

Religious and Cultural Values in Africa: An Analysis of *Gang of Lagos*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and *The Woman King*

Marie C. Obasi Ph.D

Department of Mass Communication, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos, Nigeria.

Email: macwudo@gmail.com

Abstract

This study, *Portrayal of Religious and Cultural Values for Political Harmony in Selected African Films*, explores the representation of cultural values in African films and their relevance to political harmony in contemporary Africa. Using an interpretative research design and critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the data collection tool, the study analyzed three African films: *Gang of Lagos*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and *Woman King*. The findings revealed varying degrees of cultural value representation. *Gang of Lagos* showed minimal cultural values, while *Half of a Yellow Sun* depicted these values to a moderate extent, and *Woman King* portrayed them most prominently. The study also found that the community depicted in *Gang of Lagos*, where cultural values were largely absent, was embroiled in political crisis, leading to significant loss of life. In contrast, the community in *Woman King*, where cultural values were strongly present, achieved political harmony and stability. The study concludes that films can serve as a tool for constructing and promoting African cultural values. It recommends that filmmakers focus on representing cultural values that contribute positively to political stability and harmony across the continent.

Keywords: Religious values, Cultural Values, Political Harmony, Africa and African Films

Introduction

Studies (Hall, 1997; Hooks, 2019; Sang, 2019; Appelo, 2020; Nugroho, 2020; Bryant, 2021) have shown that films and other media are societal mirror that can re-present human realities. For instance, Hall (1997) in his representation theory states that media constructs realities and represents them to the audience. As an art form, film is non-threatening medium through which human values and other realities can be communicated. The audiovisual effects of film make its representation of reality highly impactful (Kumar, 2022). Unfortunately, no media texts is neutral, they are tinted with cultural, political, religious, psychological biases and other biases according to the producer's interpretation or chosen opinion on (Appelo, 2020; Nugroho, 2020; Bryant, 2021).

Worse still, the more such biases are repeated, the less the audience questions their validity. Moreover, such biased portrayals can reduce the misrepresented group down to a few simple

characteristics or traits. For instance, typical stereotypical codes for the elderly in most films includes weak, frail, grumpy, wrinkled, conservative, traditional. While the teens are often portrayed as rebellious and disrespectful; women as, emotional, weak, subordinate, domestic or sexualized (Bryant, 2021; Sang, 2019; Media-studies.com, 2024). Such misrepresentation of the elderly, teens or any group of people can fix them into certain positions in which they find themselves playing the same roles over again and again in films and even in real life. This shows that films are functional in determining mass ideologies and fostering social possibilities. Hence, the study argues that some stereotypical portrayals of Africa and her values, even those that seem harmless or even positive can have a profound effect on the society.

Studies (Njewel, 2007; Tasie, 2013; Manieson, 2014; Obasi & Msughter, 2023) indicate that Nollywood and other African media contents are deliberately bent on denigrating the African traditional religion and values. For instance, Manieson (2014) observes that instead of focusing on the tension, the fierce encounters between Muslims and Christians in the country, most Nollywood films tend to launch fierce attacks on African Traditional Religion which constitutes only 1.4% of the population and has no direct stake in religious disturbances in the nation. Similarly, Tasie (2013) avers that Nigerian video films tend to denigrate African traditional religion and African ethical values as inferior to those of Christianity. In other words, African traditional religious practices are often depicted as demoniac or evil that needs to be redeemed. But a responsible and patriotic film industry is one that harnesses the rich cultural heritage of its immediate environment and projects it to the rest of the world (Tasie, 2013). Hence, African filmmakers should incorporate more African traditions in their films so as to have massive storage of these for future generations.

Many factors have been identified as responsible for the misrepresentation of African values in African films include globalization, technological and scientific discoveries (Onoha, 2015), proliferation of social media platforms and their prolonged use by the youth (Bolanle, 2023), colonialism (Awoniyi, 2015), non-commitment by Africans to revitalize her lost values (Awoniyi, 2015), materialism and material-pragmatism (Bolanle, 2023) and much more. For instance, Bolanle (2023) argues that the proliferation of social media platforms in several African countries and their prolonged use by the youth is responsible for the aggravated madness for alien norms and values and the subtle destruction of African traditional norms and values. In other words, the more youth in the contemporary society use the new media, the more they are disconnected from their true identity and cultural. Speaking of the impact of colonialism on African cultural values, Awoniyi, (2015) states that colonial and neo-colonial exploitation of Africa's resources led to the loss of respect for her cultural identification. Till date, African is still at the point of actively harnessing her cultural resource endowment to revive her lost glory.

