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# **The Photo-Dramatics of *Atóka* Photoplay Magazine**

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## **Abstract**

The photo-dramatics of *Atóka* implies the various dramaturgical devices employed in creating *Atóka* photoplay magazine. The composition of the photoplay magazine relies extensively on the editorial and creative ingenuity of *Olótùú* (editor) who controls the three-modal arts of *Atóka*, namely: dramatic art, photographic art and publishing art. *Atóka* tells its stories primarily in photographs, hence series of artistic and technical manipulations to convey its dramatic story vividly to its readers. This paper which adopts Roland Barthe's photo-semiotics examines the photo-dramatics of *Atóka*, dwelling on its various dramaturgical devices of adaptation techniques; photographic shots, shots imposition and continuous dialogue; editorial intervention: speech balloons, thought bubbles, and cap prints; and intro and recap devices.

**Keywords:** *Atóka*, photoplay magazine, photo-dramatics, photo-semiotics.

## **Introduction**

*Atóka* photoplay magazine was a unique publication that was prevalent in the Southwestern Nigeria from 1967 to 1991. Published by West African Book Publishers (WABP) and printed by Academy Press (AP), it was a dramatic collaboration of theatre practitioners and publishers which aimed at bringing



entertainment in form of play productions to the door steps of the teeming theatre lovers in printed form. Christened *Yorùbá Photoplay Series* at inception, *Atóka* adopted its name in January 1970. It sustained regular bimonthly publications until the mid-1980s, and went out of circulation in 1991. *Atóka* had two broad contents: drama and additives (*àfikún*). The dramas in *Atóka* are diverse, and they are from multiple sources. A great percentage of the plays are from the repertoires of the various theatre companies, many of which had been produced on stage. The plays in the repertoire of *Atóka* photoplay magazine are classified into three, namely: mythical, historical, and non-historical. In addition to this, however, are series of secondary materials which we referred to as additives. The additives are medley of add-ons or supplements which feature regularly and are meant to flavour and enrich the publication. These additives comprised *Ìtàn àròsọ* (prose-fiction), *Ewì* (poetry), *Ọrẹ̀ òkèrèrè* (pen-pals), *Ìròyìn kàyééfi* (comic news), *Àwòrán èfẹ̀* (cartoons), *Ìpolówó ojà* (advertisements), *Àgbòràndùn* (general counseling) and *Àntí Ayò* (love counseling). Our focus in this paper is on the drama component. *Atóka* was the first and longest-serving version of photoplay in Yoruba that made a long-lasting impression on the social, cultural, and economic planes. As the name ‘photoplay’ implies, the magazine employs the real pictures of the actors and



actresses to tell its dramatic story; photography is therefore a principal medium of expression in *Atóka*.

Literary study on *Atóka* photoplay magazine was pioneered by Ògúndèjì (1981:8-12). This was followed by Aróhunmólàṣe (1982), Adéoyè (1984), Àdèlé-Bólájí (1985), Adélékè (1995) and Àkàngbé (2005). These scholars have examined aspects of *Atóka* but none has carried out an analysis of its contents, done a comprehensive study of the components of its arts or investigated its dramaturgy. This study therefore sets out to fill this vacuum by identifying the dramaturgical devices of *Atóka* drama, evaluating how these devices impacted on its contents, thereby enhancing the patronage and longevity of *Atóka* photoplay magazine.

### **Photo-Semiotics**

Semiotics, otherwise called semiotic studies, can be simply defined as the study of signs and sign processes. According to Morner and Rausch (1997: 198), it is “the study of signs or signals of communications”, while to Eco (1976: 7) “semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign”. A sign in the context is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else which may not necessarily exist or actually be somewhere at the moment when a sign stands in for it.



Photographic semiotics (photo-semiotics) is a branch of semiotics, and it began with Roland Barthes in a short text (1961) entitled “le message photographique”. In 1964, he wrote “La rhétorique de l’image” which was his second text on pictorial semiotics, and a real classic of the domain is about a photograph showing Panzani Spaghetti and other kindred products offered for sale in the shape of a market goer’s still life (Sonesson, 1989:7). An emerging idea of Barthes in his second article is that no picture contains information in itself or alternatively that it contains so much contradictory information that a verbal message is needed to fix its meaning. Barthes’ notion therefore presupposes that a photograph or still image has no meaning on its own except with verbal caption or explanation. By implication, the *Atóka*’s drama in photos conveys little or no messages without the dialogue. This, of course, in our own view, is far from being correct. Schaeffer (1987:99) corroborates our opinion by stating that it was because Barthes has mainly studied “strongly organised communicational contexts” that gave him the opinion that verbal language plays a leading role in the understanding of pictures. Schaeffer maintains, to the contrary, that “neither art photographs nor scientific photographs would seem to be determined linguistically to a comparable extent” though linguistic expression can intensify and specify the photographic message (if the text is not incongruous with or negating the

photographs). It seems that, to Barthes and his followers, information itself is conceived to be something that is verbal in nature. As a matter of fact, Prieto (1975) objects to Barthes' peculiar brand of linguistic determinism in the Panzani article which he (Barthes) used to illustrate semiotics of photography. Prieto pointed out that the Panzani picture was really much more informative than the verbal text which Barthes depicts on the picture. This points to the fact that photograph is a stronger signifier and meaning carrier than linguistic text. As submitted by Sonesson (1989:9), "pictures give us much less linguistic information than verbal text except in those cases in which the picture itself contains the reproduction of written messages". It is factual that images are the central medium of information, and the role of language has become that of a medium of commentary (Kress & Van Leeuwen; 1996:38). Actually, in today's new world order, visuals are dominant means of communication, and this is quite true of *Atóka* photoplay magazine. Adélékè (1995:23) also corroborates this that "the photoplay magazine does not require as much mental effort as demanded in the reading of newspapers and books, since it is pictorial. With the aid of the action pictures sequentially arranged on every page of the magazine, the use of words is minimised".

Photo-semiotics, therefore, is the study of the social, cultural and historical processes through which photographic



signs acquire and circulate meaning. It is a useful meaning-centred critical approach with which to interrogate simplistic beliefs in the realism of the photographic image. Photo-semiotics emphasises that in all signs, the relationship between the signified (the meaning of the content) and the signifier (the form of the message) is arbitrary and that meaning is context-determined. The photo-semiotic branch of the theory of semiotics is an ample tool for literary dissection of *Atóka* photoplay magazine.

