

## **Framing the Past, Sustaining the Present, and Preserving the Future: Film Production and the Preservation of Igbo Cultural Heritage**

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### **Article Info**

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### **Abstract**

*The transmission of indigenous knowledge systems in a globalized world necessitates the adaptation of cultural practices into modern, accessible media. Film production is a vital channel for preserving and transmitting a people's intangible cultural heritage. This study investigates contemporary Nigerian cinema, 'Egwu Onwa,' as a medium for preserving the traditional Igbo folk performance. It is a visual adaptation that attempts to interpret, recreate, and transpose the pre-existing oral form of Igbo communal performance. The paper examines the transition of the 'Egwu Onwa' cultural content from its original space and oral form into a visual, digital medium. The primary objectives are to identify the cultural elements of traditional Egwu Onwa represented in the film, and to assess the degree of positive versus negative representation of these elements within the filmic adaptation. Employing the Theory of Adaptation as the framework, the study utilizes a purposive sampling method, focusing exclusively on the film 'Egwu Onwa'. The analysis reveals that while the film successfully portrays many of the activities that characterized moonlight games in ancient Igbo society, it also features several scenes where the representation deviates into a negative or distorted portrayal of the traditional cultural context and values. The study concludes that the film industry offers an avenue for preserving and transmitting the rich Igbo cultural heritage to contemporary and future generations. It recommends that filmmakers exercise diligent cultural fidelity to avoid distortions or negative portrayals that could undermine the Igbo cultural tradition being documented.*

**Keywords:** Preservation, adaptation, culture, filmmakers, Egwu Onwa

### **Introduction**

The sustenance, preservation, and successful transmission of African cultural heritage have become increasingly reliant on the adaptation of traditional knowledge systems into contemporary media. Historically, the continuity of cultural heritage in ancient African societies, including the Igbo, was achieved through oral media, a traditional knowledge delivery system where education was intrinsically synonymous with culture itself. Culture, defined as the totality of a people's way of life, encompasses their tools, beliefs, arts, and social organization, reflecting their unique aesthetic sensibilities. However, the forces of modernization and globalization have fundamentally challenged the efficacy of this oral tradition. The paradigm shift from orality to a digital, globalized environment, exacerbated by phenomena like rural-to-urban migration, has led to a significant decline in traditional modes of cultural expression, such as the Igbo *Egwu Onwa* (Moonlight Plays). This erosion creates a critical generational gap, threatening to sever the connection between the youth and their ancestral heritage. As Toni-Duruaku (2004) observes, discarding the elements that define and bind a people inevitably leads to a loss of identity and cultural coherence. To counter this, it is imperative that Igbo indigenous cultural traditions be properly secured, documented, and transmitted to future generations. This necessitates embracing new, viable platforms for cultural articulation. Film and video production stand out as powerful, accessible sources of popular entertainment that possess a profound social influence.

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Beyond their entertaining value, films serve as dynamic vessels for expanding ideological stands, denouncing detrimental socio-political practices, and documenting cultural narratives. Therefore, this study investigates the crucial role and suitability of the Igbo video film in addressing the challenge of cultural preservation. By analyzing a specific film, *Egwu Onwa*, an adaptation of the traditional Igbo moonlight plays, this research seeks to demonstrate how contemporary film production can effectively frame the past, appreciate the present, and ensure the preservation of the future of Igbo cultural heritage for the twenty-first century.

### **Literature and Theoretical Framework: Adaptation, Nollywood, E-Culture, Social Reflection, and Oral Tradition**

The analysis of this study is grounded in Linda Hutcheon's Theory of Adaptation (2006). This framework is particularly vital for examining the transition of the Igbo moonlight activities *Egwu Onwa*, originally an oral, communal performance, into the visual, contemporary medium of the video film. The oral nature of traditional African societies renders adaptation essential for documentation, preservation, and global visibility in the digital age. Okwuchukwu (2014) on cultural complexity and advancement affirms that, "the history of dance, music, poetry, storytelling and of the fine arts dates back to the early beginning of man. However, as man evolves through history and creates more complex cultures and civilizations, he not only advances and refines these existing arts but also creates new forms of arts" (p. 4).

