies, Afro beat music, soap operas, Nollywood movies, among other artistic creations that have internationalised Nigeria and Nigerians. In proposing an alternative view of Internationalisation of the Curriculum (IoC), de la Garza (2019), even though in a slightly different context, focuses on interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to reviewing the curriculum, in particular, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM), including indigenous knowledge as it does not separate the arts and humanities from science (that is, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, STEM). It is important to note that in a 21st-century world where the knowledge economy or new economy reigns supreme, Theatre and Film Arts studies are at the forefront of the emergent concept of STEAM. By implication, the world has arguably done away with STEM or modified it because the Arts are critical to the "orange economy" (Buitrago & Duque, 2013; Ogunnubi & Idowu, 2022), which is the mitochondrion of the new economy. The earlier every forward-looking institution or organisation or country recognises and takes advantage of this the better for such an ecosystem.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 FILM AND ITS FUNCTIONALITY IN SOCIETY

Mallinger and Rossy (2003, p.1) assert that “films tell stories about people, their hopes, dreams, challenges and fears, how they relate to others, and what behaviours are socially acceptable and unacceptable as the case may be.” Film is a powerful medium for disseminating vital information to people across class, ethnic, sexual, racial, religious, educational and geographical boundaries (Omoera, 2014a; Omoera & Ozoemenam, 2017). Omoera, Ogazie, & Markilolo, (2024). As a mass medium, film’s uniqueness resides in its ability to create fascinating worlds, events, characters and actions within its diegesis, immersing viewers into such fictional universes, and making them have a fantastic time and lifting thereby. Eriamiantoe Osaigbovo (in an interview in 2024) claimed that film transports its viewers from the comfort of their homes where they are watching the screen to the scene of the action. A film gives its audience the privilege of *bilocation*. This encompasses a situation whereby viewers are physically at home or in a theatrical cinema or hall and glued to their screens whilst also mentally present at the scene of the action. A film, at its best, tells relatable stories that evoke and symbolise people’s most enduring values and secret desires (Ola-Koyi, 2007). Thus, a film effectively lends itself as a critical prism through which we view and understand our social world.

Regardless of the ups and downs film has experienced, it still enjoys a pride of place in cultural and creative scholarship because of its manifold functional capacities in the global human community. Historically contextualising film using the documentary genre, Hjort asserts that John Grierson, who is widely credited with having coined the term documentary in the mid-1920s, used it to refer to “the creative treatment of actuality” (2012). One of Grierson’s best-known films, *Drifters* (1929), helps us to understand what the influential filmmaker and theorist was after. This film, about

North Sea herring fishing, was edited using montage techniques inspired by the Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, whose film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) Grierson greatly admired. *Drifters* has a striking, almost hypnotic rhythm to it as a result of its dramatic editing, and this helps to make it a “creative treatment of actuality,” rather than a mere recording of actuality (Omoera, 2016).

Combined with other intellectual developments, Grierson’s emphasis on creativity has led to countless debates, which I do not wish to embark on, just as Mette Hjort informs us that “it is easy to get caught up in the intricacies of the debates about how to conceptualise the functionality of film or its genres or its perspectival values.” Rather, claims and views which point to the humanising potentialities of film across cultures, epochs, and peoples, and how these fine elements could be made more accessible or available in the Benin film culture and by extension the Niger Delta region and the Nigerian society generally, are of enduring interest to me in this lecture. Accordingly, it is commonly held that for development to be meaningful and sustainable, it needs to be grafted upon cultural values of the people. Hjort (2012), drawing examples from Asian countries like China, Malaysia, Japan, Korea and Singapore, argues that films can be used to encourage values such as honesty, hard work, unity, and a sense of the community against individualism glorified by liberalisation and globalisation. Indeed, film has been used and is still being used to mobilize human and material resources for meaningful and sustainable development (Omoera, 2016; Omoera & Emeagwali, 2025a, 2025b).

1.2 NOLLYWOOD AS CULTURE AND INDUSTRY

The Nigerian film industry preceded Nollywood but today both are interchangeably used to describe the film culture in Nigeria and its transnational and transactional potential (Omoera, 2025a). Aside from locating itself outside the rubric of western film traditions, Nollywood is arguably the most diverse film tradition in the world, with many segments such as the Yoruba film, the Hausa film, the Igbo film, the Nigerian English film, and

the Benin-language film. From Lagos to Kano and Enugu to Benin City in Nigeria and from Nairobi, Kenya to Johannesburg, South Africa, audiences are increasingly enamoured of Nollywood films (Omoera, 2016). As a result, local and international media outlets and streaming platforms such as the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Silverbird Cinemas, African Magic, Nollywood TV, iROKOtv, Netflix, YouTube, Amazon Prime Video, Showmax, Disney+, IbakaTV, are experiencing unprecedented viewership and are raking in huge profits from screening Nollywood movies. Amidst this, the emergent body of Benin-language film has established itself as a viable variant of Nollywood with a burgeoning viewership as a result of its propagation of Benin language, history, and culture.

Omoera (2025b) asserts that filmmaking is a contemporary development medium which can be used in preserving and archiving, promoting and projecting indigenous languages, cultures, heritages and mores of the many indigenous peoples tucked away in the ‘peripheries’ of 21st century global cinema. In more senses than one, filmmaking is about human development and human development is a story which is told and retold through visual aesthetics for personal or communal edification, enlightenment and education. Traditionally, the content of film is shaped by the prevailing cultural traditions, environment and specific national histories of the countries in which it is made. Film has become an important component of African culture and its utilisation for cultural propagation and projection is very vital (Salami-Agunloye, 2023, p.485; Gonzalez & Fernando, 2022). It is a potent conveyor or purveyor of indigenous peoples’ values, from the background music, dance, fashion, cultural practices, diction, language, to the dramatic enactments, motifs and idioms. At the level of Benin-language visual culture, I have explored the interventionist potentialities of the Benin film production in arresting the endangerment of the Benin language. Film was found to be a potent mass instruction tool among the Benin-speaking people (Omoera, 2013b) and I am persuaded that this can be replicated elsewhere.

In my academic sojourning, research and publication activities around the world, I have systematically interrogated Benin-language film in Nollywood, using historicocritical and ethnographical methodologies to survey the visual culture, attempt a taxonomic analysis of the film tradition, examine the economics of the film industry, the language promotion and wealth creation potencies, audience reception, politics, gender relations and festival potential of the film culture, among others (Omoera, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; 2013a, 2013b; 2014a, 2014b; 2016; Omoera & Aluede, 2016; Omoera, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2018; Omoera & Okao, 2017; Omoera, 2020a, 2020b; Omoera & Anyanwu, 2020; Omoera & Otote, 2020; Omoera & Okwuowulu, 2021; Omoera & Emwinromwankhoe, 2024). I have also carried out empirical studies on audience reception, market value, transnational potential, institutional support for the local film industry, among others (Omoera, 2014c; Bardi & Omoera, 2014; Omoera, 2015a, 2015b; 2024).

Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, one may be curious to ask, what is Benin film or what is Benin-language film? Benin film is any film produced from the Benin people's perspective. It derives from the Benin worldview and the experiences of contemporary Benin-speaking people. Benin films can also refer to films produced within or outside Benin precincts by Nigerians or foreigners who may choose to use the Benin language or register the films as Benin films (Omoera, 2024). In this lecture, I posit that the Benin-language film enjoys an enviable status among indigenous Nigerian film cultures because of its cultural value to the Benins and its wide acceptance and enjoyment by Benin-speaking and non-Benin speaking audiences. I argue that its study and expansion have critical implications for the growth and development of other indigenous Nigerian language film ecosystems, especially in the Niger Delta region, which can borrow a leaf from its over four decades' lived visual experience.

Diachronically and synchronically speaking, the foregoing has generated interest in the academia with established and emerging scholars interrogating different aspects of the Benin film culture. Uyilawa Usuanlele (2012) explored the development of an indigenous genre in the Edo-Benin home video industry. Etorodion Osa (2020) examined Pentecostalism and Edo language video films as a PhD work at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom while Francis Amenaghawon (2023) interrogated themes in Edo (Benin) language Nollywood movies as development communication. Previously, Ejoro Odeka (2017) looked at dance-drama as a genre in Benin indigenous film industry. Many scholars are investigating aspects of films of Benin (Edo) language expression (Osemwota, 2018; Osa, 2023; Okao, 2024). Other emerging scholars who have been inspired are Solomon Idyo who is working on Tiv indigenous language film, Egbeye Peter Pamasoo who is working on towards creating a film economy for Bayelsa State, among others.