### **Dramaturgical Devices**

*Atóka* adopts four basic dramaturgical devices. These are adaptation techniques, photographic shots, editorial intervention (*ogbón-ìdásí Olótùú*), and *intro* and *recap* devices. These devices are discussed in turn in the following sections.

**Adaptation Techniques** – The *Atóka* drama are diverse, and they are from multiple sources. Adaptation was a very common practice in *Atóka* plays, and this was carried out at different levels. These were adaptation from stage to photoplay medium; adaptation of published text from drama text to performance text, adaptation at the level of playwriting; adaptation from the genre of prose fiction to drama; and change of titles.

***Adaptation of Plays from the Repertoire:*** The common practice was to adapt the stage plays for the photoplay medium, and



such plays were usually notable and prominent with the theatre company concerned. Such adapted plays were made suitable for *Atóka*; they were fragmented into parts and generally adopted photoplay characteristics. Several examples abound particularly with the first generation dramatists.<sup>1</sup> *Yorùbá Ronú*, the maiden photoplay production, was a popular stage performance by Hubert Ogunde.<sup>2</sup> His other stage plays, which also appeared in *Atóka*, include *Ológbòdúdú*; *Àròpin ni Tèniyàn*, and *Awo Mímó*. Kólá Ògúnmolá's *Atóka* titles which had earlier appeared on stage include *Òmùti*; *Eni a fẹ la mò*; *Obìnrin Àsìkò*; *Ohun ojú wá lojú rí*; *Wàhálà n pàniyàn*; *Èhìn Òla*; *Àkódá Oró* and *Èṣù Òdàrà*. In the same vein, Dúró Ladipò had earlier produced his mythical plays, namely *Móremí*; *Ọba Kò So*; *Ajagun-ńlá*; *Ọba Mọrò*; *Beyi ò ẹ* and *Òtún Akogun* for stage before appearing as photoplays in *Atóka*. His other plays in this dual media are *Ààrò Mèta* and *Tẹni Bẹgi Lójù*. For Oyin Adéjọbí, we have *Kúyẹ*; *Ìgbèhìn á dùn*; *Orogún Adédigba*; *Fowó Rakú*; *Ìpadàbò Oduduwà*; *Àjàsorò*; *Ayẹṣòro*; *Ìyekan Sọjà*; *Tẹni n Tẹni*, and the like first appearing on stage then in *Atóka* photoplay magazine. This is also applicable to Akin Ògúngbè who had earlier produced *Rírò Ni Tèniyàn*; *Àsírí Baba Ìbejì*; *Fáriorò* and *Baba Ìjọ* on stage and later as photoplays, Sẹgun Olùbùkún also produced *Ìyàwó Òrúnmilà* and *Başòrun Gáà* on stage before adapting them for photoplay, while Àyinlá Olúmẹgbón also had



*Kóndó Olópàá; Èni A Wí Fún* and *Adiẹ Funfun* on stage initially and later as photoplays. Several other examples abound.

***Adaptation of published texts:*** Adaptation of published texts is carried out at three levels namely: adaptation from drama text to performance text, adaptation at the level of playwriting, and adaptation from the genre of prose fiction to drama. Multiple examples abound for each of these categories.

- i. *Adaptation from drama text to performance text:* A number of Yorùbá drama texts published by notable publishers were adapted by theatre companies for *Atóka* as photoplays. Due to the technical nature of the photoplay medium, such full length plays are usually abridged to fit into the regulated and regimented size of *Atóka* photoplay magazine. This was carefully done by excising certain parts of the published plays outrightly or reducing them without necessarily tampering with the logicity of the plot and the meaningfulness of the message; after this, such plays are then adapted for *Atóka*. These include Şégun Olùbùkún's *Başòrun Gáà*, an adaptation of Adébayò Fálétí's *Başòrun Gáà*; *Egbìnrin Ọtẹ̀*, an adaptation of Babátúndé Ọlátúnjí's text with the same title by Ìşòlá Ọ̀gúnşòlá; *Efúnşetán Aniwúra* and *Kòseégbé* both adapted from Akínwùmi Ìşòlá's published plays in the same titles also by Ìşòlá Ọ̀gúnşòlá. *Àsírí Tú* was also adapted by Kàmórù Àrẹ̀mú

from the published play written by Babatunde Ọlátúnjí, while *Gbangba Dẹkùn* by Oyin Adéjọbí was from the play *Ilé tí a fi Itọ Mọ* written by Olú Dáramólá. *Atọka* in this regard provided educational information to students not only on Yorùbá history and culture but also on the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) syllabi as these adapted plays were from the WAEC recommended Yorùbá literature books for drama and prose. These were produced by the theatre practitioners in *Atọka* for the educational benefits of the teeming students who sat for Yorùbá in the Ordinary Level Certificate Examinations.

- ii. *Adaptation at the level of playwriting:* At this level of adaptation, we found Yoruba theatre practitioners creating a play out of published texts written in a foreign language which may be in the genre of drama or prose fiction. Here, dual tasks of adaptation and translation were carried out. Notable examples were *Ọmùtí* adapted by Kólá Ọgúnmólá from Amos Tutùọlá's novel titled *Palm-wine Drinkard* published in 1946, and Dúró Ladipọ's famous play *Èdá* which was adapted from the popular medieval play titled *Everyman*.
- iii. *Adaptation from the genre of prose fiction to drama:* A number of *Atọka* plays were also adapted from published prose fictional texts. Such novels were adapted as plays for *Atọka* medium. Notable examples from this category



include *Kúyè*, adapted by Oyin Adéjòbí from J.F. Odúnjò's novel titled *Kúyè*, *Èsè M̀à̀l̀ú̀ú̀* from J.F. Odúnjò's *Ọ̀mọ̀ Ọ̀kú Ọ̀run*, and *À̀d̀ì̀t̀ú̀ Olódùmarè* adapted for photoplay by Kólá Ọ̀gúnmólá from D.O. Fágúnwà's *À̀d̀ì̀t̀ú̀ Olódùmarè*.

- iv. *Change of titles*: Change of titles of known plays to a new one is another dramaturgy that is prevalent in *Atóka* photoplay magazine. For example, *Ìd̀à̀m̀ú̀ Páàdì M̀ìnkáìlù*, a published play written by Adébáyò Fáléti was changed to *À̀wá Ara wa* when adapted to photoplay by Adébáyò Fáléti and his Alébiòşù Theatre. Also, "Ìtójú Kúnlé" from J.F. Odúnjò's *Ọ̀mọ̀ Ọ̀rukàn* was changed to *Èsè M̀à̀l̀ú̀ú̀* in *Atóka* photoplay magazine in Oyin Adéjòbí's adaptation, while *Èkùró Ọ̀lójà* on stage was also changed to *Èniyàn Şòro* in *Atóka*. Another example is Lèrè Pàimó's *Ìdájó* that was changed to *Olùèsan* in *Atóka*.