Hutcheon (2006) defines adaptation not merely as a copy, but as a repetition with variation (p. 8). This core concept perfectly encapsulates the process under investigation: the film *Egwu Onwa* is a conscious repetition of the traditional cultural practice but introduces variations dictated by the new medium 'film', modern context, and the adaptors' creative choices. Furthermore, Hutcheon posits that adaptation exists simultaneously as both a product (the resulting film) and a process (the act of adapting) (p.8). Crucially, she highlights the importance of intentionality in this process, stating: "The examination of the different versions... suggests that the political, aesthetic and autobiographical intentions of the various adapters are potentially relevant to the audience's interpretation... if we cannot talk about the creative process, we cannot fully understand the urge to adapt and therefore perhaps the very process of adaptation. We need to know why" (Hutcheon, p. 107).

The focus on the adapter's intentionality is central to this study's objectives. The initial motivation to adapt *Egwu Onwa* stems from the laudable intention of cultural preservation and transmission, bridging the generational gap by making ancestral traditions accessible. However, the analysis moves beyond mere documentation to critically assess the film's representation (its product). By using Hutcheon's lens, this study investigates how the variations introduced by the filmmakers, whether aesthetic, commercial, or narrative, affect the authenticity. This allows the research to determine if the resulting portrayal is positive (faithful) or negative (distorted/misleading) in its representation of the traditional cultural elements. Ultimately, this framework provides the necessary critical tool for scrutinizing the delicate balance between creative license and cultural fidelity in the pursuit of heritage preservation. Timothy – Asobele (2003) described it as a dialogue of culture (p. xiv) while Conteh-Morgan & Olaniyan (2004) sees it as an inter-cultural negotiation (p. 53).

Early scholarly discourse on the Nigerian video film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, established its rapid emergence and socio-cultural impact. Shaka (2002) contributed foundational work by tracing the history, genres, and textual characteristics of the emergent industry, noting its significance as a new form of mass communication and cultural expression. Similarly, general film studies literature, such as Lynne and Ward (2004) and Kolker (2006), provides the technical and theoretical context for digital moviemaking and the form and culture of cinema globally.

However, a more focused line of inquiry critiques Nollywood's role as a mirror of Nigerian society. Opeyemi (2008) observed that the industry often falls short of reflecting a balanced national image, concluding that the movie business frequently portrays negative aspects, becoming a "bad teacher of what is right." Reinforcing this critique, Ideagu (2014) argued that the primary focus of most Nigerian home movie producers is often purely commercial, neglecting the vital roles of cultural promotion and countering the deleterious effects of foreign films. Ideagu strongly asserts that producers often "break norms and show a culture that is more of their own creation," (Ideagu, p. 15) a finding highly relevant to this study's goal of assessing positive versus negative representations of *Egwu Onwa*.

A crucial body of literature explores the transition of African narratives and cultural practices from traditional oral forms into modern media, which is directly linked to the use of Hutcheon's Theory of Adaptation in this study. Emenyonu (2010) edited a seminal work exploring the interface between film and African literature. Contributors examined the criticism of literary adaptations, the impact of video films on reading culture, and African writers' engagement with filmmaking. This collection validates the academic need to scrutinize the filmic adaptation process in Africa. Extending this, Ker and Nasiri (2018) specifically addressed the Emerging Trends in Oral Performance

Through New Media, underscoring the contemporary urgency of adapting oral traditions for documentation and visibility.