At any rate, I employed a complementarity of the emic and etic approaches in this lecture, as espoused by Jingfeng Xia to underscore the usefulness of filmmaking in indigenous languages in Nigeria, using the Benin film culture as a point of departure. The thinking here is that a deliberate mixture of methods can provide useful insights into examining and understanding the issues at stake in certain socio-cultural milieus, where the state of affairs may require and indeed benefit from the points of views (POVs) of both an “insider” and an “outsider” (Omoera, 2011, Omoera & Oseghale, 2012). In this regard, an anthropological emic-etic perspective, which combines local views with scientific assessment of issues, is important (Anderson, 1990). The emic approach investigates insiders’ opinions on issues. That is, it focuses on how they perceive and categorise the world, their rules for behaviour, what has meaning for them, and how they imagine and explain things. Flowing from this, key person interview (KPI) and observational methods formed the emic modality in this lecture. The etic (scientist-oriented) approach shifts the focus from local observations, categories, explanations, and interpretations to those of the researcher, or an external

“agent.” Here, content analysis as well as historical approaches constituted the etic modality for the study. The etic approach realizes that members of a culture (in the case of this lecture, the Benin film culture in Nigeria) often are too involved in what they are doing to interpret their cultures impartially.

Combining both approaches in this discourse, the POVs of local Benin film producers, film enthusiasts, and culture avatars were sought and analysed along with external POVs in film scholarship. In other words, I used content analysis and historical, observational, and interview methods to examine the status or what I call the poetics of the Benin film. This was to ensure a critical balancing of thought that could potentially lead to improvements in filmmaking activities among Benin cineastes, and by extension, emerging filmmakers in different localities in the Niger Delta region and Nigeria generally.

1.3 BENIN FILMOGRAPHY: EARLY BEGINNINGS, PRODUCTION SITES AND AUDIENCES

The Benin (Edo) film industry dates back to about forty years, powered by the success of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Benin City. About this time, technology put in the hands of a culturally driven young man (Ozin Oziegbe, may his soul rest in peace) who joined a few other professionals to dominate the cultural and entertainment business at the time (Okao, 2017).

Benin is the present-day capital of Edo State in south-south Nigeria. The term “Benin” is vested with several meanings and connotations, the earliest of which dates back to between 900-1200 CE, when it started enjoying the status of a kingdom ruled by the Ogisos (Egharevba, 2005). Benin is interchangeably used with the term, “Edo” (Agheyisi 1986, p.39; Omoregie, 2000, pp. 10-11; Lawal-Osula, p. 2). Aside from being a geographical entity, Benin is also used to describe the people and the language spoken in this area. With the current geopolitical arrangement, the Benin-speaking

people are mainly found in the southern part of Edo State (Edo south), which consists of seven local government areas (LGAs), namely, Oredo, Egor, Ikpoba-Okha, Orhiomwon, Umunwonde, Ovia South-West and Ovia North-East as signposted in Figure 1. The inhabitants of these LGAs are, for the most part, native speakers of the Benin language and the primary market target of all the Benin film producers/videographers who shoot Benin movies. Benin filmmakers operate from two distinctive points, Benin and Lagos/diasporic end, with several production sites. While Lancewealth Images Nigeria Limited is a clear Benin film producer from the Lagos/diasporic end, Prolens Movies Nigeria Limited, Pictures Communications Nigerian Limited, Osagie Mega Plaza Nigeria Limited, Triple 'O' Resources Nigeria Limited, 99 Entertainment Nigeria Limited, Idowu Agbes Audio Visual Productions, to mention a few, constitute and animate the creative and productive mitochondrion of filmmaking at the Benin end.

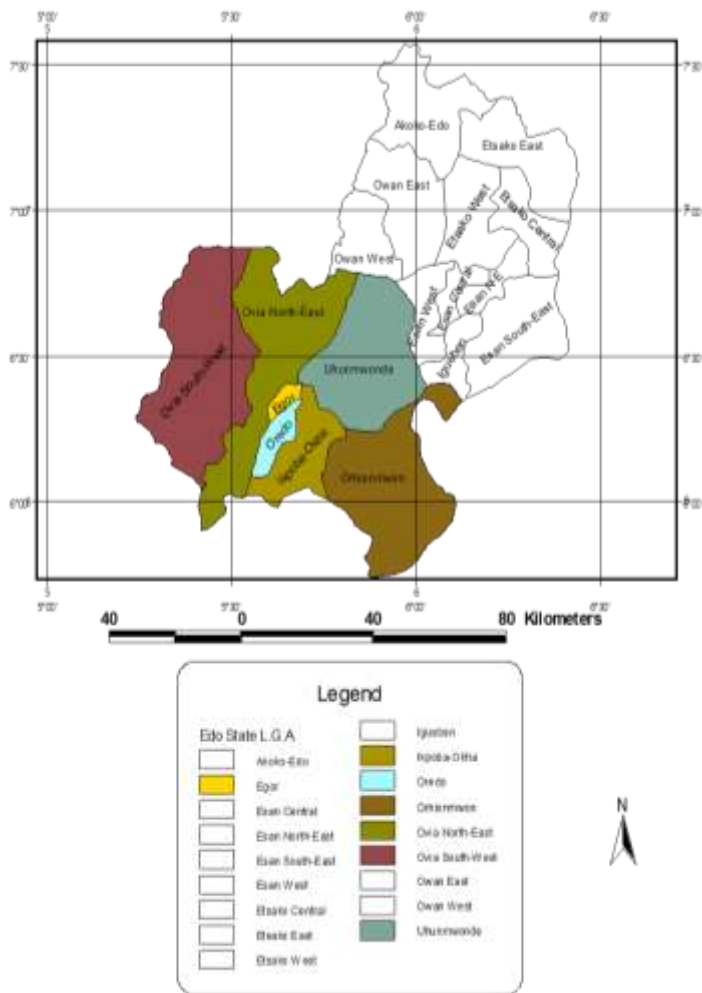


Figure I: Map of Edo State Showing the Study Area

The non-native residents of the Benin-speaking areas as well as the general viewing public, including audiences in other parts of Nigeria, Africa, the diaspora and the western world, constitute the other markets for the Benin-language film (Omoera, 2013a). Perhaps, this speaks to the potentialities of the Benin-language film in a globalising Nollywood which are largely untapped at the moment. Some of the outstanding names in the Benin video culture are Johnbull Eghianruwa (Sir Love), Eunice Omoregie (Queen of

Benin movies), Omo-Osagie Uteteneghiabe (the unmistakable voice of Benin movies), Loveth OKH Azugbene (Emama no kasedo/Ovbesa kpooo), Osagie Henry Legemah, Osaretin Igbinomwanhia (Akpaka 99), Prince Ayomi-Young Emiko, Onions Edionwe, Osarodion Enogieru, Monday Osagie, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, Davidson Esekeigbe, Baba Cliff Igbinovia, Osasuyi West, Ogbeide (Ukeke), and Andrew Osawaru. Others are Wendy Imasuen, Omadele Uwagboe, Don Pedro Obaseki, Peddie E. Okao, Ossa Earliece, Eliel Otote, Billy Kings Aibangbe, Nosa Obaseki, Kabat Esosa Egbon, Ino Moses, Sylvester Uwadiae, Mosis Obakpolor, Iyen Agbonifo-Obaseki (Mother Hen), and Frances Osunde Okungbowa. They have featured as either as actors/actresses or producers/directors in movies such as *Ikoka* (2003), *Ikuemitin* (2007), *Emotan* (2003), *Ekuase* (2004), *Agbawu* (2007), *Yasin* (2008), *Olidara* (2008), *Ebuwa* (2009), *Ovbimwen Osemwen* (2011), *Ebuwa* (2009), *Okagbe N'ogbeti* (2011), *Adesuwa* (2012), *Osamede* (2024), *Akate* (2025), *Owa Ozuo* (2025), *Esista Evbuebo* (2026), among other great Benin films.

Filmographically, Omoera (2024) has annotated over 500 movies of Benin-language expression. Between then and now over fifty Benin-language films have been produced in the evolving poetics of the indigenous film culture. Some of these include: *Enogie of America* (2024, Ehis Agoba), *Edobor* (2024, Sandra Love TV), *Ailele* (2024, Pick Up Entertainment), *Ovbiye Nikor* (2024, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Noyankpan 1&2* (2024, Nuela Ediku TV), *Aizeyeosabor 1&2* (2024, Woman of Dignity TV), *Oletin* (2024, Osas O. Disk), *Emeri* (2024, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Edunekhui* (2024, Bright Obakpolor TV), *Oghomwen* (2024, Ehis Agoba), *Aghonghon* (2024, Max Million TV Show), *Iye Ohenhen* (2024, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Uvbi* (2024, Max Million TV Show), *Amahense* (2024, Victor Aghahowa), *Agbon (Life)* (2024, GE Films Entertainment), *Osayomore* (2024, Exco Films TV), *Owa Eghianye* (2024, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Nomasokpia* (2024, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Ugiaban* (2024, Sandra Love TV), *Odumakiti* (2024, Idowu Agbes Parliament Ltd), *Omohu* (2024, Exco Films TV), *Pa Lugard* (2024, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Irinayasiekpo* (2024, Sylvester Uwadiae),

Ighodaro (2024, Matthew Obasuyi TV), *Omosigho* (2024, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Ukpomokpa* (2024, Sylvester Uwadiae), and *Osamede* (2024, James Omokwe).