**Camera Shots Technique** - The greatest differentiating art of the *Atóka* photoplay magazine is the use of photograph. As the name 'photoplay' implies, *Atóka* employs the real pictures of the actors and actresses to tell its dramatic stories, photography is therefore a principal medium of expression in *Atóka* where acting and photographing take place simultaneously. The art of photography is dependent on acting, and it is a process of making the fleeting and transient art of acting permanent in visual form. Camera is the principal tool of photography;



therefore, camera distance, camera movement and camera angle are critical indices of production in still photography. Camera distance implies the level of physical distance between the camera and the subject or action. It is the distance that determines what the camera sees of the subject or action. Camera movement refers to the movement of camera from one point to another (spatial movement), while camera angle is the position or direction of the camera relative to the subject or action (Ekwuasi, 2002). Photography as a narrative device in *Atòka* is quite technical. Alamu (2010) opines that the movement and angle of camera are fundamental to camera shots. Camera angle is the capturing of objects from a preferred side for narrative emphasis, and this is principally functional. Stressing the functional purpose of photographs, Enwezor and Zaya (1996:21) maintain in Adéèkó (2012:25) that

for photographs to have any meaning beyond their functions as *memento mori* and as instruments of evidence and record, we must acknowledge another stabilizing factor: the gaze, which Gordon Bleach has aptly termed ‘the negotiated space of viewing’.

‘Negotiated space of viewing’ entails variables like gaze, posture and outlook and as argued by Geoffrey Batchen, “camera placement, the position of the photographer in relationship to the subject and the ‘natural’ environment



selected by the photographer to enact the subject's authenticity” are all fundamental factors in photography (Adéèkó 2012:26).

Photographic images are captured in shots through the camera. A shot refers to a photographic view or exposure recorded on film with a camera. The photographer worked hand-in-hand with the Editor at location to record the play by capturing different shots of the actors and actresses and the general locale of the performance. Each shot had a different purpose and effect, and the photographer was always conscious of these. Camera angles were essential factors in photographic shots ([www.mediaknowall.com](http://www.mediaknowall.com)). In other word, the framing or the length of shot and the angle of the shot are crucial factors of consideration. A change between two different shots is called a cut.

Different types of shot are obtainable in photography. Cleave (1977: 20) and Ekwuasi (2002:89) identified Long shots, Medium shots and Close shots as the three basic types of camera distance with each having its sub-classifications. This study also identifies three basic types – Long, Medium and Close-up. These three are actually the basic types of shots though each has its own sub-branches based on the length (distance) of the subject from the camera. Moreover, these three are the basic relevant shots which are applicable to still photography and are obtainable in *Atóka* photoplay magazine; others are of use to moving pictures. Long Shot (also called Full

Shot (FS) or Wide Shot (WS)) is used as an establishing shot, and it normally shows the exterior like the outside of a building or a landscape. In a long shot, there will be very little detail visible; it is meant to give a general impression rather than specific information; therefore, there is no emphasis on any particular object. As buttressed by Ekwuasi,

Long shot is primarily used to establish in the audience, as a sort of frame of reference, the locale and the action in which closer, more detailed shots take place... Every new set must be represented, either at the opening of the sequence of shots or very early in it, with an establishing full shot (2002:92).

Long Shots are used appropriately as establishing shots in *Atóka*. Its use is also of cultural import which functionally depicts the communal nature of the Yorùba society.

Medium shot has variations such as “Medium Long Shot (MLS) and Medium Close-Up but it generally implies that the camera is fairly close to its subject and probably includes something less than the full figure” (Cleave 1977: 20). Ekwuasi notes that because medium shot is the combination of the two extreme shots (the long shot and the close shot); it, in effect, partially demonstrates the attributes of the two (2002:93). It is noteworthy that Medium shot is the most used type of shot in *Atóka*, and as also opined by Ekwuasi, its use introduces major characters, induces dramatic effects and functions as a re-



establishing shot. In *Atóka*, Close-up is the most potent device which is capable of drawing the reader's attention to any detail of the 'scene' as the editor wishes, be it facial expression, gesture, hand or leg movement. It practically highlights the importance of an object in a particular story by giving it a close focus. It also particularises a subject or action by isolating it. Close-Up is therefore a shot of emphasis.

In the photographic shooting of *Atóka*, Pa. Abimbade Oládèjò<sup>3</sup> identified wide shot, close-up shot and medium shot as those commonly used in *Atóka*. He referred to wide shot (WS) as full shot or 'scenery'; while medium shot is also referred to as three-quarter view in *Atóka* parlance. According to him,

*Wide shot – báyá èniyàn méjì, méta, méréin ló wà níbè, tí a fẹ́ kó gbogbo wọ́n pọ̀... Tó bá jẹ́ Close-up, iyẹn ni ohun tó súnmóni gbòngbòn. È ó rí Close-up mǹràn tí ó jẹ́ látòrùn látórí... Three-quarter view – láti orínkún sókè... Full view, tí a bá fẹ́ kó gbogbo ara látẹ̀sẹ̀ dórí. Medium ni three-quarter view.*

Wide shot – perhaps two, three or four people are there, if you want to capture all of them, (wide shot is employed)... if it is Close-up, which is for subjects that are extremely close. You find some Close-ups that will capture from neck or the head... Three-quarter view is from knee upward... Full view is for capturing the entire body from feet to the head. Medium shot is the three-quarter view.<sup>4</sup>

The use of shots in *Atóka* has cultural implications. Space is communal, and space is also economic. Communally, space is of essence in Yoruba society where existence is communal. The use of Full shot therefore is of communal signification. *Atóka* is a visual storytelling, and storytelling in communal Yoruba society was public and collective. Full shot is therefore employed to capture communality scenes such as market, naming, funeral, celebration, war, and the like. Despite joint ownership of space at the communal level, individuals also own spaces for economic reasons. Medium shot and Close shot are therefore employed to indicate spatial restrictions. A close examination of *Atóka* photoplay magazine shows that, true to Pa. Abimbádé Oládèjò's submission, wide shot, close-up shot and medium shot are the most employed. Wide shot is very common in the photographs used for the cover pages. Quite a number of cover pictures are in wide shot, giving a full view of the characters and the environment of the scenery. Examples include the covers of *Kẹ̀hìnsókun Part 4* and *Awo Mímó Part 1* by Hubert Ogunde; *Kúrá Part 1* by Fẹ̀mi Adéyẹ̀mọ; *Igí Dá Part 1* by Olúyòlé Theatre; and several others. These are clearly shown in Plates 1 -3.