The critical issue of fidelity during adaptation is raised by Ernest-Samuel (2012), who investigates “E-Culture” (electronic culture) in African video films. Using Igbo epic films like *Akwaeke Na Odum* and *Sacred Tradition* as paradigms, the study argues that E-culture is often a superficial or false culture, cautioning against the promotion of content that is not true to indigenous traditions in a globalized environment. This directly supports your study's hypothesis regarding potential negative portrayals and distortions in cultural adaptations.

### **Gap in the Literature**

The reviewed literature establishes a robust foundation for this study, confirming several key areas of scholarly investigation. Existing academic work acknowledges Nollywood's significant, albeit often criticized, role in reflecting Nigerian society and shaping its modern cultural discourse. Furthermore, there is a clear consensus regarding the theoretical importance of adapting oral African traditions into visual media to ensure their preservation and transmission in the digital age. Specifically concerning the research subject, prior studies have demonstrated the viability and necessity of using film to retrieve and repackage various aspects of Igbo culture.

However, despite the strength of these foundational arguments, the literature contains a critical void: none of the existing studies provide a targeted, critical assessment of the portrayal of the Igbo *Egwu Onwa* (moonlight plays) within the context of contemporary video film adaptation. This study, by focusing exclusively on the specific cultural fidelity and representation of *Egwu Onwa* and analyzing its elements, therefore steps in to fill this precise gap. This is achieved by providing a targeted, critical assessment of the positive and negative cultural fidelity achieved in adapting this distinct Igbo communal performance.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research design focused on textual analysis to investigate the role of film adaptation in preserving Igbo cultural heritage, specifically the *Egwu Onwa* (moonlight plays). The research employs a descriptive and analytical approach. It is descriptive because it identifies and catalogues the specific cultural elements of the traditional *Egwu Onwa* performance as they existed in the pre-colonial Igbo society. Simultaneously, it is analytical because it critically assesses how these elements were represented, interpreted, and varied (positively or negatively) during their translation into the contemporary medium of the video film.

The study population comprises all contemporary Nigerian video films (Nollywood) that focus on adaptations of traditional Igbo cultural practices. The study utilizes purposive sampling. The *Egwu Onwa* film is selected as it directly and explicitly deals with the adaptation of the Igbo moonlight plays, the core cultural element under investigation. Its thematic relevance makes it the most suitable textual artifact for achieving the objectives of this research. The primary data collection instrument is textual (film) viewing and content analysis. The film *Egwu Onwa* was viewed multiple times, and detailed notes were taken on specific scenes, dialogues, actions, character representations, settings, and musical elements that either reflect or distort the known characteristics of traditional *Egwu Onwa*.

The collected data were subjected to critical textual analysis guided by the principles of Linda Hutcheon's Theory of Adaptation. The analysis began with the identification of source material elements, noting documented, traditional components of *Egwu Onwa* (e.g., specific games, songs, communal settings, moral lessons, and performance conventions). This was followed by a comparative mapping of the identified traditional elements against their representation in the film *Egwu Onwa*. The next critical step involved the assessment of variation introduced by the film's adaptor. This determined whether the adaptation resulted in Positive Cultural Fidelity (accurate, faithful, or constructive reinterpretation) or Negative Portrayal/Distortion (misrepresentation, omission of key moral elements, or the introduction of sensationalized content that undermines the traditional cultural values). The final stage, thematic synthesis, involved synthesizing the findings to conclude the overall efficacy and cultural responsibility demonstrated by the film in framing and preserving the Igbo heritage.

### **Results and Discussion**

Discussion and analysis in this segment are presented under four captions which are: the film industry and cultural adaptation, the concept of *Egwu Onwa* (Moonlight Plays), the synopsis of *Egwu Onwa*, and features portrayed in the film.

#### **The Film Industry and Cultural Adaptation**

The video film industry serves as an immensely powerful tool, capable of influencing individual thought and potentially shaping audience actions based on the ideas and narratives presented. Given this influence, the medium is crucial for the transmission and negotiation of cultural values. These cultural elements abound across the African continent and can serve as rich, inexhaustible sources for thematic exploration and plot narratives in African cinema.