For Benin Nollywood films produced post-2024, we have *Ederao* (2025, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen), *Ivbialeke* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Idia* (2025, Ese Ariremu and Jide ‘Jblaze’ Oyegbile), *Noguese* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Atuari* (2025, Neulla Ediku TV), *Erhun-Iye* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Orhion-Gborhion* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *E.P.V.C Noga* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Imayayi* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Amadi* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Aibuedefe* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Nomakueyo* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Ofen Owa* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Airiose* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Emwen-Evbuebo* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Osayuki* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Omo vbe Iye dan* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Ahoemuen Iye* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Nomabie* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Enotiemwonwa* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Osemwen* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Umawagbon* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Esagien Iye 1 and 2* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Ehimwenma* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Igiowamwen* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Edubiemen Udin* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Iziegbe* (2025, Matthew Obasuyi), *Evbakhavbokun* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Ole Indomie* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Osanoherhun* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Obodineda* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Ukposisi* (2025, Idowu Agbes), *Omotor* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Igho Erhamwen* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), *Osarobo* (2025, Sylvester Uwadiae), among others. These films, in terms of content and context, embody, exhibit and assert Benin cultural motifs.

2.0 THE BENIN WORLDVIEW: AN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE BENIN FILM

Generally, worldview refers to a comprehensive and personal conception or view of humanity, the world, or life. According to the Edo Arts and Cultural Heritage Institute (EACHI), Benin is one of the oldest traditional kingdoms in West Africa that still exists today (EACHI, 2009, para. 6). The Benin people have popular songs such as the ‘Eguae ruese’ folksong that goes thus:

Text in Benin

Kponmwenoba me
Kponmwen ekhaimwen Oba me
Iwina ne eguae ye vbe
Edo oyemwen

English Translation

Thank the Oba for me
Thank his chiefs for me
The work the palace is
doing in Benin pleases me

Chorus

Eeee Eguae ruese

Thanks go to the palace
for everything

Culturally, Igbe (2006, p.59) points out that the male folks are generally regarded as the head because the traditional Benin home or community is built around patrilineal or patriarchal ‘edifices’ such as the ‘Omodion’ (eldest son) inheriting the estate of a deceased person. Traditionally, a man with many wives is said to have many ‘urho’ or doors; that is, if he has three wives, he has three ‘urho’ or ‘doors’ (Eweka, 1992). On the socio-religious plinth, Izevbigie (1978); Obonor (1994, p.1); Ebohon (1996, p.20); Lawal-Osula (2005, p.7) assert that the traditional Benin person leads a sedentary (even though this is fast changing) lifestyle and believes in the existence of a supreme God/being (Osanobua) whom he or she worships and communicates with through intermediaries such as the ancestors, Ehi (guardian angel) and other small deities such as Olokun, and Ogun.

On the economic front, the Benin people are industrious and specialise in bronze-making, farming, coral bead-making, and general merchandising. Osawaru and Eghafona (2004, p.82) contend that the present-day bronze casters in the Igun quarters of Benin City are reminders of the high sense

of craftsmanship and industry of the Benins in the days of yore. Technologically, Osagie (2000, pp.64-65) states that the early Benin local technology developed in about ten base areas, including metal, wood, ivory, bone, shell, fibre, leather, clay, mud, and stone. However, there seems to be a gradual but consistent shift from the ancient Benin worldview to the one now constantly assailed from many angles. This trend is due to modernity, urbanisation, foreign religion, globalisation, foreign languages, and other contemporary challenges.

A diachronic review of the different forms of artistic/media production in Benin would show that landmarks, myths, and folklores linked to the Oba have been the major sources from which indigenous artists – dramatists, bronze casters, novelists, sculptors, poets, bards, musicians, dancers, minstrels, carvers, among others, have continued to draw inspiration. For instance, a careful examination of the creative works – stage plays, poems, carvings, sculptures, music, etc. – of O.S.B. Omoregie, High Priest Osemwingie Ebohon, Ambassador Osayomore Joseph, Sir Victor Uwaifo, Akaba Man, Chief Arala Osula, Evbinma Ogie, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, Peddie Okao, among other Benin performing artistes attests to this fact. Benin film, being a cultural product of the latest technologies available and accessible to the Benin people appears to have become the trendiest audio-visual purveyor that aggregates the advantages and essences of other art forms/forms of media productions it met to assert itself and gain credibility and acceptance of the Benin populace.

3.0 A SURVEY OF THE TAXONOMY OF BENIN-LANGUAGE FILMS

As an emergent stratum of Nollywood, the Benin-language film has grown in leaps and bounds in its over four decades of visual existence. In this section, I seek to highlight and X-ray the classificatory modes of Benin-language film as could be distilled from the over 500 movies that I have annotated over the years.

3.1 Epic/Historical/Folkloric Films

This category of Benin films deals essentially with the history of the Benin people through different prisms. While a majority attempt to recapture, in filmic form, the heroic feats and activities of past Obas in the Benin kingdom, others dwell on the activities of great medicine men and women whose legends have remained extant in the rich Benin adages, proverbs, and folktales (Omoera, 2024). For instance, the film, *Ebomisi 1&2* (2003) recapitulates the titanic clashes among some great medicine men in the history of Benin. Of particular interest is the haughty and boastful Ebomisi, who is egregiously known for challenging his fellow medicine men to duels, which he always wins. But Obonayen, another medicine man of tremendous renown, as a way of helping the Oba check the excesses of overbearing citizens, stopped Ebomisi's act of terrorism by neutralising his charms. Today, the tale is one of the adages in Benin folklore and family circles. The films tell of great betrayals, heroic feats, and the enduring spirit exhibited by the past Obas and other men and women of prominence, as well as the lowly people in Benin of yore. They rely heavily on Benin orature for their subject matter. These traditional stories could be actual events, myths, legends, or folktales, but what is unmistakable is that they are rooted in some distant idyllic Benin world that, interestingly, still commands respect and acceptance in the land today. The films draw from the existing Benin theatre culture, which is deeply rooted in the customs and traditions of the Benin race (Omoera, 2008a, 2024). Other films in this category are *Ikoka* (2003), whose sleeve is shown in Figure 2, *Emotan* (2003), *Ekuase* (2004), *Imaguero* (2004), and *Adesuwa* (2005), *Iyeoba* (2023), *Odumakiti* (2024).

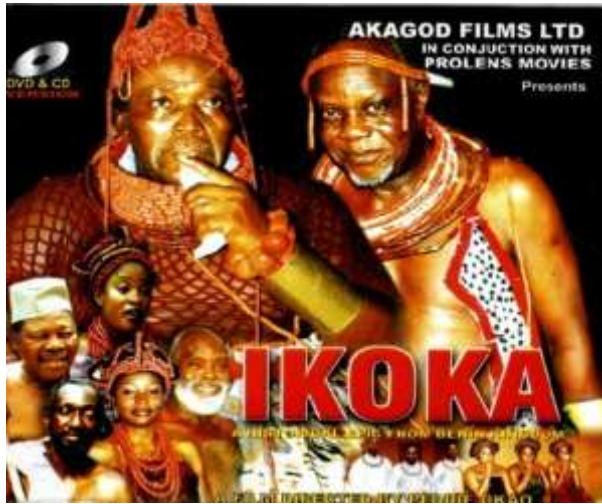


Figure 2: The Sleeve of Benin Epic Film, *Ikoka*, Photo Credit: ProLens Movies Limited

3.2 Comic/Hilarious Films

This category of Benin video dramas deliberately explores buffoonery, light-hearted issues, and, sometimes, a series of mistaken identities that ultimately elicit rib-wracking laughter from the audience. *Atete* (2001) emblematises a classic example of Benin films that belong here. In the gripping film, the mischievous son of a native doctor, Ebose (Brother Osagie), gets commissioned by a parent church to go to their rural branch and assist another pastor in the work of evangelism. He gets there and performs fake miracles to swindle the villagers out of money and sleep with their beautiful daughters. When he eventually impregnates a number of the girls, he begins to speak in ‘tongues’ that they should rejoice as it is a sign of the Holy Ghost’s visitation. Though he tries to escape justice, he inadvertently runs into the hands of security operatives invited by the village elders.

Other films in the comic/hilarious mode are *G.S.M Oghisoegbe* (1999), *Esogia Nobavbaro* (1999), *Ozeba 1* (2001), *Esergent Efosa* (2002), *Ikuvbogie* (2003), *Iyelekute* (2005), *Oletuketuke* (2006), *Ebvare-E-Mwuikpo* (2008), *Ekusu-Ekpo* (2008), *Okpia Nebuebu* (2009), *Esuku* (2011), *Omobe*

vbo Zuo (2013), *Egboghakan 1&2* (2014), *Ukwu Man 1* (2023), *Pa Lugard* (2024), *E.P.V.C Noga* (2025), to mention a few.