Ogunde's *Kehinsokun* No. 4    Ogunde's *Awo Mimó* No. 1    Femi Adéyemọ's *Kura* No. 1

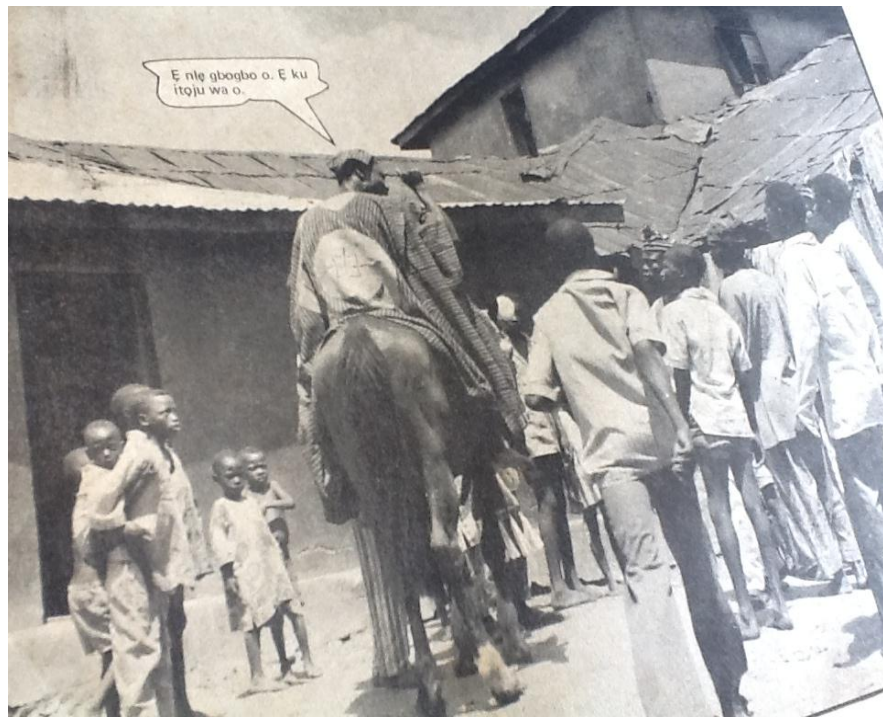
**Plate 1**

**Plate 2**

**Plate 3**

The use of wide or full shot however is not limited to the cover alone. Though not so common in the text, we still find it here and there in different plays. In *Igí Dá*, Number 1, an historical play, for example, when Ìyápò is going to visit Àrẹ̀nàkakańfò, he rides on a horse and several people are greeting and honoring him on the street as a war leader. We see examples of this on pages 3, 4 and 5 as illustrated in Plates 4 and 5. Also, in *Oògùn Ifé*, Number 1, produced by Obańlá Theatre, a non-historical play, in the opening scene where we see Mosún in the market to shop for food stuff and ingredients, a number of wide shots are effectively employed. All the shots on pages 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 are wide shots. This is understandable because no other shot can effectively orientate the readers to the place where the action is set by capturing a full view of Mosún, the seller, the stuffs and other buyers and sellers in the background, conveniently, other than the wide shot. As stated, a number of wide shots are found here and there in different

plays, particularly in scenes relating to celebrations like marriage, naming, funeral and partying; war, market, and crowd scenes in general. Again, in *Ajagun-ńlá*, a mythical play, wide shots are employed in the marriage scene in Ilé Oníkòyí when Ọmọlọlá is being given in marriage to Ajagun-ńlá on pages 19 – 20 and 21.



**Plate 4**



**Plate 5**

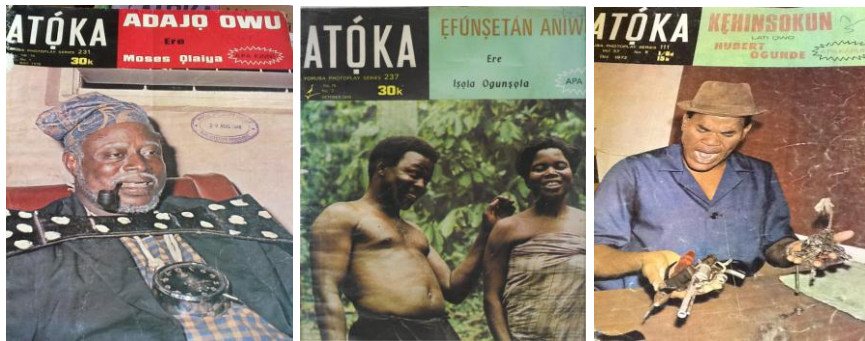
Iyapo, a warlord, passing through the market, riding on his horse to Àarẹ-Ònàkakaṅfò's house in *Igí Dá* Part 1 by Olúyòlé Theatre

From the examples above, we can see that all the plays in the three classifications: mythical, historical and non-historical, all make use of wide shots in their photodrama.

Medium shot (Mid-shot) is another type of shot that was commonly employed in *Atóka* photoplay magazine. To start



with, some covers are also shot in medium shot, and this is not limited to any of the three categories of *Atóka* drama. Examples include *Adájó Owú*, Number 1 by Moses Oláiyá a. k. a. Bàbá Sàlá; *Efúnṣetán Aniwùrà*, Number, 2 by Ìṣòlá Ògúnṣolá; *Kèhinsókun*, Number 5, by Hubert Ogunde; *Ìyàwó Òrúnmilà*, Number 2, by Ségun Olùbùkún and *Tẹni Bẹgi Lójù* Numbers 2 and 3, by Dúró Ladipọ. Plates 6 – 8 clearly illustrate this.