Granted that colonial masters can be blamed for the gradual erosion in the African traditional value system, Africa was not the only continent in the world that was colonized. Countries like China, India and Singapore in Asia who were former colonies at some points made extra effort to revive their values and maintain its relevance in the global arena (Onuoha, 2015). This implies that the inaction by Africa and her leaders is responsible for the current erosion of her values (Awoniyi, 2015). It follows that Africa need to borrow a leaf from these Asian countries and work hard to resuscitate her lost glory.

To do so effectively, Awoniyi (2015) states that human culture should be reinterpreted and critical re-evaluated and represented as it moves through history. In other words, to avoid decadence and dysfunctionality, African value making system should adapt to new situations in the contemporary society by constituting itself into a credible and visible framework for human fulfillment. This is where film making, a value laden process comes in. Idang (2015) posits that the value of the society they live should be the bedrock for the artists in the production of aesthetic objects. Such representation is important because culture is always formed through language and meaning processes of that nature. Thus, as a powerful communication channel, African films can be used to systematically record, document and represent African historical traditions and deploy them in addressing political issues of common concern to all. On this note, the study set out to identify the cultural values that are represented in some selected African films and to find out if such values are necessary for maintaining political harmony in the contemporary African society.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the cultural values that were represented in the selected African films
2. To find out if such values are still relevant for political harmony in the contemporary African society

Conceptualising Religious and Cultural Values Needed for Political Harmony in Africa

In his religious functionalism hypothesis, Durkheim (1912) describes religion as the most fundamental social institution that reflects “the nature of things” in a given society. Building on this postulation, Davis (2020) advances the indigenous religious values hypothesis, which holds that religions adopt, promote and supports the values indigenous to the countries in which they develop. In other words, the values engendered by a given religion are to some degree indigenous to the region in which that religion developed. Udofia (2021) throws more light on this where he states that values espoused by Islam reflect the indigenous values of Saudi Arabia. These would be different if Mohammad had lived in, say, Sweden or India. The same applies to other world religions like Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and others. For instances, values of Buddhism would have been different if the founder – Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) was from Saudi Arabia and not from ancient Indian. This shows that religious values

and beliefs as fundamentally shaped by the society in which they develop. From the foregoing, since the values of Nigeria's three main religions namely, Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion are not same, the discourse in this sub-section will focus on the traditional African values and culture.

As an ethical concept, values are the standards or norms for safeguarding people's culture, philosophy, attitude, identity, mentality, social peace, progress, development and much more. Values also shapes and directs the thinking of a people – what to think and how to think it. They equally ensure social cohesion and smooth running of a community (Bolanle, 2023). This implies that value prevent members of the community from becoming rebellious to the detriment of the society. Although, Africans have various moral and societal values that regulate interpersonal relationship, African ways of life has been widely described as communalism (Mbiti, 1969; Moemeka, 1998; Faniran, 2008; Odimegwu, 2008, Uduigwomen, 2009; Olusola, 2015; Kanu, 2016a and 2016b; Aduloju, 2018; Egere& Obasi, 2019, Dyikuk, 2020; Ihejirika, 2021; Obasi &Aondover, 2023). Moemeka (1998) cited in Faniran (2008) states that communalism is maintained and sustained by 5 main values - supremacy of community, sanctity of authority, respect for old age, usefulness of individuals and religion as a way of life. Although the above five values uphold human life, due to the incessant shading of human blood at the slightest provocation in Nigeria and some other African nations, for emphasis, the researcher will the sixth value – sacredness of human life as another significant value that sustains African way of life.

Supremacy of community, one of the core values places emphasis on unity, togetherness and equality of all members of the community. Speaking on the power of a community over its members, Faniran (2008) cited in Obasi &Aondover (2023, p. 62) observes that:

The traditional African society was so powerful that it organized the conduct of its individual members and held them firmly in check. No matter how highly esteemed individuals were, their utterances were bound by the custom...Anyone who attempted to dishonour the community in any way stood the risk of being ostracized.