3.3 Rags to Riches/Materialistic/Social Commentary Films

This typology designates those films that explore contemporary and burning issues of the day as they affect Benin society in particular and Nigeria in general. The films attempt to capture, in the form of film narratives, the economic, social, and human challenges the Benins have contended with or are still contending with locally and internationally. Problems such as the shameful exodus of their youths to foreign lands in search of greener pastures, the frequent sale of family houses and desecration of family values by both male and female folks, and the celebration of ill-gotten wealth, regardless of whether it is from kidnapping, prostitution, cybercrime, armed robbery, or other dishonourable means. The endless list invariably points collectively to a larger spectrum of problems besetting the Nigerian state. Other video dramas cast in the rags to riches/materialistic/social commentary mode are *Uyinmwun I, 2&3* (2006), *Agbawu* (2007), *Olidara* (2008), *Ekenakema* (2011), *Okagbe N'ogbeti* (2011), *Gbeghe* (2023), *Iziegbe* (2024), *Evbakhavbokun* (2025), *Esista Evbuebo* (2026), among others.

3.4 Pentecostalism/Christian Films

The films that belong here derive their meaning, significance, and taxonomy from the thoughts and ideas embedded in them. These films linguistically indigenize the Bible and Christian doctrines to entertain and evangelize the people of Benin. Popular films in this mode are *Erhun Avan* (2002), *Etinosa* (2004), *Osaibueku* (2005), *Udazi* (2005), *Pastor Igbinosun* (2008), *Ahenmwun* (2010), *Amugbugbe* (2011), *Edokhiekhie* (2011), *Osahenhen* (2021), *Osayomore* (2024), *Osarobo* (2025), and many others.

3.5 Documentary Films

The ideology underlining the documentary film as an art form hinges on its aspiration to be a medium of truth (Oklobia and Onwuliri, 2020, p.80;

Evwierhoma, Oklobia & Thomas, 2022). In the Benin language film stratum of Nollywood, Onions is reputed to be the first to present documentaries in the home video format. Some of his documentary videos include *Echoes of a Kingdom: Great Benin* (2010), *The 7th Aken of Benin Obaship: Oba Akensua II 1933-1978* (n.d), *Arousa N'ohuan-ren [Holy Aruosa Cathedral]* (n.d), *Avbiama Masquerade and Priest* (n.d), *Aisiokuoba 1, 2, 3 & 4* (n.d), *The 38th Oba of Benin: Oba Erediauwa, CFR, The Oba of Great Benin Kingdom* (n.d), and *Witness to Survival: Kingdom vs. Kingdom* (2010). These video works usually contain real experiences, real situations, and settings within Benin's socio-cultural milieu (Omoera, 2016, 2024).

3.6 Musical Video Dramas

It is one of the trendiest of the categories of Benin-language films, as noted by Omoera and Aluede (2016). Films in this class combine operatic characteristics of old music traditions with popular Benin dances such as 'Esakpaide', 'Ugho', and 'Ewuwuagba,' and give them dramatic twists against contemporary discourses in Benin society. For example, *Wagie Emwenma Gha Yeman's* (2008) preachment, in the main, calls for a rallying of the Benin people to advance the race in an increasingly competitive world.

3.7 Action/Sci-fi Films

This is another trendy discernible genre of film in the evolving Benin video culture. Films that belong here are action-based and ambitious in terms of scientific try-outs, deployment of digital technologies, and sanguineous and resourceful experimentations with local but contemporary themes and issues of crime, deceit, violence, youthful exuberance, betrayal, or sell-out, which are very widespread among the younger generations in the Benin locality. Evidence from my field trips indicates that Max Odunamen Odaro is a clear pioneer in this category of Benin films as he is reputed to have made *Edevice* (2013), the first-ever action/sci-fi film in the Benin film circuit of Nollywood (Omoera, 2016, 2024).

Edevice tells the story of some corrupt security agents (under the leadership of Bishop) who sell a nuclear weapon to a ruthless mob boss (Oscar),

knowing full well they are incomplete. To conceal this secret, the security agents exterminate the scientist (Daniel Omasehi) who developed the weapon. On discovering the cheating, Oscar lets loose his gang members. They inflict pain and agony on the land in vengeance on Bishop and his cohorts. The only solution is to find the missing link, and the secret lies with Omasehi's son, who is now on the run. That is the catch of the remarkable film as indicated in Figure 3. Another film that belongs here is *Ighogho* (2014), also directed by Max Odunamen Odaro and from the staples of Kaydee Films. The application of technological equipment and artificial intelligence is the hallmark of this Benin-language film genre.



Figure 3: Screen Grab of an Action Scene in *Edevice*, Photo Credit: Kaydee Films

3.8 Horror Thriller Films

Perhaps, the newest type in the evolutionary poetics of Benin-language films to emerge is the horror thriller film. Ordinarily, horror thrillers are western genres but as an emerging category in Benin visual culture it combines suspense, fear, haunting twists, and fretfulness in stories that are woven against unmistakable Benin cultural essence and mythological lore to produce spellbinding visual edutainment. For instance, *Idia* (2025), co-directed by Ese Ariremu and Jide 'Jblaze' Oyegbile, relates the story of a naïve orphan who gets adopted by a strange family as their housekeeper,

but must help their lineage continue at the expense of her own sanity. Another example is *Enakhe* (2021, dir. Victor Sanchez Aghahowa). There could be more in the taxonomic categorisation of Benin films; however, the foregoing are the ones that have been identified so far in the evolutionary process that Benin film is still undergoing.

4.0 EVOLUTIONARY MILESTONES OR WAVES IN BENIN-LANGUAGE FILMS

The Nigerian film of Benin-language expression has evolved in its several decades of practice that is worth poetising. From the filmographical corpus of Benin-language films (Omoera, 2008a, 2008b, 2014a, 2024), which is bursting at the seams and serving as veritable means of entertainment, relaxation, or even diversion among the populace, we could discern certain evolutionary milestones or waves. We have the first milestone or pre-*Evbakoe* wave, second milestone or *Evbakoe* wave, third milestone or Ikoka wave, and fourth milestone or post-Ikoka wave.

4.1 Pre-Evbakoe Wave

This is the first phase of Benin-language film evolution. It was between 1984 and 1998. During this period, Benin-language dramas were shot in video format and sold in motor parks, market places by Benin theatre/cultural groups and shown on television stations. Ogunsuyi (2007, p.66) informs that, by 1987, he had produced *Erhi Ifueko* (*Ifueko's Father*), a folk drama for the screen at the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Benin City. Also, Ozin Oziengbe (in an interview in 2009), noted that as early as 1988, he had produced films in the Benin-language, among which are *Ikioya* (1988), *Ewemade* (1989), and *Ehizomwanogie* (1990). At any rate, these screenplays/works of Ogunsuyi and Ozin Oziengbe were, technically speaking, television dramas couched in the mode of the legendary Benin television drama, *Aimiuwu* (1984), subtitled in English as *The Pot of Life*, which won awards for the NTA, Benin City in the 1980s. The transition from these Benin television dramas to feature video dramas of one to two

or three hours, shot on electromagnetic tapes, was sparked off by the production of *Udefiagbon* (1992) by the Uyiedo Theatre Troupe.

In Beninland, theatre troupes such as Uyiedo Theatre Troupe (UTT), Oziengbe Cultural Troupe (OCT), formerly the Voices of Benin, Adolo Theatre Troupe (ATT), Inneh Theatre Troupe (ITT), Edo State Cultural Troupe (ESCT), Aisosa Cultural Troupe (ACT), Iden Cultural Troupe (ICT), Rainbow Theatre Troupe (RTT), and Awanokhueni Theatre Troupe (ATT), started to video record their performances and almost in a natural progression began to produce video dramas for home entertainment in the pre-Evbakoe era.

4.2 Evbakoe Wave

This is the second phase of Benin-language evolution. It was between 1998 and 2003. It was rather a short period but equally very defining for the emerging film industry. Notwithstanding the evolutionary claims in the pre-Evbakoe era, Peddie Okao, a prolific Benin film producer and distributor (in an interview in 2012), stated that *Evbakoe*, produced in 1998, remains widely accepted as the first significant Benin video drama.

4.3 Ikoka Wave

This is the third phase of Benin-language film evolution. It was between 2003 and 2016. This was a very revolutionary period in Benin Nollywood, when more hands, both professional and entrepreneurial, joined the creative combustion, leading to an explosion of some sort in Benin film production arena. We saw Nollywood greats like Peddie Okao producing chartbusters like *Ikoka* (2003), a three-part epic tragedy, which explores the crisis that engulfed Benin kingdom some three hundred years ago. The film featured Justus Esiri, Olu Jacobs and other leading Nollywood actors and was distributed nationwide and beyond. The period also saw Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen making movies like *Oto-ere* (2005) in which JC Jungle (the lead character) wielded awesome power, like his ilk in *Udazi* (2005, dir. Peddie Okao) and *Omwengho* (dir. Peddie Okao 2008) to forcefully

annex other men's land, wives and other valuables with fierce brutality. *Agbawu* (2007, dir. Lancelot Imasuen), *Ebuwa 1 & 2* (dir. Lancelot Imasuen 2009), among others, were produced in this period.