Oláiyá's *Adájó Owú* No. 1 Ìṣòlá's *Efúnṣetán Aniwùrà* No. 2 Ogunde's *Kèhinsókun* No. 5

**Plate 6**

**Plate 7**

**Plate 8**

In the play-texts, medium shots are the most utilised than wide shot and close-up. In *Kóndó Olópàá*, Number 1, a non-historical play by Àyìnlá Olùmègbón, for instance, when Àyìndé Bàbá Mòṅsùrá is lamenting about the fall of his storey building at Agodi in Ìbàdàn and his houses which were demolished due to the express road construction on pages 12, 13 and 14 with his wives commiserating with him; medium shots are used extensively. Also, on pages 16 – 21, when Àyìndé is painfully narrating the experience of his losses to Oníràrà and the Oníràrà's promise to introduce him to a very potent



babaláwo who will resuscitate his wealth, the actions are captured in medium shots all through. In *Ìsàlẹ̀ Ọ̀rọ̀*, Number 3, by Omilaní, a non-historical play, at the beginning of the third part when Bàbá Ìbùkún has successfully convinced his wife (Ìyá Ìbùkún) about the foreign goods he would receive the following day from the foreign business partner whereas he is only deceiving his wife that he wants to use for ritual sacrifice; medium shots are predominantly employed from pages 1 to 5. This is captured in Plates 9 – 11.



**Plate 9**



**Plate 10**

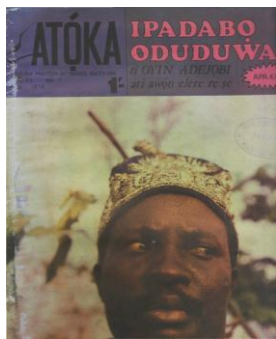


**Plate 11**

Àyindé in his shop is convincing his wife about the 'foreign business' he wants to venture into.

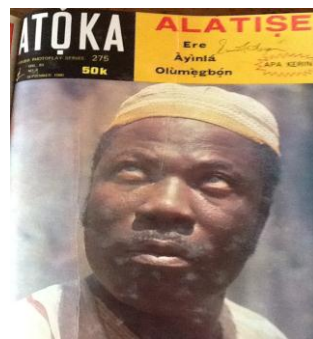


Close-up shot has an emphatic and dominant effect; it is also functionally employed to stress some actions or create effects. In *Atóka*, the use of CU is seen on the cover photographs but with very less frequency. As a matter of fact, its use is very rare; in fact, it is almost non-existent in the play proper. Oyin Adéjóbí's *Ìpadàbò Odùduwà* Number 1 for instance has its cover photograph in Closu-Up. The same goes for *Alátìṣe* Number 4 by Àyínlá Olùmègbón, *Ojúlarí* Number 4 by Lékè Ajàò *a.k.a. Kókóńsari*, and *Bàbá Ìjọ* Number 4 by Akin Ògúngbè; among others. Close-Up is illustrated in Plates 12-14.



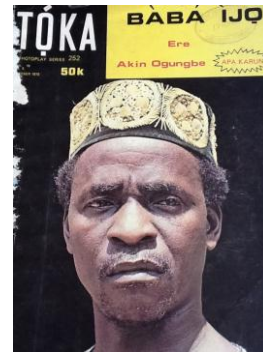
*Ìpadàbò Odùduwà* No. 1

**Plate 12**



*Alátìṣe* No. 4

**Plate 13**



*Bàbá Ìjọ* No. 5

**Plate 14**

Thus, the three shots, Long shot, Medium shot and Close-up shot, are all made use of but in varying quantities and differing frequencies. The shots are functionally and effectively utilised. However, only one camera was used in recording the play productions at locations. In our own opinion, the use of one camera, no doubt, has its shortcomings. It limits the production richness and creative depth, compounds the photographer's



stress and permits loss of valuable actions which perhaps might not have eluded the lens of a second photographer.

***Imposition of shots:*** This is another unique production ingenuity of the editor and his production team. Imposition of shots is the mounting of shots on each other to create special effects. In *Kóhódó-Olópàá*, Number 2, pages 30 – 32 and Number 5 pages 17 – 20, we see four skeletons torturing Àyìndé Bábá Mòhnsúrà and Akin in the forest at different times when each of them ventures into making money through ritual. They both seek to have “arọ owó” (lame wealth) which can never be exhausted. The four skeletons representing the spirits of the deads which are supposedly assigned in the spiritual realm to attend to Àyìndé in Number 2 and Akin in Number 5 flog their victims until Àyìndé takes to his heels and Akin, in his own case, runs mad. To create an impression of metaphysical effect, three production steps were taken<sup>5</sup>. The first step was that the picture of Àyìndé and Akin who were in pain were shot at different instances. The second step was that the artist created artistic impression of skeletons around the photograph through drawing and painting. Finally, the photographer then re-shot the picture to give the effect desired. This was no doubt effective and convincing to readers. If human characters have put on masks or special costumes, it would not have had such arresting effect.



**Plate 15**



**Plate 16**

Ayinde who is alone in the forest at midnight is being tortured by ghosts.

**Continuous Dialogue:** Creative ingenuity of the Editor is also reflected in the handling of continuous dialogue. When a character has long lines that occupy multiple balloons, rather than replicating the character in different photo plates and thus occupying space unduly, what *Olótúù* (the editor) simply does is to duplicate speech balloons around the character in the same picture sequentially thus conserving space utilisation and creating editorial and visual effects. There are two examples of