The Igbo society, in particular, possesses a wealth of cultural practices and traditions that can be effectively harnessed by film producers for preservation and documentation. Indeed, film stands as one of the most effective contemporary media through which a people's culture can be documented, preserved, and successfully transmitted across generations. Igbo film producers are actively engaged in this cultural endeavor. One significant example of an Igbo film that attempts to portray and preserve an aspect of the Igbo cultural heritage is the production titled *Egwu Onwa* (Moonlit Plays).

This video film functions as a visual adaptation of the traditional Igbo moonlight activities. It represents a deliberate effort to interpret, recreate, and transport the pre-existing, conventional oral and performance form of *Egwu Onwa*. By undertaking this process, the film aims to be a vital instrument for documenting, preserving, and transmitting this specific aspect of Igbo culture to modern audiences.

### **The Concept of *Egwu Onwa* (Moonlight Plays)**

*Egwu Onwa*, or moonlight plays, is a fundamental Igbo traditional training mode, serving as a critical institution for holistic human upbringing and kinetic development. The original purpose of *Egwu Onwa* was to teach the philosophy of life, culture, and the traditions of the people *odibendi*. Ogbalu (1979) highlights the functional significance of the practice in the ancient Igbo society. He explains that traditional Igbo communities lacked formal institutions for physical exercise, stating:

*umuntakiri enweghi ulo akwukwo ebe ha ga na-agbaghari oso na-agbasiike ma na-azu akwara ha. Ndi Igbo weputara egwu onwa n'onodu ihe ndi a, ka o buru ihe na-enye mmadu obi utu n'abal mgbe o ruchara oru diiri ya n'ehihie, o na-enyekwa aka izu akwara umuntakiri ka ha gbasieike.* (Ogbalu, 1979: 87-90)

#### **Translation**

In traditional Igbo society, where formal institutions for physical training were absent, Children did not have dedicated schools where they could run around to exercise and strengthen their bones. The custom of *Egwu Onwa* (Moonlight Plays) was strategically introduced by the Igbo to serve multiple essential community functions.

In essence, the Igbo introduced *Egwu Onwa* as a substitute for organized sports and schools, acting as a means of communal entertainment at night after the day's chores, while simultaneously developing and strengthening the children's physical health.

The moonlight plays were characterized by a variety of interactive oral performances, which were the chief source of entertainment, relaxation, and cultural transmission. These activities included dancing, singing, folktale narration, folk songs, riddles, and jokes. As noted by Finnegan (2012), the critical factors in oral performance are the artist, the audience, and the creative manipulation of the medium to entertain, satirize, encourage specific values, or recount heroic communal achievements. Ogbalu further details the diversity of participation across age grades:

*N'egwu onwa umuokorobia na-eti oti igba nke eji apia mmonwu. Umuagbogh na-agba mmarigo ma o bu oru-ego, ha na-agu uri nke ha na-eturita onwe ha aha. Umunta na-akwa ekere mmgbe na-agbakamgba. Ndi okenye na ndi isi awo ibe ha nori na-ako akuko nnanna ha koro ha tutu onwa adanyuo...* (Ogbalu, 1979, p. 89)

#### **Translation**

'During these plays, young men would practice *oti igba* (drumming) used for masquerade displays; young maidens would engage in dances like *mmarigo* or *oru-ego* and perform praise poetry; children would play games like *ekeremmgbe* and wrestle; and significantly, adults and elders would narrate ancestral stories until the moon waned'.

The setting and timing of *Egwu Onwa* were highly ritualized. The activities primarily took place at the village *ilo* (square) in the evening, after the day's work and dinner, typically during the dry season when the full moon was visible. Achebe (1958) corroborates the importance of the moonlight setting, noting the proverb, "When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk," signifying the energizing and communally unifying power of the event.