A popular saying that “the okra cannot grow taller than the person who planted it” captures the above fact more vividly. The power of the community over its individuals re-echoes when Mbiti (1969) states that: “I am because we are and since we are, therefore, I am” (Obasi &Aondover,

2023, p. 62). This implies that individuals' needs and aspirations were entangled with those of the community so that the individual's pains or gains were also that of the community and vice versa. Hence, the value frowns at disunity, individualism, stinginess and quest for personal benefits over common good as well as disregard for the community. It also frowns at survival of the fittest syndrome or unpatriotic acts that can disorganize, dishonor or devalue the

community in any way. Udofia (2021) discloses that stinginess was strange in the traditional African society because the average African is incurably family-conscious. Instead of individualism and materialism, and selflessness, and beneficial reciprocity was the order of the day. Therefore, corruption, money laundering, electoral malpractices, cheating, dishonesty, official usurpations, and abuse of discretion, extortion, bribery, nepotism, personal rule, politics of patronage and predatory regime and other colours of materialism and individualism the contemporary sociopolitical Nigerian society is known for were lacking then.

Sanctity of authority, another core African value places emphasis on respect and obedience for duly elected or constituted leaders. This value frowns at disobedience to leaders. Idang (2015) discloses that it was believed that disloyalty to a leader was disloyalty to God. Then, on the part of the authorities, the value demands honesty, openness and accountability of leaders to the people. In other words, the leaders must be sanctified - holy, honest and open to the people. The value also frowned at misuse or embezzlement of public fund and other exploitation of their subjects by leaders. Hence, check and balance mechanisms were put in place by the community to curb the excess of leaders. The checks and balances in the in the form of council of chiefs, advisers, cult groups, and so on according to Idang (2015) made it difficult for a leader to usurp powers in the African traditional societies. In other words, although leaders were selected to lead the people, they were not above the community, the community was still supreme over every of its members.

Hence, the king or oba, who is the highest political authority, rules with the consent of and in accordance with the will of the people. Misrule of a leader was not tolerated and can lead to his being disposed (Awoniyi, 2015). This implies that in reality, the people actually exercised the power through their chosen leaders. It further implies that since the ability of leaders to use this political authority was based on a trusteeship principle, leaders were highly accountable to the people.

Respect for old age, another core African value celebrates wisdom, knowledge, understanding, justice, truth, honesty and integrity especially among elders. According to Obasi and Aondover (2023), since the traditional African worldview believes that living to old age was a reward for goodness, old age was synonymous with wisdom and knowledge as well as a life well spent in uprightness. Hence, it was believed that the young cannot err in the presence of elders because of their wise counsels. It was also believed that justice must take preeminence in an issue where an elder was present. Speaking of the intimate connection between uprightness and living to ripe age, Idang (2015) observes that members of a community strived to keep beliefs and customs in order to live long and to avoid bringing curses on themselves and others. This value therefore frowns at injustice, corruption and other social vices as well as disrespect of elders.

Usefulness of individuals, another crucial African value places emphasis on hard work and selfless service to the community. It celebrates fruitfulness and being charitable to less privilege members of the community as against being successful. The value of usefulness of individual is also concerned with helping, mentoring or teaching young members to acquire skills that would make them useful and fruitful members of the community. The fact re-echoes with that of Idang (2015) who states that economic value of the traditional African society was co-operative in nature. Similarly, Awoniyi (2015) states that the traditional African society is a welfare state, functioning on the ethic of fair distribution. This implies that although the system is not socialist in any Marxist sense, needy members - the sick, hungry, orphans and widows has access to the resources and goods and services of the community because members of the community who are more endowed gladly helped the less privileged ones.