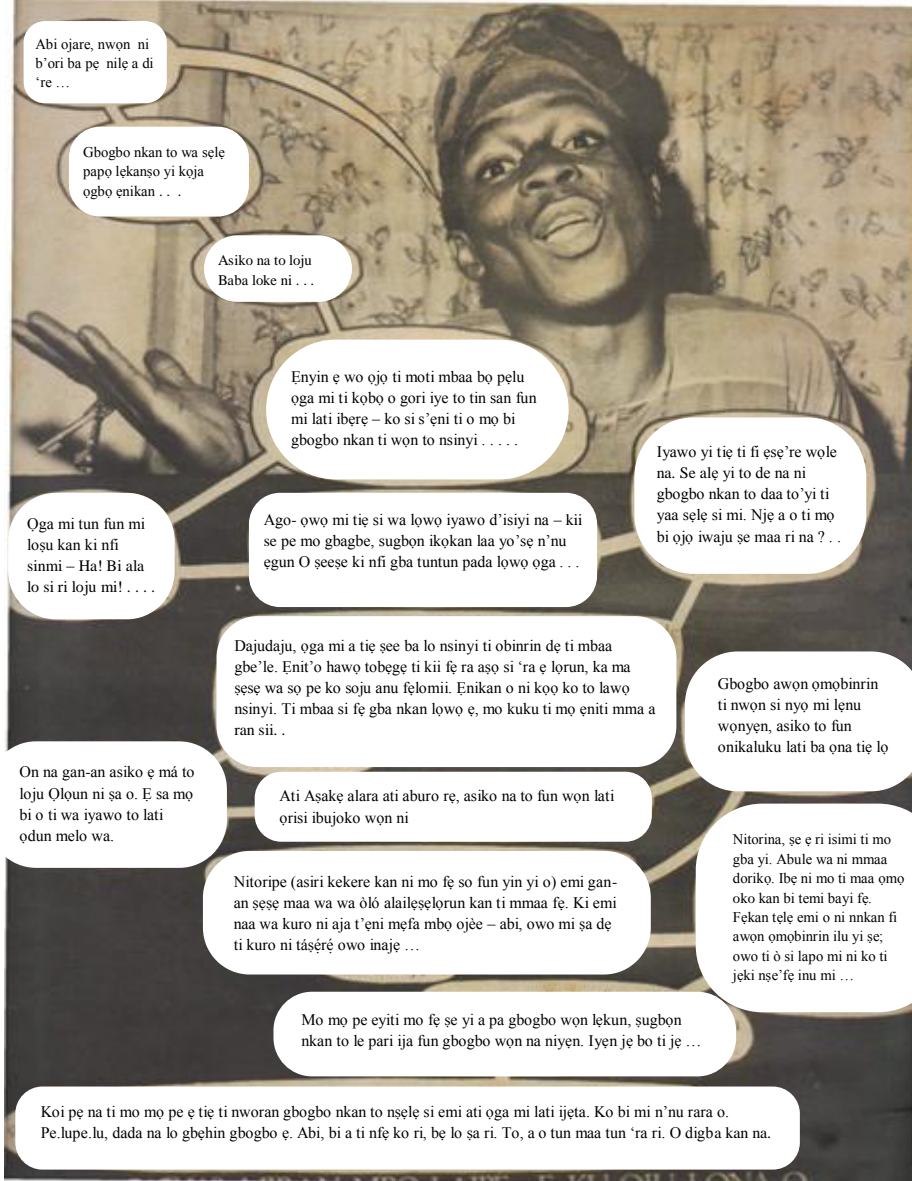
this in *Ajagun-ńlá*, Number 1, pages 3 and 4. On page 3, we see Arèsà chanting his oríkì which occupies three speech balloons which are linked together to show the sequence, while on page 4, we have Oníkòyí's *Oríkì* presented in four speech balloons arranged sequentially around him creatively. Both long speeches are however set on bogus medium shot with each occupying more than half of the pages. Perhaps, it is in *Àsìkò Náà Tó*, Number 3, page 32, by Ìṣòlá Ògúnṣòlá, that we have the greatest ingenious display of artistry by the editor as seen in Plate 18 where a single photograph of Lájí serves 15 different speech balloons effectively. The 15 speech balloons are sequentially linked to help the reader in following the trend of the speech.



Oníkòyí chanting his oríkì in *Ajagun-ńlá* Part 1

**Plate 17**





**Plate 18**

Lájí in the euphoria of his freedom in *Asikò Náà Tó* produced by Ìṣòlá Ògúnṣòlá



***Editorial Intervention: Speech balloons, Thought bubbles, and Cap prints:*** The employment of the three editorial devices of speech balloons, thought bubbles and cap prints serves as the main anchor of the editorial photo-dramaturgy in *Atóka* photoplay magazine. *Speech balloons* are the rounded space in which speeches (dialogues) are written and introduced with an arrow to the mouth of the speaker. *Thought bubbles* refer to the series of bubbles that come out of the head of a character which contain the thought of that character, while *Cap (capital) prints* are usually placed at the top right or left corners of each shot where they are relevant, and they serve as the confirmation of the narrative voice of the editor. These three constitute the tripartite editorial devices of the *Olótùú* in composing *Atóka* photoplay magazine.

Speech balloons convey the *Atóka* dialogues, while photographs bear the matching actions. Let us examine the mechanics of speech balloons and thought bubbles. In a speech balloon, we see the speech enclosed in a balloon, and at the end of the balloon is an arrow pointing directly to the mouth of the character. In drama, speeches make up dialogue in responsorial pattern, it comprises both the speech and the response; the speech balloons therefore bear the dialogues, while the pointing arrows indicate the characters who utter the speeches as seen in Figure 3.1.

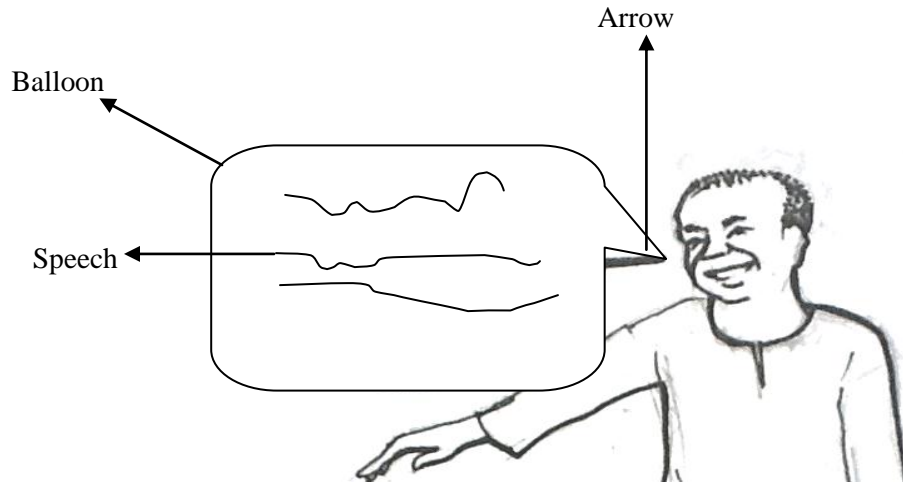


Fig. 3.1: A *diagrammatic illustration of Speech balloon*

In Fig. 3.2, the smallest bubble is nearest to the head of the character while the biggest constitutes the final of the bubbles which bears the character's thought. The thoughts in the biggest bubble are reflective of the inner thinking of the character. It should be noted that in cartoon registers, speech balloon and thought balloon are standard terminologies, but for the purpose of clarity and distinctiveness, the researcher employed the term thought bubble to demarcate the two concepts. Ogundeji (1981) has also used the two terms in line with the cartoon register. Thought bubble presents the thought going on in the mind of the character; so the thought is



graphically represented in bubble oozing out of her/his head. It depicts what is going on in his/her mind.