Achebe's (1958) reference to the empty *ilo* in *Things Fall Apart* during a period of colonial disruption further underscores the traditional significance of the gathering, showing that any change in the customary period or venue of *Egwu Onwa* symbolized a great social and cultural transformation (Achebe p.156). It is against this established, traditional function and context of the *Egwu Onwa* that this study proceeds to analyze its portrayal in the contemporary Igbo film.

### ***Egwu Onwa* (The Moonlight Play): Synopsis and Features of the Video Film**

The film *Egwu Onwa* is a 2017 Nigerian Igbo movie, subtitled in English. It features Chinwe Owoh, Rachael Okonkwo, and Stephen Alajemba, among others. The narrative begins in the present day when a young boy, Ikeji, asks his grandmother why she frequently sings an old song. Upon learning it is an *Egwu Onwa* song, Ikeji's subsequent question about why the plays are no longer held motivates the main plot, which unfolds as a flashback to a certain ancient kingdom.

*Egwu Onwa* was depicted in the ancient kingdom as a vital source of entertainment and socialization for all members of the community. However, the king eventually bans the practice after discovering that "something more than game" (*Egwu Onwa*, 2017) was occurring under its cover, leading to widespread atrocities. The film then presents a series of interconnected subplots illustrating the moral decline, linking the negative behaviours to the moonlight sessions:

### **Marital Discord and Misogyny**

Okpōnkū, encouraged by his mother Mgborie, sends away his wife Ekemma for bearing only female children. During this expulsion, they sing a derogatory song, "*Ekemma bear good seed, Ekemma bear good seed for any tree that does not bear good food will be hewn down*" (*Egwu Onwa*, 2017). Mgborie further threatens Ekemma's daughters, "*You are here occupying someone else's compound; you will be sold for three pence and half penny*" (*Egwu Onwa*, 2017). Okpōnkū later marries Chinelo, who constantly drugs him with sleeping pills so she can commit adultery with her boyfriend, Chike, in their matrimonial bed.

### **Adultery and Abomination**

Agnes, wife of Onyekwere, rushes her children to *Egwu Onwa* whenever her husband travels so she can commit adultery with her lover, Odiukō. Agnes eventually becomes pregnant for Odiukō, leading to a trial before the council of elders and the traditional conviction for *aru* (abomination).

### **Immorality and Social Breakdown**

The film shows scenes where teenagers, like Nkechi, use *Egwu Onwa* as a cover for sexual immorality, prompting Nkechi's father to blame his wife for not heeding his warnings about the plays. Other non-traditional crimes include a nurse, Ifeyinwa, stealing and selling a baby for personal profit.

### **Rape and Ban**

The climax of the corruption under the cover of the plays is the rape of the king's daughter and her maids on their way to *Egwu Onwa*. Following this, the King and his cabinet formally ban the practice to discourage all prevalent atrocities.

### **Features of *Egwu Onwa* Portrayed in the Film**

Despite the negative narrative framing, the film successfully captures several authentic features of the traditional *Egwu Onwa*:

| Feature                           | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Participants</b>               | The sessions feature a mixture of adults, youths, and children, accurately reflecting the communal nature of the traditional practice.                                                                                               |
| <b>Setting</b>                    | The environment is well-captured, showing the moon radiating light over the communal gathering, confirming the night-time, outdoor setting.                                                                                          |
| <b>Activities</b>                 | The film displays key traditional activities, including Ifo Narration (folktale storytelling), where the <i>Okpōkukō</i> 'raconteur' and audience use the call-and-response formula ' <i>Ifo Chakpii! Wooo!</i> '.                   |
| <b>Folk Songs</b>                 | Authentic Igbo folk songs are rendered, such as <i>Onye ga-agba egwu iya...</i> and the elaborate <i>Nwa enweghi nne</i> song embedded within the folktale, which correctly utilizes musical accompaniment to advance the narrative. |
| <b>Musical Instruments</b>        | Traditional Igbo musical instruments like the <i>ogene</i> 'metal gong', <i>okpōkoro</i> 'wooden gong', <i>ekwe</i> 'slit drum', <i>udu</i> 'pot', <i>ubu</i> 'guitar', and <i>ichaka</i> 'maraca' are correctly represented.        |
| <b>Preparation</b>                | The scene showing children and adults rushing to finish chores (like Nkechi's brother fetching firewood) to ensure participation accurately reflects the high anticipation and value placed on the play.                             |
| <b>Language</b>                   | The dialogue is primarily rendered in standardized Igbo language, enhanced with the Enugu dialect, which grounds the film in Igbo cultural identity.                                                                                 |
| <b>Positive Cultural Elements</b> | The film accurately portrays the traditional method of dispute resolution by the council of elders and the traditional sanctions for <i>aru</i> 'abomination', such as the temporary excommunication of Odiukō.                      |