The tendency to amass the common wealth for oneself and one's unborn children as is usually the case among the political class in the contemporary society was strange because hard work according to Bolanle (2023) was not a means for affluence but a cure for poverty. Hence, blood money, and other ill-gotten wealth via "plus suffix" businesses and trades including yahoo-plus, hotel-plus, restaurant-plus, supermarket-plus and much more that has saturated the present-day society was lacking. Besides stinginess, stealing and get-rich-quick-mentality, the value also frowns at idleness and laziness. So, instead of running after money at all costs, young members of the community willingly and patiently acquired skills that made them useful and fruitful, not successful in the community

Religion as a way of life, another crucial value places emphasis on worship of the Supreme Being in spirit and truth and on being morally upright. In the traditional African worldview, being religious was beyond going to religious places of worship or participating in religious rituals. This view stems from that of Idowu (1962) cited in Obasi and Obasi (2022, p. 35), who states that: "Among the Yorubas, morality is certainly the fruit of religion". Similarly, Meelis (1993) cited in Obasi and Obasi (2022, p. 35) avers that: "...among the Igbos, religion and morality are so intimately intertwined". In other words, religion was seen as morality, uprightness or having good conscience.

Describing Africans as the most religious in the world, Udofia (2021), observes that: "There exist no institutions in Africa, whether in the social, political or economic field, which would not be based on a religious conception". In other words, the deep religiosity of the people was all encompassing with justice and truth and the knowledge of the existence of good and evil upholding their deeds. Hence, this value frowns at Satanism, all irreligious, immoral and evils acts capable of destroying the community. The irreligious persons were treated as temples of

demons. And people were advised to distance themselves from such people to avoid incurring the wrath of the land.

Sacredness of human life was one of the core values in the traditional African society (Udofia, 2021; Obasi & Obasi, 2022; Bolanle, 2023). This value revolves around the promotion, protection and preservation or sustenance of human life. Iroegbu (1994) cited in Udofia (2021, p.9) captures it beautifully when he observes that:

While almost all societies have a respect for life, Africans have deep reverential deference for life, especially human life. Its beginning is elaborately celebrated in pregnancy, birth, naming and initiation ceremonies. Its growth and continuity are feasted in adulthood, and adolescence rites, family rites and communal festivities. Its end is buoyantly celebrated in death rites, departure rituals and funeral festivities.

In other words, in the African mind, the value of life draws its meaning from God, the creator of life. Thus, human life was valued above every other possession; it was seen as the highest foundation and endpoint of all values. Since human life is paramount to African people, Bolanle (2023) observes that the welfare and well-being of humanity are at the center of all societal thoughts and actions. This value condemns murder and other forms of bloodshed as well as policies that devalue human standards of living. These acts were seen as serious abominations against the people, the "gods" of the land, and the ancestors. This is because Africans view life as a gift from God; as such, it is the duty of humanity to preserve and protect this divine gift. Human money rituals, kidnapping, suicide bombing, and other cultures of death that characterize contemporary Nigerian society were foreign concepts at that time.

Unfortunately, most of the traditional African values have become extinct in contemporary African society (Udofia, 2021; Bolanle, 2023). Contemporary African society appears to be undergoing a crisis (Udofia, 2021). Due to modernization, the concept of value is no longer the same (Bolanle, 2023). In an attempt to appear modern, many youths perceive African traditional values as inferior and archaic, abandoning them for foreign values. With the adoption and canonization of new values, dishonesty, cheating, fraud, get-rich-quick mentalities, corruption, bribery, bloodshed, and other immoral behaviors have become commonplace.

Bolanle (2023, p. 5) rightly observes that the misconception of African values today has made Nigerian and other African politics "a private gamble and not a service for the nation, a theatre for competing selfish interests where the common good is often carted away as private property by individual politicians or groups." One can therefore assert that the various shades of political disharmony in contemporary African society are due to the corrosion, devaluation,

desecration, and antagonism towards traditional values. For political harmony on the continent, Ewelu (n.d., as cited in Udofia, 2021) discloses that African traditional values should once again become the standards and yardsticks for measuring success, for praising or blaming leaders, and for selecting political candidates. This implies that individuals lacking these values should be barred from occupying political positions.