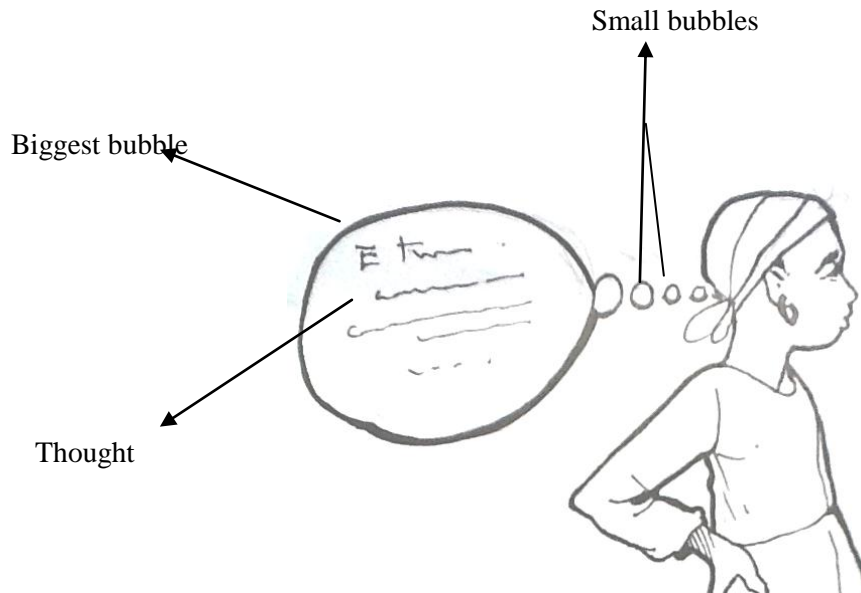


Fig. 3.2: A diagrammatic illustration of Thought bubble

However, it is sparingly used as its occurrence is far in-between. It is possible not to have one instance in a volume. For instance, there is no single thought bubble in *Ikú Jàre Èdá* (3 parts), *Èṣù Òdàrà* (four parts), and *Baṣòrun Gáà* (three parts). This implies that the editor only employed thought bubble sparingly and functionally as occasion demanded. The use of thought bubble, at times, is seen as an unnecessary and needless emphasis by the editor. This is because its use, in such instances, added no value or made no impact on the story or its

action. Thought bubble can readily take the place of the character's normal utterance as a soliloquy or monologue in stage plays.

There is a third literary feature in the presentation of *Atóka* photodrama apart from speech balloon and thought bubble which Ogundeji (1981:10) identifies as "bold prints" in his work which focused on a few plays of Oyin Adéjòbí. According to him (personal discussion),<sup>6</sup> this was the in-house terminology used by the practitioners of the photoplay magazine. These are texts, written in capital letters, boxed in a rectangle and usually placed at the top right or left corners of each shot where they are relevant, and they serve as the narrative voice of the editor. However on taking a critical look at the term "bold prints" as employed by Ogundeji and the *Atóka* photoplay magazine practitioners, we find it inadequate. It does not adequately capture the concept it is used to describe. Though it is possible to see capital letters as a type of bold print in a sense because they are big, but there also exist bold prints in both lower case and upper case as distinct from normal prints. The concept of bold in typesetting is applicable to both small and capital letters. The so-called bold prints in Ogundeji (1981:11) are really capital prints. It is therefore better to so call them to avoid any confusion.

Cap prints serve multiple purposes at various times by representing stage directions to aid reader's understanding.



They also serve as linkers by giving additional information that will assist the reader to link the previous happening in the story with the new. For instance, when the pace of the story is quickened by fast-tracking sequence of events, the editor may introduce reader's aid to keep them informed that certain events have taken place both in space and in time. This is why Adeleke (1995:24) also refers to it as "vacuum-fillers and 'bridges' to aid reader's comprehension by linking the previous action with the new". Cap print device is also adopted to indicate changes in settings and locations. It can also serve as illumination of characters by making a cursory revelation about the character of a certain performer. However, the use of this readers' aid is not instructive in all instances. There are occasions when its use is redundant and may be of little value.

Aróhunmólàṣẹ (1982:8-21) however disagrees with and criticises Ogundeji on his views on bold prints (i.e. cap prints) and thought balloon (i.e. thought bubble). According to him,

... we are not sharing his (Ogundeji's) views that they are superfluous, and that in fact they give little information and rarely contribute to the movement of the plot. (p. 12)

Our reaction to Arohunmólàṣẹ's stand is that though cap prints could be functionally utilised in a number of respects, a view which Ogundeji also subscribed to, it is not so in all cases as there were instances of mere repetitions and redundancy. Thus,

Aróhunmólàṣẹ’s submission that bold prints are useful in all respects is a baseless generalisation. It is also a statement of fact, as maintained by Ogundeji, that ‘thought balloon’ (that is thought bubble) does not quite advance the plot in any way. Though it was an ingenuous editorial invention whereby the editor gained entry into the inner mind and accessed the unuttered thoughts of characters, it did not reveal a new thing which the speech balloon has not expressed. In our own view, Aróhunmólàṣẹ’s posture is that of ‘criticism for criticism’s sake’ as he does not interrogate or tackle the real substance of Ogundeji’s submissions.

It must be pointed out that the *Atóka* story is highly dependent on the editor who could be regarded as the “Alpha and Omega” of the photo-dramatic art. The dialogue composition depends on him highly. The editor is at liberty to recompose, remodify and alter the dialogue recorded on tape recorder to agree with the general trend and purpose of sequentialised photo-shots that reveal the plot of the play. The editor’s position is understandable. Since he must illustrate the dialogue with the right picture, there is need for coherence between the picture and the dialogue; hence the crucial need for editorial ingenious intervention. This is an important licence which the editor enjoys.