|                    |                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Ontological</b> | The characters bear Igbo names (Ifeyinwa, Onyekwere, Ekemma, etc.) that reflect the Igbo belief that names are meaningful rather than mere tags. |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### Findings: Variation and Cultural Fidelity

Applying Hutcheon's Theory of Adaptation, the analysis reveals that the film *Egwu Onwa* is an adaptation marked by both positive fidelity and significant negative variations that distort the source cultural practice.

### Negative Portrayal and Distortion

The primary distortion in the film lies in the motivation for the ban and the projection of contemporary ills onto the past. The producer utilizes the traditional *Egwu Onwa* setting as a canvas to showcase modern social decay, suggesting the plays themselves were the source of corruption.

### Immoral Causes for Relegation

The film attributes the ban of *Egwu Onwa* to widespread atrocities (rape, adultery, fornication) that supposedly flourished under its cover. However, as noted by Achebe (1958) (through the mouth of one of the oldest member of the *umunna*) the major factor leading to the decline of communal gatherings like *Egwu Onwa* was colonial influence and the subsequent breakdown of kinship bonds.

... A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their own homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so. You may ask why I am saying all this. I say it because I fear for the younger generation, for you people.' He waved his arm where most of the young men sat. 'As for me, I have only a short while to live, and so have Uchendu and Unachukwu and Emefo. But I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong is the bond of kinship. You do not know what it is to speak with one voice. And what is the result? An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his brothers. He can curse the gods of his fathers and his ancestors, like a hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for the clan.' He turned again to Okonkwo and said, 'Thank you for calling us together. pp. 133-134.

The film displaces the blame from external influences to the internal moral failure of the tradition itself.

### Misrepresentation of Marriage and Divorce

Okponku's immediate dismissal of his wife, Ekemma, for bearing only female children, is anti-Igbo tradition. While the Igbo value *itụ omumụ ngwa* 'an admixture of both sexes', female children are crucial as the 'honour of the family' *nwa nwaanyi bụ ugwu ezi* and hold unique responsibilities for caring for parents in old age and managing the funeral rites (*umuada*). Furthermore, the film's portrayal of Chinelo's marriage to Okponku, rejecting bride price and traditional drinks *iti, nkwenụ, ngwọ* is a direct rejection of Igbo customary law *igba nkwi*, falsely projecting modern individualistic values onto the traditional past.

### Anachronisms and "E-Culture"

The film features several elements that did not exist in the ancient Igbo society, including the existence of formal hospitals (where the baby theft occurs) and the use of contemporary songs adapted from Christian hymns (the "Jesu" song replaced with "Chike"). These anachronistic elements project contemporary reality and Westernized "e-culture" onto the historical setting, compromising the film's claim to cultural preservation.

### Positive Cultural Fidelity

Despite the narrative distortion, the film achieves positive cultural fidelity in its formal and structural elements. The accurate representation of Igbo traditional dances, musical instruments, the *ilọ* setting, and the mechanics of folktale narration (call-and-response) provides valuable visual documentation of these intangible cultural assets. Moreover, the detailed portrayal of the *aru* purification process highlights the sophisticated legal and moral code of the traditional society.