4.4 Post-Ikoka Wave

This is the fourth evolutionary trend of the Benin-language film. It is marked by ingenious application of technology, use of modern filmmaking gadgets, branding, attempts at monetisation and the development of sustainable distribution platforms. This period is between 2016 and the present. It has been called “the new age culture of film with culturally blended casts, with cross over actors in a creative bridge between the mainstream Nollywood veterans and the rising Benin (Edo) creative force” (Ino Moses in interview in 2025). Filmmakers like Peddie Okao and other stakeholders like Pedro Agbonifo-Obaseki, Ogie Ogedegbe, Eliel Otote, Billy Kings, Davidson Izegaegbe, Iyen Agbonifo-Obaseki, Ino Moses, and Edwin Irahabor, have built secure-video-on-demand (SVOD) platforms such as igodo.tv to screen movies locally and globally. Also, filmmakers like Sylvester Uwadiae, Christy Jesurobo, Eunice Omoregie, Omadeli Uwagboe, have created YouTube channels to market and monetise their films. In this maturational stage, Benin-language filmmakers are partnering with the larger Nollywood industry players to increase their share. We now have film festivals and cinemas such as the Edo State International Film Festival (ESIFF), Benin City Film Festival (BCFF), Kada Cinemas, and FilmOne, operating in Benin City and enriching the cinema culture and industry.

Table 1: Highlights of ROI in Highest Grossing Films Running in Cinema Theatres in Nigeria (2016-2025)

S/N	TITLE	YEAR	DOMESTIC GROSS	DIRECTORS/ STUDIOS
1	<i>Behind the Scenes</i>	2025	₦2,103,039,706	Funke Akindele/ FilmOne
2	<i>A Tribe Called Judah</i>	2023	₦1,404,187,806	Funke Akindele/ FilmOne
3	<i>Everybody Loves Jenifa</i>	2024	₦1,088,000,000	Funke Akindele/ FilmOne
4	<i>Battle on Buka Street</i>	2022	₦668,423,056	Funke Akindele/ FilmOne
5	<i>Omo Ghetto: The Saga</i>	2020	₦636,129,120	SceneOne Productions
6	<i>The Wedding Party</i>	2016	₦452,288,605	Ebonylife Films / FilmOne / Inkblot Prod / Koga Studios
7	<i>The Wedding Party 2</i>	2017	₦433,197,377	Ebonylife Films / FilmOne / Inkblot Production / Koga Studios
8	<i>Chief Daddy</i>	2018	₦387,540,749	EbonyLife Films
9	<i>Brotherhood</i>	2022	₦328,881,120	Greoh Studios
10	<i>King of Thieves</i>	2022	₦320,805,150	Euphoria360 Media / Anthill Studios
11	<i>Malaika</i>	2023	₦302,086,925	Toyin Abraham Films Production
12	<i>Sugar Rush</i>	2019	₦287,053,270	Greoh Media / Jungle Filmworks / Empire Mates Entertainment
13	<i>Ijakumo</i>	2022	₦278,496,384	Toyin Abraham Films Production / Filmone
14	<i>Christmas in Miami</i>	2021	₦265,583,000	Corporate World <u>Pictures</u>
15	<i>King of Boys</i>	2018	₦244,775,758	Kemi Adetiba <u>Visuals</u>

16	<i>Merry Men: The Real Yoruba Demons</i>	2018	₦235,628,358	Corporate World Entertainment / FilmOne / Gush Media
17	<i>Aki & Pawpaw</i>	2021	₦234,076,437	Play Network Studios/ Film One
18	<i>Merry Men 2: Another Mission</i>	2019	₦234,505,169	Corporate World Pictures / Gush Media / FilmOne
19	<i>Ada Omo Daddy</i>	2023	₦218,754,222	Mercy Aigbe Prod /Captain of the Sea Prod/Adezak Prod
20	<i>Your Excellency</i>	2019	₦186,340,948	EbonyLife Films
21	<i>A Trip to Jamaica</i>	2016	₦180,264,964	Corporate World Pictures
22	<i>Prophetess</i>	2021	₦178,744,340	Anthill Studios

Compiled by the Author

5.0 THE ORANGE ECONOMY: GLOBALISING TO LOCALISE AND LOCALISING TO GLOBALISE NOLLYWOOD FILMS

Globally and locally, Nollywood films are rapidly growing edutainment products or phenomena that traverse several divides from traditional to modern, religious to commercial, and sectarian to democratic agendas. As part of the emergent orange economy, Nollywood is arguably the most diversified film ecology on the continent of Africa with distinct production points of releases and the exploration of diverse subject matters.

There is the ‘global’ in the ‘local’ and the ‘local’ in the ‘global’ in contemporary world. Hence, many countries are developing their capacities to take advantage of the orange economy. The orange economy is the new economy that is outside mineral resources such as crude oil (Epochi-Orlise & Omoera, 2022; Omoera & Joe, 2024; Joe & Omoera, 2025).

Table 1 shows the return on investment (ROI) of 22 top grossing films that ran in cinemas in Nigeria between 2016 and 2025, with *Behind the Scenes* (dir. Funke Akindele, 2025) crossing ₦2 billion mark at the box office, becoming the first Nollywood film to achieve the milestone.

5.1 The ‘Triad of Screen Power’ in Benin-Language Film and Nollywood

In plural ways, the media in Africa, including film have been central to the processes of (popular) cultural production and circulation on the continent and even beyond. The media have, therefore, been telling the continent to the world, imagining and re-imagining it in new and innovative ways. This process has been immensely helped by new media technologies such as digital and satellite television/radio, the internet, mobile telephony, and social media platforms all of which have participated actively in mediating and structuring the idea of the popular in African cultural studies.

Flowing from this, I wish to put forward an intellectual construct to reinforce the power of film and improve the gains of glocalising Nollywood, with specific reference to Nigerian indigenous language films, using the

Benin-language as fulcrum of discussion. The construct is tagged, the ‘Triad of Screen Power’ or ‘Screen Power Triad.’ By this, I mean the professional, technical and smart expansion and appropriation of film as art, film as business and film as science. Film has over the years been considered mainly in its artistic or creative terms but in a new world economy, the industry of film requires and deserves critical attention given its business possibilities. In the same breadth, the science of film is crucial because successful filmmaking in contemporary society is all about adequate deployment of technology (tech). The ‘Triad of Screen Power’ offers a tripod pathway to harness the skill sets, creative ideas, business capacities, scientific nous, logics, etc., that inhere in film to empower the populace, especially the younger generations, to make smart decisions in creating edutainment products for glocal audiences.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I strongly believe that if we combine the ‘Triad of Screen Power’ with my earlier postulation: ‘Homefrontism’ (Omoera, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b, 2017a, 2020, 2024), the socio-cultural and socio-economic gains in the Nigerian indigenous language film sector will be much. With the “Homefrontism Paradigm,” I argued for a progressive order in the historical, sociological, economic, cultural, aesthetics-epistemological and formalistic studies of Benin films (Omoera, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b, 2017a, 2020, 2024). Homefrontism, as a concept, emphasises the need for the creators of filmic and other cultural and creative contents (mass media contents) to continuously look inwards into societal norms, culture(s), history, folklores, traditions, proverbs, myths and legends of African descent and make them the foundation or core of their creative and entertainment output. Such an effort is likely to push us towards a new poetics for indigenous African film culture in Nigeria and beyond.

I further argued that “Homefrontism” calls for a painstaking inward-looking attitude of filmmakers towards the cultural milieu in making video films (Omoera, 2017a). It was enunciated to counter the anglicising of Nigerian

filmic narratives and stressed the compelling need for the localisation of the linguistic, artistic and didactic aspects of cinematic output emanating from Nigeria (Omoera, 2014a). I termed it a new form of “glocalisation of Nigerian filmic contents” and posited that “film and other edutainment products are more likely to succeed when the product or service is adapted specifically to each locality or culture it is marketed in” (Omoera, 2017a). The paradigm further stresses that actors or thespians in film should reflect their norms and cultures in their speech, language, costumes as well as every other element that makes up the mise-en-scene (Omoera, Nwaoboli & Emwinromwankhoe, 2024).

Except in cases where these actors are made to reflect foreign cultures, sounding foreign culminates in criticisms as filmmakers must give primacy to local cultures before considering foreign cultures. For example, while Gina Prince-Bythewood’s (2022) *The Woman King* is acclaimed globally as a riveting historical and epic African film, Jimmy Odukoya’s anglicised accent as Oba Ade in the film has attracted some backlash from some Nigerian film scholars, critics and theorists who argue that the actor’s manner of speaking did not accurately reflect the norms prevalent in the film’s setting. Benin film and other Nigerian indigenous language films readily stand out amidst mediatised cultures as embodying unique communicative figurations. Okezie (2010, p.204) asserts that:

The languages and customs of Africa define and identify the people in their local settings. They guide their behaviour and determine the outcome of their efforts. It means that without their languages and customs, the continent has no identification and thus cannot be defined, cannot think, nor act constructively and independently, which are necessary elements for development.