***Intro and Recap devices:*** In addition to these is the intro and recap device of the editor. All the five *Atóka* editors<sup>8</sup> employed these opening and closing devices to either introduce the story in each Number (edition) or conclude it. The *intro* serves as the prologue, while the *recap* serves as the epilogue. The *intro* in a way presents a summary of the story, while the *recap* serves as commentary and hints the reader about what is to come. In the *recap* to the concluding part of a play, however, usually the next play and the theatre company that will produce it is mentioned. Let us cite *Èhìn Òla*, Volume 34 series 97 – 98 of March 1972 as example. *Èhìn Òla* is a two-part photodrama edited by Ségun Sófowótè, the founding editor. The *intro* to Number 1 goes thus:

*Omọ męta ni Baba Ajadi bi. Orukọ ekinni tii  
 ęe ęgbon patapata ni Olabimpe ti o yi orukọ  
 rẹ pada si Òbẹ-ńtẹ. Obìnrin ni ekeji, on a maa  
 jẹ Sade. Abikẹhin wọn ni Ajadi. Ninu awọn  
 męteęta, Ajadi nikan ni a mọ mọ ięe kan pato  
 bi o tilẹ jẹ pe on kii ęe ięe na yanju; ọdẹ ni on  
 sa pe'ra rẹ. Awọn meji iyoku ko kọ'ra mọ ięe  
 kan gidi, bẹ si ni irin ęe wọn ko mọ.*

*Ibanujẹ nlanla ni iwa awọn omọ wonyi jẹ fun  
 baba wọn. Ibanujẹ na pọ to bẹ gẹ ti o fi di  
 aisan si baba wọn lara. Ninu aare yi ni Baba  
 Ajadi wa ti o fi ranęe pe awọn omọ rẹ nitoripe  
 ọrọ wọn ndun-un l'emi, ati pe ara rẹ sẹ ndi  
 ara àgbà. Èhìn Òla No. 1 o.i. 1*





Baba Ajadi has three children. The name of the most senior is Olabimpe who change his name to Òbè-ńtè. The second born is a female named Şade. The last born is Ajadi. Of the three it is only Ajadi that is known with a vocation even though he is not serious with it. He calls himself a hunter. The other two have no defined job and they are wayward.

These children bring sorrow to their father to the extent that he becomes ill. It is while on his sick bed that Baba Ajadi sends for his three children because their ways of life cause him pain and more so he is getting old.

Clearly, this *intro* lets the reader into the world of the story. The major characters are mentioned and described; the background of the play is given, and the direction of the storyline is hinted at. As a matter of fact, the *intros* and the *recaps* cumulatively give a complete synopsis of the entire story. Below is the *recap* to *Èhìn Òla*, Number 1.

*Lẹhin gbogbo ọrọ ti Baba Ajadi ba awọn ọmọ rẹ sọ, sibẹsibẹ, oju ko ti wọn, bẹ, irin ẹsẹ wọn ko pada. Şade mba işe alẹ rẹ lẹ, Obente ko si ye ẹe tá-tà-tá, tú-tù-tú ti o nse. Ẹnyin na sa rii bi o ti pa Abọlọmọpe lẹkun. Lẹhin ti o ti ẹe işe buruku na tan lo lẹ si ile ọti nibiti o ti lẹ nrohin ara rẹ; nibe l'ọ ti sọrọ s'agbọn. Nisiyi, ọwọ ọlọpa ti tẹ tẹgbọn taburo. Nibo ni ọrọ wọn yio yori si...?*

*Ẹ o ma ri iyoku ere na ninu ÈHÌN ÒLA apa keji ti yio jade laipe yi. Ẹ f'ọju sọna. Èhìn Òla No. 1 o.i. 32*



After all Baba Ajadi's admonition to his children, they were neither ashamed nor changed from their illicit ways. Sade continues in prostitution, Obente does not stop his stealing. You have seen how he caused sorrow for Abolomope. It was after his nefarious act that he went to beer parlour where he was narrating his escapade to his sister – Şade and in the process get himself trapped. Now, both the brother and sister are in police net. How do they end up? You will see the concluding part of the play in *ÈHÌN ÒLA* part two which will be on the stand soon. Look forward to it.

This *recap* is partly a recapitulation and partly a summary of Number 1. With a question to awaken the eagerness of the readers about what to expect in the next edition, the *recap* ends with a subtle promo of Number 2 to the readers. The trend of both the *intro* and *recap* is the same in all the Parts even for a six-part volume<sup>8</sup>. It is remarkable to note that the *intro* and *recap* in *Başòrun Gáà*, Volume 32 Number 1 produced in November 1971 by Şégun Olùbùkún is all set in caps as different from the initial one considered in *Èhìn Òla* Number 1 which incidentally were both edited by the same editor – Mr. Şegun Şofowote<sup>9</sup>. As a corollary to this, the *intro* to *Èhìn Òla* Number 1 bears the pictures of the three lead characters – Olábimpé (a.k.a Òbéntè), Şadé and Àjàdí, whereas there is

hardly any other edition where the photographs of the characters are placed in the *intro*. This is a reflection of the rigidless style of *Atóka intros* and *recaps*. Though the twin-device is functional, it does not have a definite style.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the various dramaturgical devices of *Atóka* photoplay magazine discussed are no doubt effective. Each device made unique contribution to the production of the periodical. The effectiveness of these devices contributed a lot to the survival of the magazine for a quarter of a century. The photo-shots were efficiently and purposefully deployed with Long Shot functioning as establishing shot, Medium Shot highlighting movement and action, and Close-Up laying emphasis. Shots imposition and continuous dialogue created visual and editorial effects and conserved space; speech balloons conveyed dialogue, thought bubbles expressed soliloquy; cap prints bore stage directions and off-stage events, while continuous dialogue conserved space and also created editorial and visual effects.

### **End notes**

1. Chief Léré Pàímó in Àkàngbé (2005:45) listed Hubert Ogunde, Dúró Ladipọ, Kólá Ògúnmólá, Oyin Adéjọbí and Akin Ògúngbè as belonging to the first generation of dramatists in Ogunde tradition.



2. *Yorùbá Ronú*, produced by Hubert Ogunde in 1967, was the first production of *Atóka* photoplay magazine.
3. Pa. Abimbádé Oládèjò was the maiden photographer of *Atóka* right from inception. He worked for *Atóka* from 1967 to 1974.
4. Pa. Abimbádé Oládèjò revealed this in the course of interview with the researcher on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2013 in his residence at Block 269 Jakande Estate, Mile 2, Lagos State.
5. Pa. Abimbádé Oládèjò revealed this on Thursday June 26, 2014 while shedding light on how the effect was achieved. According to him, Mr. Jide Salisu was the West African Book Publisher's (WABP) in-house artist who carried out the impression.
6. Professor P.A. Ogundeji, the supervisor of my doctoral thesis on *Atóka*, in his bid to enrich the study, had series of informative and rewarding tutorials with me. He made this submission in one of those sessions in his house on Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2013.
7. The five *Atóka* editors in succession were: Ségún Sófowótè, Láoyè Eégúnjòbí, Múritálá Olówómojúòré, Adébólú Fátúnmiṣe and Èniolá Adéyemí.
8. *Kèhìnsókun* by Hubert Ogunde was the only *Atóka* production that had six parts.
9. Ségún Sófowótè was the maiden editor of *Atóka*.



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