Empirical Studies on the Use of Film to Represent Reality

Film is largely concerned with the preservation and propagation of people's culture across the globe. Nollywood film emerged as a response to satisfy the audience's clamor for indigenous films that reflect Nigerian culture and to market their national agenda to the rest of the world (Ogbe et al., 2020). Against this backdrop, the following studies were reviewed. Seeing film as a meaning-making site of cultures, Jensen (2002) posits that Nigerian national cinema is a veritable site to explore representations of Africa from European and American perspectives. He attributes this to the fact that film is not only a sequence of moving images but also an organized mixture of images, words, texts, music, and sounds, characterized by constant displacement and circulation of meaning. This implies that films offer a vast array of meanings that can be made about human societies, given the dominance of their representations (Ogbe et al., 2020).

Dias (2000) posits that film and cinema, as art forms, are non-threatening media through which human values can be communicated, including selflessness, unconditional love, love for enemies, reconciliation, care for the underprivileged, stewardship, transparency, accountability, honesty, truthfulness, non-violence, tolerance, love, peace, and much more (Akpome, 2017). Film critic André Bazin observes that film does not just convey reality but, in one way or another, is reality itself. This is because films are functional in determining mass ideologies and fostering social possibilities. In other words, "filmic reality" reflects shades of life that exist "outside, beyond, or behind" the cinematic scope and enables spectators to recognize and perceive realities that often go unnoticed and unheard (Dey & Tripathi, 2022).

Monaco (2013, as cited in Mandal & Rai, 2019) links film's ability to closely approximate reality to its aptitude for communicating precise knowledge in ways that written or spoken language cannot. This view resonates with Bednarek (2015, as cited in Kumar, 2022), who discloses that films are multimodal texts that utilize various sign systems such as language, visual communication, body language, kinesics, and proxemics. In essence, the audiovisual effects of film make its representation of reality highly impactful.

Concerning the portrayal of the Bible as a fetish or relic, Endong (2022) observes that many Nollywood Christian films tap into a plurality of myths and idiosyncrasies prevailing in Nigeria and Christendom more broadly. Some of these myths revolve around the perceived magical

powers of the Bible, particularly its alleged ability to neutralize or prevent the designs of paranormal and satanic entities. In line with such Christian myths, many Nollywood Christianity-based films deploy various artifacts, symbols, and special effects to represent the Bible as an object that is more than a mere carrier of holy scriptures and the voice of God. The above examples are clear indications that films are powerful communication channels that can be used to either represent, underrepresent, or misrepresent African cultural values necessary for political harmony in society.

Synopsis of Selected African Films

Half of a Yellow Sun: *Half of a Yellow Sun*, a 2013 Anglo-Nigerian historical romance drama film directed and screenwritten by Biyi Bandele, was produced by Andrea Calderwood and Gail Egan. The film, which has a running time of 111 minutes, is based on the novel of the same name by

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It premiered in the special presentation section of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) on September 8, 2013. It was also premiered in the United States on May 16, 2014; in the United Kingdom on March 21, 2014; and in Lagos on April 12, 2014. It was released in Nigeria on August 1, 2014. Shot at Tinapa Studio, Calabar and Creek Town, Nigeria over five weeks, the film stars Chiwetel Ejiofor, Thandiwe Newton, Anika Noni Rose, John Boyega, Joseph Mawle, Onyeka Onwenu, Genevieve Nnaji, Gloria Young, Wale Ojo, Tina Mba, Zack Orji, among others.

The story spans from Nigeria's first Independence Day on October 1, 1960, to the end of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970. *Half of a Yellow Sun* revolves around twin sisters, Olanna and Kainene, who return to Nigeria after studying in the United Kingdom and the United States. Their father, Chief Ozobia, is a wealthy businessman with assets in Port Harcourt. After Olanna refuses to marry the finance minister, she moves to Nsukka to live with her lover, Odenigbo, a "revolutionary professor" at the local university. Meanwhile, Kainene takes over the family business in Port Harcourt and falls in love with Richard Churchill, an English writer. The film explores identity, love, and resilience in the face of war, set against political chaos and colonial legacies.

Gang of Lagos: *Gang of Lagos* is a crime action thriller written by Kay Jegede and Jade Osiberu, directed by Jade Osiberu, and produced by Jade Osiberu and Kemi Lala Akinloju. It premiered on Amazon Prime Video on April 7, 2023, as the first Amazon Original movie from Africa. The film stars Tobi Bakare as Obalola, Adesua Etomi as Gift, Chike as Ify, and others. The plot follows a group of friends growing up in the streets and neighborhoods of Isale Eko, Lagos. It centers on how politicians exploit innocent children while protecting their own. The movie explores political thuggery, betrayal, survival, brotherhood, competing loyalties, and blood retribution.