Okezie’s position underscores the intellectual resourcefulness of our indigenous languages. Therefore, filmpreneurs, scholars, critics, enthusiasts, and theorists, among other types of audiences of Benin-language films and indeed other indigenous language productions in the Niger Delta region and

Nigeria generally, should embrace and possibly adopt the deconstructive dialectics of ‘Homefrontism’ to theoretically benchmark the output of the teeming indigenous language filmmaking cultures. The case for Homefrontism is underscored by the fact that “film or cinematography has developed from mere display of scientific curiosity to a fantastic and formidable medium that could be used to establish identity and store information about peoples, cultures, ecologies and happenings” (Omoera, 2020b, p.11; 2011).

Homefrontism pushes further the acclaimed Nigerian saying that “charity begins at home” and has the following as its key assumptions: Filmmakers and other media content creators should constantly look inwards and pattern their contents after the norms, mores, customs, traditions, proverbs, history, artefacts, heroisms and folklores of the society wherein they reside. Filmmakers and other media content creators should reject western ideals or negotiate them because they are likely not effective for addressing local challenges and instead look for local ways of addressing societal and developmental challenges. By constantly tapping into local resources for production of content, filmmakers and other media content creators can help to massively shape citizens’ notions and perceptions and archive history for posterity.

I strongly believe that if the foregoing is expertly deployed alongside the ‘Triad of Screen Power,’ the practice and scholarship of Benin-language film and other indigenous language film cultures or productions in Nigeria would experience artistic, commercial and technological breather. To exemplify the point, Netflix cancelled all its contractual agreements with Nigerian and African filmmakers in early December of 2024. This decision sent shock waves in the cultural and creative ecosystems in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. However, if we deploy the values of ‘Homefrontism’ and consciously deploy the ‘Triad of Screen Power’ by looking inward and optimising the building of our local artistic, industrial and technological capacities, our Benin-language filmmakers and Nollywood content creators

would not fear or fret over the so-called exit. After all, we have the population advantage and waiting audiences, if we are able to build cinemas in our localities and develop technologies to power local initiatives to develop distribution networks, including streaming platforms and support them to grow sustainably and accommodate trained youths in our localities.

5.2 How Youths Can Start Up Businesses/MSMEs in Filmmaking in Benin Locality/Nigeria

Having established the boundlessness of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) opportunities for Benin youths in particular and Nigerian youths in filmmaking, it is pertinent that we closely look at how they can set up or start up MSMEs of their choice in the Nigerian film ecology and internationally drawing from the ‘Triad of Screen Power’ construct. We have noted with empirical evidence that film production business and its cognate services are lucrative in Nigeria. It has actually turned into a mega-business, and given the rate of the business growth occasioned by the positive supply and demand dynamics of film and video works in the entertainment and creative subsector of the Nigerian economy, it is considered a multi-billion-naira industry. As Nollywood booms and redefines African life, many start-ups tend to believe that it is only the directors, actors/actresses, producers and screenwriters that can make money. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Becoming a film director/producer/actor/screenwriter is not the only business opportunity in the movie industry or the only way to earn a living in the movie business (InfoGuide Nigeria, 2020). There are so many other entrepreneurial opportunities in the industry that start-ups or smartpreneurs or filmpreneurs will find interesting and lucrative as earlier noted.

Without a doubt, the triadic strength of film has an inherent multiplier-effect on all participants in the filmmaking ecosystem, whether in the artistic, business or technical senses. As a creative business controlled by the emotional reaction of its audience (customers), it must be conducted on monetary realities as it edutains, using available technology within a time

frame. The handling of this technology along with the artistic creation of edutaining narratives or weavings for an audience by a team of skilled men and women (filmpreneurs or smartpreneurs) has great implications in the supply and demand dynamics in the creative business of filmmaking. The film technology gives opportunity for the production of a type of narrative (e.g., feature, comedy, documentary, horror thriller as earlier noted under the classification of Benin films) that serves the commercial interests of the producer and distributor, and the viewers whose appeal dwells on the reality that it offers scenes they can easily identify with. It is this continuous interaction among these productive ‘forces’ in the creative business triangle of filmmaking that leads to their socio-economic and socio-cultural empowerment and growth. Figure 4 is an illustration of the point made.

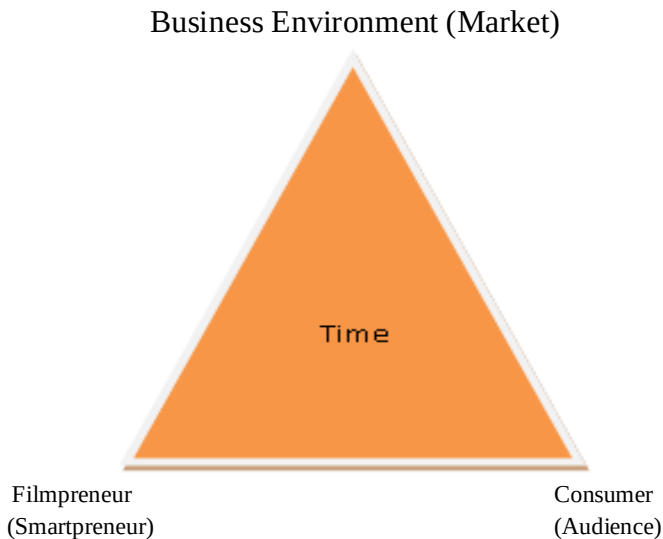


Figure 4: Creative Business Triangle in Filmmaking (Adapted from the Triangle of Business by Eni-Yimini Agoro, 2018)

Is any youth in Benin locality or the Niger Delta region of Nigeria wondering how to start up their own business in film in light of Figure 4? Once

upon a time, such a thing would have been hard to imagine. But today's digital world makes it easy for entrepreneurs/filmpreneurs/smartpreneurs to use their talents and resources to create their own businesses, even within the rather insular world of Nollywood. There is unlimited number of businesses one could create. All you need to do as a smartpreneur is to explore and exploit the creative business triangle in filmmaking within the limits of time, resources and available market. On the technical side, movies require lighting, cameras, sound equipment. You could start up a rental company, or be one of the professionals who do this kind of work. You could create or rent costumes, have your own editing studio, or create music scores, among others (Omoera, 2021). The business possibilities are never-ending, depending on your passion. According to InfoGuide Nigeria (2020), some tips to help get any youth started include:

a. *Find a mentor*: It is hard to jump into the movie business without some guidance. To get off on the right track, find a mentor in the field who can help you navigate the potential pitfalls of the industry, someone you can go to with questions and will help you brainstorm ideas. If you do not know anyone who could fit this role, ask around. Let your friends, family, and acquaintances know that you would appreciate being connected to anyone they know in the film industry. Your school's alumni office, local film academy or community liaison may be able to link you up, as well.

b. *Raise some money*: It would be a great idea if a start-up already has some funds to start up business. If not, he or she may want to investigate getting a small business loan or grant. You can also sell your ideas to close friends and family to invest in your company. Send out a professional letter (not email) to remind everyone about your dream. Describe both your passion and your drive, and ask folks to contribute whatever they can. When you have some bigger projects under your belt, you can seek out professional investors.

c. Get working: Start building up your business. At first you will probably want to start small. Are there universities nearby with film schools? Offer your services to student filmmakers to get experience. Are there small advertising firms in your area, or local businesses whose adverts could use some help? Whether you work on the creative or technical side of the film business, have an open mind as to what companies you can work with. Nobody starts out working on a Nollywood or Hollywood chartbuster.

d. Spread the word: Once you build up a decent resume of companies and individuals you have worked with (who will ideally provide good references), reach out again to everyone you know and try to explain that you're looking to move on to bigger projects. Make sure that you reapply for jobs you were too 'green' to get in the beginning. Once you understand how to start up your own business in film, the opportunities are limitless.

As a smartpreneur in any of the film business area, you must try to put your nose to the ground and follow developments in government policies and industry decisions and operations. You must learn how to write winning proposals, do feasibility studies, and oral presentations before government and non-government organisations (NGOs) that give loans/grants and other facilities to start-ups. For instance, the federal government of Nigeria in its 2021 budget proposal submitted to the National Assembly planned to release the first tranche of N20 billion of the N75 billion allocated as part of the Nigerian Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), which is expressly targeted at training Nigerian youths in different vocations and empowering them to be self-employed. Other youth empowerment programmes such as N-Power, Youth Employment and Development Initiative (YEDI), MTN Yello Star programme in Nigeria, Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and Youth Enterprise with Innovation (YouWin), and First Bank SME programmes, are available in designated centres across in the Benin locality and the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. You can access them to set up your film business and be self-employed.

The Bank of Industry Nollywood Project Nollywood Act (BOI Nollywood Act), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) also have programmes aimed at supporting Nigerian youths to train in artisanal activities, including the creative businesses immanent in filmmaking.