The data reveal that the producer of the film *Egwu Onwa* engaged in a selective adaptation, projecting contemporary ills and sensationalist drama onto the traditional structure of the moonlight plays. While the film successfully preserves the form (activities, setting and language) of *Egwu Onwa*, it fundamentally distorts its function and philosophy, wrongly rebranding a traditional institution for moral training and communal bonding as a source of corruption and moral anarchy. The film industry is a potent tool for preservation, but this case underscores the necessity of cultural diligence to avoid negative variations that create a false historical narrative.

### Preservation of Igbo Heritage in New Media

Studies focusing explicitly on the preservation of Igbo cultural heritage through new media are scarce but provide direct precedent for this research. Anyachebelu (2016) conducted a study on the retrieval of the Igbo past through the adaptation of Igbo folktales into video film. This work demonstrates that the adaptation of specific Igbo

oral narratives is a viable and academically recognized strategy for cultural documentation. On a related note, Alvan-Ikoku (2017) drew attention to the necessity of “repackaging” Igbo folksongs for global acceptance and preservation, reinforcing the broader scholarly call for utilizing contemporary media to secure intangible heritage.

### Conclusion

The analysis of the video film *Egwu Onwa* confirms that film production is a vital and necessary avenue for the preservation and transmission of the rich Igbo cultural heritage. As culture is dynamic and the age-long tradition of imparting knowledge through oral means is disappearing due to modernization and globalization, the re-adaptation of Igbo culture into accessible, globalized media is crucial for survival.

The study established that the film adaptation of *Egwu Onwa* operates through a dualistic effect. On one hand, the film successfully serves its documentary function by preserving the formal elements of the tradition, accurately showcasing the setting, participants, and oral performances (folktales, songs, and instruments) that define *Egwu Onwa*. These visual representations are invaluable for documenting intangible heritage for future generations. On the other hand, the film demonstrates significant negative variation by prioritizing sensationalized drama and projecting modern social ills (such as adultery, baby theft, and distorted marriage rites) onto the ancient past. Critically, the film falsely attributes the decline of *Egwu Onwa* to internal moral failure rather than the historical factors of colonial disruption and the breakdown of kinship bonds (Achebe, 1958). This distortion stems largely from a major impediment to culturally faithful adaptation: the prevailing conflict between business and culture in Nollywood. As observed by Osofian (2010), the industry is driven by financiers primarily focused on rapid financial returns, leading to the deliberate sacrifice of “higher considerations of culture” for quick mass appeal. This reinforces the warning that “It is hard to mix business and culture. Business is going to win” (Campbell, 1998, citing Thomas). The video film has immense potential for mass communication, cultural export, and image-building; however, its effectiveness in truly preserving the Igbo past hinges on cultural fidelity. Serious caution must be taken to avoid the negative, wrong, or demeaning portrayal of Igbo culture, which ultimately misrepresents the society to the wider world.

### Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study puts forth the following recommendations to ensure that film adaptation effectively serves the goal of cultural preservation. The Igbo people and cultural stakeholders must not passively allow their heritage to go into extinction; intentional and concerted efforts must be made for proactive cultural adaptation to meet contemporary times. Film producers are strongly urged to prioritize fidelity over profit by separating business interests from the responsibility of representing the ideal Igbo situation in their films. Adaptations should be meticulously crafted to reflect the rich cultural values the Igbo were historically known for, while eschewing external or modern influences that misrepresent the past. To achieve this essential authenticity, film producers must collaborate with custodians of Igbo culture and experts knowledgeable in Igbo history, rituals, and philosophy. Furthermore, the effective implementation of cultural fidelity will be significantly aided if the government or concerned foreign sponsors provide capital support to film producers, as this financial backing would alleviate the pressure to generate immediate profits through sensationalism, thus allowing creators the space to produce culturally responsible narratives.

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