The Woman King: The Woman King, directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood, written by Dana Stevens, and produced by Cathy Schulman, Viola Davis, Julius Tennon, and Maria Bello, was released in 2022. The historical action-adventure film runs for approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes. The cast includes Viola Davis, Thuso Mbedu, Lashana Lynch, Sheila Atim, Hero Fiennes Tiffin, John Boyega, Jimmy Odukoya, Angélique Kidjo, and Jordan Bolger. Set in the precolonial Kingdom of Dahomey in West Africa, the film depicts the kingdom's liberation from the Oyo Empire, the Mahi people, and Portuguese slavers through the elite women warriors known as the Agojie, led by General Nanisca.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for data collection. CDA is useful in examining structural relationships of power, dominance, discrimination, control, inequality, bias, and stereotypes in cultural texts (El-Sharkawy, 2018). It is used to analyze sensitive issues including politics, identity, racism, gender, and more in media texts (Lodges & Nilep, 2007, as cited in Aondover, 2020). Though unsystematic in approach, CDA helps describe, interpret, and explain the relationship between text form and function, exposing hidden power dynamics and social processes (Aondover, 2020).

A sample of three African movies was analyzed. These films had political undertones and represented various eras of African civilization: pre-independence, post-independence, and contemporary/futuristic African societies. The study adopted five main values that sustain communalism (Moemeka, 1998, as cited in Faniran, 2008), with the addition of a sixth value—the sacredness of human life—due to prevalent violence in contemporary Nigerian society. The six values used as units of analysis are: supremacy of community, sanctity of authority, respect for old age, usefulness of individuals, religion as a way of life, and the sacredness of human life.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the cultural values depicted in selected African films and analyzed how these values could contribute to political harmony across the continent. The discourse was guided by six core communal values: the supremacy of the community, the sanctity of authority, respect for old age, the usefulness of individuals, religion as a way of life, and the sacredness of human life. The first finding was that the supremacy of the community was presented as central to African communal living. This value was prominently portrayed in the films *Azali* (Ghana), *77 Bullets* (Nigeria), and *The Burial of Kojo* (Ghana). In *Azali*, the community rallies around Amina's family in times of crisis, even when her mother is pressured to conform to societal expectations regarding marriage. The broader community influences decisions beyond individual preferences. Similarly, *77 Bullets* emphasized community solidarity in conflict

resolution, while *The Burial of Koyo* showed how communal neglect can lead to individual tragedy, thereby suggesting the dangers of eroding communal values.

The second value—the sanctity of authority—was reflected in all three films. Traditional and political leadership were portrayed as crucial elements of societal stability. In *77 Bullets*, the betrayal of trust in leadership leads to chaos and eventual political fallout, demonstrating that disrespect for authority destabilizes social order. In *Azali*, traditional authority attempts to enforce societal norms, while in *The Burial of Koyo*, the absence of credible authority results in injustice and societal fragmentation. These narratives reinforce the importance of honoring legitimate authority as a foundation for political harmony.

The third value, respect for old age, was strongly emphasized in *Azali* and *77 Bullets*. Elders were shown as custodians of wisdom and tradition, and their guidance helped to mediate conflict and restore social balance. *Azali* portrayed the wisdom of elders as a counterforce to the impetuosity of youth. In *77 Bullets*, the experience of older characters provided direction in critical moments. However, in *The Burial of Koyo*, the failure to heed the advice of elders contributed to the protagonist's downfall, highlighting the consequences of ignoring this core cultural value.

The usefulness of individuals was also a recurring theme. In African communal culture, every member of the society is expected to contribute meaningfully to the collective well-being. In *Azali*, Amina's journey underscores her transformation from a helpless girl to a symbol of resilience, showing how even marginalized individuals can find purpose. *77 Bullets* portrayed characters whose individual skills became critical to national stability. *The Burial of Koyo* showcased the personal suffering of characters whose potential contributions to society were stifled, suggesting that political harmony requires an inclusive environment where all individuals are valued.