Furthermore, a smartpreneur would do well to join established industry groups or guilds as a sure way of learning the ropes in the trades or professions they may have chosen to develop their careers in. Scene designers, cineastes and costumiers are increasingly aligning and registering with local chapters of national professional guilds such as Actors Guild of Nigeria (AGN), Directors Guild of Nigeria (DGN), Nigerian Society of Editors (NSE), Creative Designers Association of Nigeria (CDAN), Association of Movie Marketers (AMM), Nigerian Society of Cinematographers (NSC), Screen Writers Guild of Nigeria (SWG N), Association of Movie Producers (AMP), Film Educators Guild of Nigeria (FEGON), and Nigeria Digital Content Regulation Conference (NDCRC), as a way of honing their professional skills. As the youths do this, there is the likelihood that they would begin to make vertical and horizontal relationships in the Benin film industry and the larger Nollywood that would rub off on their businesses.

Sustained productive interactions and creative collaborations between relevant governments agencies (NICO, NFC, BOI, CBN, etc.), academia, Federal University Otuoke, among other thought generating centres), and Nollywood industry players (Mainframe Pictures, Lancewealth Images, etc.) would indeed provide veritable youth empowerment frameworks or strengthen or reinforce existing ones in the context of MSMEs. MSMEs are regarded as the engine-room of growth required for the much-needed sustainable development of the Nigerian economy, especially in terms of job creation for unemployed youths (Awodiya, 2011). This is consistent with the global trend in which micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are considered as economic catalysts and the bedrock of industrialisation. The exploits of Nigerian youths in film and related industries

continue to improve the livelihoods of many families and positively impacting the Nigerian economy and image of the nation. This validates the argument that through the ‘Triad of Screen Power,’ a robust triadic appropriation with adequate knowledge of the opportunities that abound in filmmaking, many of the Nigerian youths currently unemployed could empower themselves and become active in the sustenance of Nigeria’s economy and in improving the lot of their localities.

The government of Edo State and some consortia/stakeholders have made some efforts to implement some of the points raised. However, sustainability remains a critical sore point. Acknowledging film as a veritable tool for job creation and youth empowerment, the Godwin Obaseki-led government organised the Edo State International Film Festival (ESIFF) in 2022 and 2023, where I chaired the jury and co-chaired the jury respectively. Figure 5 shows one of the closing ceremonies where His Excellency Godwin Obaseki appreciated the work of the jury that I headed. The festival was arguably an impressive exploration of the “Triad of Screen Power.” It was a revolutionary effort of the people, for the people and by the people that was embraced locally and internationally. Ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) was given for the overall best film and five thousand dollars (\$5,000) each for best film made in Edo and best Benin (Edo) indigenous language movie. The best Edo language film was awarded to *Agbonaye* (dir. Peddie Okao, 2015). Also, there was \$2,000 dollars each for short films in three categories sponsored by Phoenix browser, namely, best film in use of technology, best student film, best cell phone/tab film. Other benefits for Edo residents were free film masterclasses facilitated by industry experts, such as Pat Oghre Imobhio, Kabat Esosa Egbon, Mary Njoku, Charles Novia, Pedro Agbonifo-Obaseki, Kene Mkparu and Victor Aghahowa. Some interested guests and participants were taken on a trip to tourists’ destinations in Edo State and MSMEs had a business field day.



Figure 5: Photograph taken during my Service as Head of Jury at the Inaugural Edo State International Film Festival (ESIFF), 2022

6.0 PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE OF BENIN NOLLYWOOD IN A GLOCALISED WORLD

The new economy where cultural and edutainment products such as film are in high demand draws on the expertise of several professionals and collaborators. This implies that the new economy where CCIs play a crucial role if well-developed could absorb above the line and below the line personnel that would be readily supported by the very youthful population of the over 240 million Nigerians. At the Benin Nollywood level, certain proposals are germane to leapfrog the art, business and science of filmmaking. Firstly, Benin Nollywood filmmakers must strive to improve or enhance the quality of their productions by adopting new techniques. For instance, filmmakers in conjunction with the various guilds in the sector such as the Actors Guild of Nigeria (AGN), the Directors Guild of Nigeria (DGN), Edo Female Artistes Association (EFAA), Edo Artistes Association of Nigeria (EAAN), and Creative Designers Guild of Nigeria (CDGN), can organise workshops to train and retrain themselves in the latest arts of filmmaking, like the encouragement of serialisation of Benin-language films.

Serialisation in films surfaced to “exploit new technologies of narrative production and distribution” (Allen, 1995, p.1). In global film circles, the major production is the ‘feature’ genre or type made for audiences. Ioraa and Akaa (2020), exploring the larger Nollywood, argue that genre is a term for categorisation of any form of art or drama as *The Crazy King* and *Audio Money* indicate that both films are of the genre of drama of the feature type. *The Crazy King* is serialised into four seasons while *Audio Money* is serialized into eight seasons. The term ‘serial’ refers to a format, within a genre, that a story is chronological and has contiguous instalments or episodes in sequential issues of single linear production. The Benin Nollywood filmmakers should begin to explore these serialised formats or episodic renditions in their productions as the economics of scale makes it very advantageous in terms of ROI. Victor Aghahowa successfully experimented with this idea in *Enakhe* (2021), a crime drama that had 260 episodes, which is on African Magic channels. The more the Benin-language screenwriters and filmmakers engage in serialisation of their movies, the more the likelihood of their making higher profit or increasing their market share in Nollywood.

Another issue is that of brand or branding. Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, in the example I gave regarding the collaboration between the Edo State government and some consortia, the actual keystone was branding. Omoera and Bardi (2020) claim that branding is the ability to make a product or service unique or rather different from others in the same category to entice people to desire the product or service. It is a marketing strategy to reposition a product or service in the marketplace for better performance. Branding, therefore, involves the creation of a unique identity for a business, product or service to make it stand out to consumers and differentiate it from competitors. The infinite opportunity that the orange economy offers the Benin-language film and other emerging language films producers in the context of the ‘Triad of Screen Power’ must be branded for optimal results. It is this kind of thinking that possibly informed the Edo State government in

2022 through its agency - the Edo State Skills Development Agency (EDO-JOBS) to collaborate with the Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) and the Nigerian German Cooperation implemented by the GIZ alongside Kada Cinemas, Phoenix Browser, Accelerate TV, Presco Plc and Vanguard Allure. They organized and hosted the Edo State International Film Festival (ESIFF) with brand tags such as “EdototheWorld,” and “BeninFilmRising,”

The branding and rebranding of the Benin-language films as cultural commodities to be used by the Benin people to project their cultural identity and economically empower the growing population is a viable proposal that should be taken seriously. The Benins are among the most influential and prolific players in Nollywood, making their films in their own language but also in English. If they consistently pursue the branding agenda in their film events such as festivals awards and screenings, they will be properly positioned to celebrate the Benin (Edo) film industry talents within the state and Edo born talents all around the world, showcasing them to the world and creating an enabling environment for the creative business in Edo State to flourish, connecting home grown talents with their counterparts’ within Nigeria and the world at large. Stephen-Imobhio (2025) affirms that film festivals create vital opportunities for filmmakers to connect with global networks, funding agencies, programmers and industry stakeholders. The film festivals should be designed and orientated to open up the content creative space and endear a lasting penchant for quality and make Edo-born filmmakers globally competitive. Hence, the ESIFF should be revamped and the Benin City Film Festival (BCFF) should be strengthened to support the emergent Benin-language film culture and industry.

The third proposal is that of film distribution. Every forward-looking film culture has efficient and effective film distribution channels. In Nollywood and particularly the Benin film segment, dysfunctionality of the modes of

film distribution is as sickening as it is frustrating. Peddie Okao (in an interview in 2025) argued that distribution is the single most challenging problem the Benin Nollywood sector had had to confront. If the distribution network is secure and well-coordinated, film producers are likely to smile to the banks. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2013, p.10) reports that aside from Hollywood hegemonic distribution channels in the United States of America (USA), there were other notable non-USA releases that were blockbusters, illustrating the growing impact of non-Hollywood film globally. The Indian movie, *My Name is Khan* (a 2010 drama), was the highest-grossing Indian movie internationally in history. Meanwhile, the paramilitary Brazilian drama, *Elite Squad*, turned into the most viewed Brazilian film internationally to date (with more than 11 million admissions outside Brazil, breaking the record of the 1976 film *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*, which sold 10.7 million tickets). *Elite Squad* was distributed in about 20 countries. Also, I earlier noted how *Behind the Scenes* grossed the highest in the list of distributed films between 2016 and 2025 in Nigeria. The Benin Nollywood filmmakers must make concerted efforts to woo credible investors within Beninland and elsewhere to build facilities such as cinemas for theatrical releases of films, develop apps for online streaming of Benin-language films globally and ensure insurance cover for the various distribution systems. The more globally-compliant the distribution channels of Benin-language films the more the profit margins of the all players in the industry.

Closely tied to this is the issue of monetisation of the Benin Nollywood film. Although the creation of a monetisation platform has given today's filmpreneurs a chance to better their craft and usher in a period of possible boom, the dynamics of technology demand a conscious structure to herald the revolutions that are yet to manifest in the ways films would be made and monetized. But the Benin-language film industry, like the larger Nollywood has not systematically factored in this 'distribution' development in their growth processes. The closest effort at creating what would have

sufficed as a developmental base for progress in distribution was formulated by a committee headed by Peddie E. Okao. The eventual evolution of technological and information/communication manifestations in the business of film, caught Benin (Edo) filmmakers unaware, and, arguably, consequently left the business of film unstructured, uninsurable, undependable, not bankable, and not diametrically connected to the mainstream Nigerian economy. The current generation of Benin (Edo) filmmakers should be provoked to seek both national and international recognition for their films in order to expand market, and sue for higher levels of commercial activity.

