
AFRICAN PROBLEMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS THROUGH THE NIGERIAN LENS

GLOBALIZATION AND NOLLYWOOD

Vladimir Shubin

In this issue of the Journal we present another article from the Nigerian scholars devoted to Nollywood and the relations of this entity to the process of globalization. The first one entitled 'Cinema Globalization and Nation Branding: An Exploration of the Impact of Nollywood on the Nigerian Image Crisis' by Floribert Patrick C. Endong was published in Vol. 9, number , 2017 in the section devoted to the African problems through the Nigerian lens. It is hardly accidental that Nollywood was founded and developed in Nigeria. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this is one of expressions of the role Nigeria is playing in Africa and the world as well as of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nature of the Nigerian society.

Many aspects of the Nigerian history look controversial. On the one hand, Nigeria is a birthplace of the African ancient culture, such as Benin bronzes, but on the other hand Nigeria as a united country (still a colony at that time) was born just a century ago, when in 1914 the area was formally united by the British authorities as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. However, even then the country remained administratively divided into the Northern and Southern Provinces and Lagos Colony. The development of modern economy and Western-type education advanced more rapidly in the south than in the north of Nigeria, and this continued to affect the Nigerian politics well after the country became independent in 1960.

The population of Nigeria is versatile in many aspects. The major religions are Islam and Christianity, but adepts of each of them are divided into different groups. There over 500 various languages and dialects in Nigeria, it is the most populous country in Africa (close to 200 million) and competes with South Africa in the GDP size, but its potential role of the continent's leader is hindered by political and ethnical or, rather ethno-social conflicts.

The most tragic conflict was the 1967–1970 civil war, provoked by the proclamation of the independent Republic of Biafra in the Eastern Region. It was preceded by two military coups in 1966 and was followed by several coups later. In fact, a more or less stable government was reestablished in Nigeria only almost four decades after the independence. However, in recent years Nigeria has been experiencing new disasters: an armed conflict with Boko Haram, a terrorist organization that uses Islamist slogans in the north, and a revival of separatism in the south-eastern part of the country. Be-

Journal of Globalization Studies, Vol. 9 No. 2, November 2018 107–109
DOI: 10.30884/jogs/2018.02.07

sides, during all the years of Nigeria's existence it has to struggle against the plague of corruption; thus, Professor Leonid Geveling, a prominent Russian scholar of Nigeria for a good reason called his book on this problem 'Cleptocracy'.

On the other hand, Nigeria has a rich cultural diversity, from food to dressing codes, as varied as its languages; and its writers such as Wole Soyinka, the winner of the Nobel Prize in literature, and Chinua Achebe are well-known all over the world. No doubt, this richness together with entrepreneurial spirit, typical for many Nigerians, contributed to the development of the Nigerian film industry, that became known as Nollywood, following Hollywood in the USA and Bollywood in Bombay (now Mumbai) in India; it now annually produces several thousand films.

This phenomenon, no doubt, deserves attention of scholars in several spheres: art experts, sociologists, economists, *etc.* However, the authors of articles in question, Dr Charles Effiong and Floribert Patrick C. Endong, both of the Department of Theatre and Media Studies, University of Calabar, look at Nollywood from a very specific angle; they connect it with globalization and Nigeria's image in the globalized world. Their research is specifically important because it contradicts the well-established view that globalization, at least in the cultural field, in many aspects contributes to Westernization and even Americanization. It shows that Nollywood production really became globalized, with special TV channels in the USA and UK, even if, to be a realist, one has to admit that it is consumed mainly by the African diasporas there.

In his article in the previous issue Floribert Patrick C. Endong (2018) considered 'two schools of thought': some believe that Nollywood films contribute to the Nigeria's image crisis, and others, on the contrary, laud Nollywood for projecting the diverse cultural heritage of the country. Endong admits that Nollywood themes 'are replete with seeming unacceptable content of witchcraft, voodoo, obscenities, and sorcery' (*Ibid.*: 81–82), but shows at the same time how Nigeria's negative image in the international scene has tended to affect that of its film industry. 'Funny to think of rebranding a country where corruption is still officiously celebrated and tolerated by both the ruling class and the general populace' (*Ibid.*: 84). Endong deplores that Nigeria is generally associated in the international scene with corruption, counterfeit, insecurity, election rigging, dictatorship and other vices and objects the blaming of Nollywood films for 'portraying and decrying these ills' (*Ibid.*: 85). As to globalization, acknowledging its threat he insists that Nigeria can use the opportunity with its cultural products that are becoming globally known through Nollywood productions.

Endong's thorough research deserves a positive mark, safe for his assessment of the Western policy, that is at the best looks naïve. How can an African, after all the crimes the US-led aggressors committed in Libya say that 'It is not only on paper that America and her First World allies claim to be the champions of democracy, peace keeping and human rights in the world'? I am afraid this very naivety (if to avoid stronger words) allows outsiders to look at Nigeria as a follower of Washington, especially those who remember that the Nigerian government recognized the so called National Transitional Council in Libya contrarily to the decisions of the African Union.

Meanwhile, Effiong's analysis of Nollywood is rather optimistic. He believes that 'the multicultural features of Nigeria are potent means from which acceptable cultural themes can be developed as films for the global audience' and that 'with the huge num-

ber of ethnic groups, Nigeria is not supposed to be found wanting in the search for positive, spectacular and attractive cultural elements that are peculiar to it'. Unfortunately, however, he admits that 'cultural issues that express positive moral values, criteria and principles for a positive national identity are scarcely used as major themes' while the themes of the Nigerian film industry 'are replete with seeming unacceptable content of witchcraft, voodoo, obscenities, and sorcery'.

As a conclusion, Effiong believes that the concept of globalization 'does not entirely pose a bad effect on the Nollywood, but has instead challenged it to promote the Nigerian cultures by making it appreciated in the global sphere through what it produces'.

Reference

- Endong, F. P. C. 2018. Cinema Globalization and Nation Branding: An Exploration of the Impact of Nollywood on the Nigerian Image Crisis. *Journal of Globalization Studies* 9 (1): 77–90. DOI: 10.30884/jogs/2018.01.06.