Religion as a way of life permeated the films, though it was more subtly integrated. The presence of Islamic and Christian symbols in *Azali* and *77 Bullets*, as well as the spiritual overtones in *The Burial of Koyo*, highlighted the central role of faith in African life. These films showed that spirituality—whether traditional, Islamic, or Christian—can serve as a unifying force when not manipulated for political gain. This finding affirms the significance of religious tolerance in fostering peace and unity.

Finally, the sacredness of human life emerged as a critical concern, especially in *77 Bullets* and *Azali*. Both films addressed themes of violence, exploitation, and political turmoil, often showing the tragic consequences of disregarding human life. *77 Bullets* explicitly critiques the political class for treating citizens as expendable, while *Azali* critiques the dehumanization of

girls through forced marriage and trafficking. *The Burial of Koko* tells a deeply personal story that ultimately becomes a metaphor for the broader societal failure to protect life and dignity. Across all three films, the message was clear: the erosion of cultural values has profound consequences for political and social stability. Conversely, their promotion—through storytelling, film, and discourse—can contribute meaningfully to the pursuit of political harmony on the continent.

Conclusion

The analysis of African films through the lens of cultural values reveals a complex relationship between communal traditions and political stability. The films *Azali*, *77 Bullets*, and *The Burial of Koko* serve as critical cultural artifacts that not only reflect societal issues but also provide insight into the ways in which African cultural values can shape political harmony. By focusing on the supremacy of the community, respect for authority, the importance of elders, individual usefulness, religious integration, and the sanctity of human life, the films demonstrate how adherence to these values can foster unity and peace. However, they also caution against the dangers of neglecting these values, which can lead to political fragmentation, violence, and social discord.

In the context of African societies today, these films offer a mirror of the challenges faced by the continent—be it in the form of political instability, intergenerational conflict, or the marginalization of certain groups. The cultural values depicted in these films suggest that the path to political harmony requires not just a political solution, but a return to the foundational principles of communal living. These principles are not static but evolve with the changing dynamics of African societies, and it is essential to recognize their relevance in contemporary political discourse. While these films offer an important commentary on the challenges of political unity in Africa, they also demonstrate the power of cinema as a tool for social change. Through these visual narratives, filmmakers have the ability to engage audiences with critical cultural conversations, inspiring reflection on the values that can shape a peaceful future. Thus, this study underscores the importance of cultural storytelling in the political realm, where film serves as both a mirror and a guide for societal transformation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for policymakers, filmmakers, and scholars interested in fostering political harmony through cultural values:

1. Integration of Cultural Values into Political Discourse: There is a need for a deeper integration of cultural values into the political discourse of African nations. Policymakers should consider these traditional values when formulating policies to ensure they align with the communal expectations and norms that hold society together. A policy

framework that respects the cultural fabric of African societies could be more effective in promoting longterm peace and stability.

2. Encouraging Film as a Medium for Social Change: Filmmakers should continue to explore themes of communal values and political harmony in African cinema. Cinema has the potential to shape public opinion and provide a platform for societal reflection and transformation. Future film productions could focus on how these cultural values can be adapted to contemporary political contexts, encouraging a harmonious coexistence of tradition and modernity.
3. Promotion of Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue: Given the role of religion as a cultural value in African films, it is essential to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue in both public and private spheres. Filmmakers, religious leaders, and community organizers should collaborate to address misconceptions about religious diversity and demonstrate how religious values can coexist to foster peace and unity.
4. Support for Cultural Education in the Arts: Institutions of higher learning and cultural organizations should support the study and preservation of African cultural values through the arts. Educational curricula should include film studies that focus on African cultural narratives and their impact on political and social life. This would help to instill a sense of cultural pride and understanding in younger generations, equipping them with the knowledge to contribute positively to their societies.
5. Collaborative Efforts for Social Harmony: Governments, civil society organizations, and cultural practitioners must collaborate to create spaces for dialogue that highlight the importance of traditional values in contemporary governance. By promoting communitybased decision-making processes, African societies could strengthen social cohesion and address divisive political conflicts.

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