The Benin-language film sector and indeed the larger Nollywood must find a smart way to skirt around piracy and copyright violations to ensure sustainable growth and development. Despite the litany of achievements recorded in the local Benin-language film industry, can it be said that all is rosy for the sector in Nigeria? No. The motion picture industry in Nigeria, like in all other creative industries, suffer from the pains and pangs of the hard bites of piracy and copyright infringements. Reports have it that Nigeria loses an estimated \$50 million annually to international piracy of Nigerian movies and films in America, Canada and African countries (Okao, 2017). This sad situation is worsened by the fact that the existing distribution system has been stretched to the limit, which makes it impossible to satisfy the ever-growing needs of Nollywood audience. At the Benin film industry level, the absence of a structured and wide distribution network has equally accelerated the incidence of piracy and encouraged bootleggers whose activities magnify as the distribution problem worsens. The proposal for the future, therefore, is a reconsideration of the trajectory of Benin film productions to include theatrical releases in cinemas. This implies the setting up of cinemas in strategic centres in the locality, where teeming audiences can go and watch their favourite movies. Also, the setting up of formidable online film streaming platforms can go a long way in addressing the matter. Jedlowski (2022, p.1-2) opines that the ‘platformisation’ of

African film distribution of content production (on both streaming and digital television networks) in the mode of Netflix and other streaming giants in a local context can make a difference. Therefore, Nollywood content creators and Benin filmmakers should collaborate with smartpreneurs and techpreneurs to explore the variegated digital platforms to package contents and chaperone secure modes of exhibition and distribution of Benin-language films to the consumers/audiences locally and globally. This is likely to discourage or reduce to its barest minimum the incidences of piracy or copyright infringements.

7.0 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

My work has extended the schools of thought of indigenous language films in Nigeria by elevating the Benin (Edo) film to the status of the Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo/English film cultures. In this regard, I have developed an organic theoretical framework for the study of indigenous language film called ‘Homefrontism’ with a view to expanding African indigenous knowledge system (AIKS) in general and theatre and film studies in particular. Thus, I have helped to address the dearth of theories or ideations on African schools of thought in world cinema. The treatise contributes to the growing literature on indigenous language films in Africa, with specific regard to a micro national film scholarship (the Benin [Edo] language film). It validates and affirms the status of Benin film as a vibrant indigenous language film culture in Nollywood. It also posits that the Benin-language film as part of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), deploying the ‘Triad of Screen Power,’ could be a driver of social and economic progress in an evolving society where many youths are jobless and do not have the required skill sets, if only the socio-economic potentiality of the art, science and business of filmmaking is adequately deployed.

My contributions to scholarship, in teaching, research and national and international community services have been largely in the area of developing theories/critical principles for discovering the nature, identity, style, aesthetic and linguistic as well as ideological peculiarities of African Studies

and nature of knowledge which make it distinct from western and other paradigms. It has been a scholarly engagement that transcends the confines of thematic and exegetical studies. My research has consistently focused on a systematic ‘scientification’ of African visual literature, covering its theoretical, pragmatic, logical and philosophical investigation of African stories and storytelling that have been technologized through the agency of visual texts and the techniques to screen, annotate, archive or curate them, using Benin-language films as fulcra of investigation.

8.0 CONCLUSION

As Nigerian films are released into the local and international markets on a daily basis, Nollywood is booming and redefining African life. This development has engendered a global impact that industry players, the academia and relevant government agencies in Nigeria must acknowledge and exploit to provide wealth creation avenues and job opportunities for Nigerian youths, particularly in the Benin-language film sector and other emerging indigenous language film ecosystems in the Niger Delta region. Theoretically anchored in the ‘Triad of Screen Power,’ the lecture used the historical-analytic, direct observation and systematic literature review methods to argue that filmmaking is an illimitable vocation because of the boundless opportunities and possibilities that inhere in it. Consequently, Nigerian youths, particularly those in the Benin locality and by extension in Niger Delta communities, should train and acquire artistic, technical and business competencies in the different aspects of filmmaking for self-empowerment, wealth creation and socio-cultural development of Nigeria. To do this, stakeholders should combine efforts to build the capacities of Nigerian youths in the various creative matrixes of filmmaking as a way of empowering them to be self-employed and possibly employers of labour.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, it is hoped that this inaugural lecture has scholastically helped to consolidate the position of Benin (Edo) language film as a formidable Nigerian indigenous film culture, whose potentials can be exteriorized to create wealth and job opportunities for the teeming youths. It

is also contemplated that the evolving Benin-language film model or template can be adopted and adapted by other indigenous language film cultures, scholars, and socio-cultural and socio-economic authorities in the Niger Delta region and across Nigeria to boost their local economies and align their local ecosystems with the centripetal and centrifugal forces that operate in the larger Nollywood industry, which is now both national and transnational in ethos, value, audience reception, distribution and consumption of edutainment products.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

I, therefore, make the following recommendations.

1. The Benin-language film paradigm should be studied and replicated in other indigenous language film cultures in the Niger Delta region and Nigeria generally. The local governments and their development partners should prioritise collaboration and support of the local film industries, associations and guilds. They should also ensure that they are more capacitated in terms of resources and training to improve the content creation and monetisation processes because in the long-run that will make it easier for the members of those associations and guilds to actively participate in the capacitation programmes.
2. Relevant government agencies and nongovernmental organisations in Benin and other Niger Delta localities should mobilise funds and establish film villages and smart media cities as cultural and creative industries (CCIs) hubs where the skills of growing filmpreneurs, smartpreneurs, techpreneurs, among others, can be incubated, groomed and exported nationally and transnationally.
3. The Edo State Film Classification Board should be established to cater to the specific needs of the emergent industry and regulate the local economy as it has been done in Kano State with the Kano

State Film and Video Censorship Board and the Lagos State with Lagos State Film and Video Censors Board respectively. This will go a long way to address piracy and copyright infringement issues.

4. Stakeholders, including well-meaning Nigerians and global citizens, should make efforts concerted to establish film trusts in Benin and other indigenous language film cultures in Nigeria to ensure sustainability and consistency in the upscaling of film events such as film screenings, festivals, archiving and curation.
5. Federal University Otuoke, being a forward looking and innovative tertiary institution, can also take smart steps to key into the orange economy by establishing the Centre for Digital Content Creation and Nollywood Studies in the Niger Delta (CEDICCANSUND) to improve its internally-generated revenue and empower its youthful student population and by extension its host community.

10.0 FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

My future research will centre on the feminine mystique in Benin-language films, focussing on the works of Benin women filmmakers like Eunice Omoregie and Omadeli Uwagboe. I hope to engage in the application of Biblical (Christian) ethos in scoping and taxonomising Benin-language films. I will also be involved in research on Artificial Intelligence application in the crafting of stories and making of films of Benin-language expression to be at the forefront of Nollywood's development as an authentic African cultural production.

11.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, permit me to give all glory, honour, praise, and thanksgiving to God the Father, God the Son, Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit. That is, the triad Godhead (Trinity), on whom dwells the fullness of God bodily and in whom we are complete, and who is the head of all principality and power. Without Him we are nothing and everything is

in His hands (Matthew 28: 19; Colossians 2: 9-10). I wish to sincerely thank the Vice-Chancellor, the Very Distinguished Professor Teddy Charles Adias, for creating the scholastic platform and granting me the opportunity to present the 30th inaugural lecture. The second in the series from the Faculty of Humanities (after its excision from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences), and the first in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies. Also, I wish to express my gratitude to the Vice-Chancellor for promoting me to the esteemed rank of Professor and for allowing me to serve our family university by appointing me as the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and as the pioneer Head of the Department of Theatre and Film Studies.

It is now almost 5 years of your visionary leadership of steering the rudder of our family university, which has experienced a quantum leap in human and infrastructural development. Professor Teddy Charles Adias, as a quintessential manager of human and material resources, prizes not only academic excellence but also the thoughtful care of those who deliver it in our ecosystem. Permit me to say, *Alua*, Sir, *Domo*, Sir, *Khara*, Sir. I wish to use this opportunity to thank the second Vice-Chancellor of Federal University Otuoke (FUO), Professor Seth Accra Jaja, a pragmatic leader, for offering me an appointment as a lecturer at FUO. I immensely thank the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Professor Chris Onyema (Administration), Professor Ibebiei Temple Offor (Academic), and Professor Nateinyin Joy Akporehwe (Research and Development), and the principal officers: University Registrar, Mrs Andabi Amangi-Edomo, University Bursar, Dr Peretowei Topman Suowari, University Librarian, Dr Gboyega K. Oyeniran, for their services to FUO.

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